Communicating in a Diverse Workplace

Succeeding in a Global Business Environment

A highly successful German automotive company recently merged with a U.S. carmaker. Members of the German team met with American staff members in Detroit.

Anita Boaz had been employed at the Detroit site for seven years, moving from administrative assistant to manager. As a result of the merger, Anita's new supervisor would be a newly relocated German manager, Hans Dortmann. She was very comfortable in the relaxed atmosphere of the American office but was a little nervous about meeting the German visitors. She worried that their English wouldn't be good enough for her to understand easily.

Anita's first meeting with Mr. Dortmann was set for a Friday—casual day at the Detroit office. Anita chose some nice slacks to wear, instead of jeans. Traffic was unusually heavy; Anita was a few minutes late for the meeting. The door was closed. She knocked once and went in. The Germans, all dressed in conservative business suits, were sitting at a conference table. Anita reached out her hand to Dortmann and said with a smile, "Good morning, Hans. It's good to meet you! I'm Anita Boaz."

Dortmann rose hesitantly, then responded with a brief greeting and sat down. Anita was baffled by his chilly reaction. Then she decided maybe he wasn't used to working with women at the management level. Anita was disappointed. She came away thinking Dortmann and the other Germans were rude and standoffish. At the same time, the Germans were put off by what they felt was rude behavior on her part.

A few weeks later, the company offered some sessions on cultural orientation. Anita learned the following about German businesspeople:

- They have a high regard for authority and structure.
- They greet each other formally, using titles such as "doctor" or "professor" when appropriate.
- They enjoy working with data and other concrete "evidence."
- They tend to separate business and pleasure, saving humor and social talk until after the business is done.

Over time, Anita and her colleagues in Detroit developed a friendlier relationship with the Germans. But first they had to establish respect for one another.

Questions

1. What assumptions does Anita make about her new supervisor and German businesspeople in general? Why are those assumptions inaccurate?
2. How is Anita's situation typical, given the current trends in business in the United States?
3. What potential communication barriers exist in this situation? Does Anita do the right things to overcome those barriers? Explain.
4. How might Anita and her new supervisor benefit from their differences? What must they do to recognize and learn from each other's strengths?

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2·1 Cultural Differences at Home and Abroad

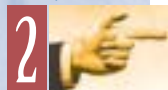*Objective*

1

KEY POINT

Cultural diversity requires us to value the differences in people, not just tolerate those differences.

Objective

2

Cultural Diversity

We live and work in a society of **cultural diversity.** With cultural diversity, people from different backgrounds have different languages, customs, values, manners, perceptions, social structures, and decision-making practices. As travel and communication around the world become easier, businesspeople are more likely to encounter people from other cultures. The company you work for right here in the United States may be owned by a company based in Europe or Asia. Your coworkers may have been transferred from company headquarters in London or Taipei. Or you may work with people whose parents or grandparents immigrated—along with millions of others—to the United States in recent decades.

Wherever your coworkers are from, they likely have had unique experiences, and they certainly have their own ideas about how things should be done. Accommodating people's experiences and ideas is one of the greatest challenges in the culturally diverse workplace.

The United States is very much a **multicultural** society—a society made up of people from many cultures. More than one million people immigrate to the United States each year. Today, more than 20 million U.S. residents were born in other countries. There are at least 300 different cultures in the United States. Members of those cultures all have different views of proper business etiquette, based on their upbringing and cultural traditions.[1]

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics will make up the largest minority group in the United States by the year 2010. Immigrants from China, Korea, and India are adding to an already substantial population of Asian Americans. The same is true for immigrants from Eastern Europe and other areas. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans will make up more than a quarter of the workforce by 2005. All of this means that the American workplace of the twenty-first century will be more diverse than at any other time in the country's history. Are you ready?

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[1]M. Kay duPont, "Minding Your Cultural Ps and Qs," *Office Pro*, February 1999, pp. 10–13.

The World as a Global Workplace

International business takes place across the political borders of nations. New technologies make it easier than ever to make products and transport them to people on the other side of the world. Those people on the other side of the world also are manufacturing products that Americans buy. When a businessperson believes that he can sell a product to just about anyone in the world, he is thinking of the world as a global marketplace. That kind of thinking results in a global workplace.

Multinational Companies

A **multinational** company is one that conducts business in two or more nations. Some successful multinational companies are General Electric, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and Disney. These companies were pioneers in creating the truly multinational corporation. They weren't satisfied just doing business with several countries. They each became an enterprise with a workforce and a corporate culture that reflect the diversity of the markets in which they operate as well as the workforce that keeps those markets supplied.

Diversity in Your Own Global Workplace

Every day, workers in this country interact globally—whether that means ordering products from abroad or visiting an international web site. The chances are great that you will interact in the workplace with people from other nations or with Americans who are from different cultures.

To work effectively with others from different cultures, the first step is to recognize, understand, and accept differences. Then you must deal sensitively with people from other backgrounds. It takes all of us to create a successful multinational environment.

Projections for the Twenty-first Century

What are the projections for the workforce in the twenty-first century?[2]

- Technology, especially the Internet, will enable more businesses to enter the global marketplace.
- There will be an explosive growth of companies doing business across borders.
- Continuing development of a world marketplace will require development of an international workforce.

As companies expand across the globe, challenges to communication grow as well. The Internet helps us find and share information better than ever before. However, crossing cultural boundaries means more than sending e-mail to another country or looking at a web site from across the globe. Whether you are dealing with peers in international locations or foreign-born colleagues in the United States, effective communication requires special planning and understanding.[3]

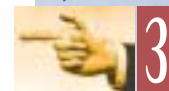[2]"60 HR Predictions for 2008," *Workforce*, January 1998, pp. 50–51.
[3]Paula Jacobs, "Cross-Cultural Connection," *InfoWord*, May 11, 1998, pp. 110–111.

DIVERSITY
Non-U.S. citizens own roughly 13,000 companies in the United States. These companies employ 5 million Americans.

Objective 3

TECHNOLOGY
In addition to providing information, the Internet presents opportunities for new ways to do business.

Cultural Differences

Objective

4

People from cultures different from your own are likely to have different values and to make different assumptions than you do. For example, most Americans would be pleased to receive a compliment on an item of clothing they are wearing. However, if you are talking to someone from Asia, that person may divert her eyes, murmur, and hurry away. Many people from Asian cultures believe that accepting praise in front of others is a sign of being vain.

To communicate effectively, you must recognize barriers to communication. Cultural differences can be communication barriers because they prevent or hinder an effective exchange of ideas or information. Once you know that, though, you can begin to overcome the challenges of communicating across cultures. It is important to remember that all people want to feel valued, respected, and understood. The challenge is knowing what words or actions will be perceived as "respectful and helpful."

INTERNET

Visit the Multicultural Pavilion on the Web at **curry.edschool.virginia.edu/ go/multicultural/.** Click on "Awareness Activities" to increase your knowledge of and sensitivity to people from diverse cultures.

Language Differences

People all over the world speak more than 3,000 languages. Though English is widely spoken across the globe, it is the native language of only about a dozen nations. Figure 2-1 shows the languages most widely used in the United States and in the world. Note the differences between the two lists. Keep in mind that the percentage of non-native-English speakers in the United States is increasing. Outside of the United States, although English is studied widely, about 5 out of 6 people do not understand it.

Most Widely Used Languages in the United States	Most Widely Used Languages in the World
1. English	1. Mandarin (Chinese)
2. Spanish	2. English
3. French	3. Russian
4. German	4. Spanish
5. Italian	5. Hindi (India)

FIGURE 2-1 Most Widely Used Languages

Body Language

When we communicate with body language—by using gestures or the position of our bodies—we use nonverbal communication. The way we say words and the hand movements, posture, and facial expressions that accompany our words often have greater significance than the words themselves. In addition, the less English that people understand, the more they rely on body language.

INTERNET

Visit "Working on Common Cross-cultural Comminication Challenges at **www.wwcd.org/action/ampu/crosscult.html** for insights into problems in intercultural communications.

TECHNOLOGY

Diversity on the Internet

In an ideal world, the best way to learn about another culture is to get to know a person from that culture who is willing to share information, impressions, and experiences. In the absence of that opportunity, technology provides new ways to learn about people from other cultures. Numerous web sites provide virtual tours of other countries. In addition, some sites focus specifically on diversity both in American society and in the workplace. Following are two extensive sites that provide specific information about the beliefs, customs, and behaviors of people from other cultures.

- The first is the Multicultural Pavilion on the Web at **curry .edschool .virginia.edu/go/ multicultural**/. This site is a rich mix of ideas and information. It includes quotations and proverbs from people and cultures around the world. It even has a multicultural song index. Features of the site also include awareness activities for site visitors to do, data archives, online articles, an online discussion board, and links to numerous other multicultural sites.

- Another valuable web site is the Cross-Cultural Communication Challenges site at **www.wwcd.org /action/ampu/ crosscult.html**. This site identifies six fundamental patterns of cultural diversity. It also includes guidelines for multicultural collaborations and a link to exploring our country's diversity through community conversations about cultural identity. ■

Don't assume that people from all cultures know and use the same types of nonverbal communication that you do. Gestures are *not* universal. An acceptable American gesture, such as the "OK" sign, would likely be perceived as poor manners by someone from France, where that gesture signifies "worthless" or "zero." In other countries, the American OK sign represents an obscene or lewd comment.

If you do business with Islamic people, be aware that they consider the feet unclean. If you touch someone with your foot, apologize. Do not cross your feet at the ankle. This would display the soles of your feet, which is considered rude.

Even how people indicate "yes" and "no" may differ significantly from culture to culture. To signal "yes," a Greek may tilt the head to either side. To signal "no," he may slightly nod the head upward, or just lift his eyebrows.

You may think that greeting business associates would be a simple procedure. How hard can it be to smile, look pleasant, and shake hands? Watch out! People from various cultures have their own ideas about the "proper" way to greet people. Figure 2-2 gives examples of the variety of greeting styles you may encounter.

KEY POINT

In spite of a smile's different meanings, it is still the best sign of general goodwill. Don't forget to use it, especially when being introduced to people.

Argentina	Shake hands briefly and nod to all present. Close friends shake hands or embrace.
Brazil	A long, warm handshake is common, upon both arrival and departure.
Canada	Shake hands firmly. People may just smile and nod in informal business situations, or if they have greeted someone with a handshake earlier in the day.
France	Shake hands lightly and quickly. Be sure to greet each person present.
India	Only the most Westernized of businesspeople shake hands. Instead, expect to use the *namaste* (pronounced nah-mas-tay). Fold palms together below your chin and nod or bow slightly.
Japan	Some Japanese may extend their hand for a light handshake. If not, watch how the person bows and return the bow to the same depth. This indicates that you consider yourself of equal status. As you bow, lower your eyes and keep your palms flat on your thighs.
Saudi Arabia	Most Saudi businessmen shake hands in Western fashion. Only some Saudi men will shake hands with Western women.

FIGURE 2-2 Greeting Customs Around the World
Source: Roger Axtell, *Do's and Taboos Around the World,* Elmsford, NY: Benjamin, 1985.

Facial Expressions

Americans are taught to maintain steady eye contact with others, while people from many other cultures, such as those from Asia, believe less contact is more respectful. Many Americans get confused when others don't give them the eye contact they're expecting. Accept the lack of eye contact as a cultural difference and don't change your usual way of communicating. Non-Americans generally expect Americans to make eye contact. Just don't let your eye contact turn into staring.

Americans usually smile to show pleasure and good nature, but that's not true of all cultures. The importance of a smile and the fine points of timing vary from culture to culture. For example, Middle Easterners might use a smile to soothe someone, thus avoiding conflict. To smile at a French person on the street is considered an inappropriate intrusion. Some cultures use a smile to acknowledge a message that has not been truly understood. Asians may smile when they are happy, sad, apologetic, angry, frustrated, thankful, or even confused.

Personal Space

Personal space is the space immediately surrounding a person, within which other persons should not intrude. The size of a person's personal space varies depending upon personal preference and cultural background. Moving into a person's personal space may cause that person to be uncomfortable.

Most Americans appreciate personal space of 18 inches to three feet. In a business setting, they don't like having others closer than a couple of feet. Generally, Americans don't like crowded elevators or center seats in airplanes, buses, and cars. When possible, they often try to leave an empty seat between themselves and a stranger.

Western Europeans have the same comfort zone as most Americans—18 inches to three feet. Middle Easterners of the same sex, Mediterraneans, and some Hispanic cultures are comfortable with a personal distance of less than 18 inches. Most of the rest of the world prefer more than three feet of personal space. However, the Chinese are used to very limited personal space and are generally comfortable with physical closeness. People from cultures that have relatively less personal space than Americans may be insulted if an American steps back to create more space.

Business Cards

Americans are casual with business cards. Chinese people take business cards very seriously and exchange them early in a meeting. With Asian coworkers, however, don't offer your card until asked or you may appear too aggressive.

Business cards are also very important in Japan. Hold the business card with the thumbs and forefingers of both hands. Present it so that

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[4]Cynthia L. Kemper, "Business Cards Can Be Key in Global Communication," *Communication World*, October/November 1998, p. 24.

DIVERSITY

In Japan a business card represents the individual in a much deeper and more meaningful way than it does in the West. The Japanese use a special business card case, which elevates and displays others' business cards when received.[4]

the recipient can read the printing on the card, and bow slightly. A Japanese recipient will accept the card in the same way and read it carefully. When you receive a card from a Japanese person, be sure to examine it closely and avoid putting it away quickly. If you're in a meeting, place the card on the table or desk in front of you for further reference.

2 Checkpoint

Cultural Differences

Indicate whether each statement is true or false.

1. It is best to ignore barriers caused by cultural differences so as not to draw attention to the differences.
2. The OK sign is perceived the same way in France and the United States.
3. A nod always means "yes."
4. While Americans are taught to maintain steady eye contact, Asians believe less eye contact is more respectful.
5. A smile is universal and means the same in any culture.
6. In general, Hispanic persons are comfortable with a personal space of less than 18 inches.
7. To avoid offending a Chinese or Japanese businessperson, carefully examine a business card that is presented to you before putting it away.

Check your answers in Appendix E.

CASE 2:
Answers

Responses to Questions 1 and 2 in Chapter Opener

1. **What assumptions does Anita make about her new supervisor and German businesspeople in general? Why are those assumptions inaccurate?**

   Anita makes the following assumptions: Hans might not be able to speak or understand English very well because he is from another country; Hans is more used to dealing with male managers than female ones; Hans understands and agrees with the concept of casual office dress; the Germans will be

eager to make friends in Detroit; the Germans have the same ideas as Americans do about proper greetings and personal space. The assumptions are inaccurate because Anita doesn't stop to think that people from Germany might not have the same values and procedures as Americans do.

2. **How is Anita's situation typical, given the current trends in business in the United States?**
More and more companies are able to operate internationally, either by phone, fax, e-mail, and Internet, or by actually sending employees to work in other countries. Also, the American workforce is becoming more multicultural as tens of thousands of people from other countries immigrate to the United States each year. Unfortunately, people—and the companies they work for—don't always recognize the value of training employees to function in multicultural situations. Misunderstandings arise, not because two parties can't agree on business terms, but because they simply don't understand each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is the world becoming more culturally diverse? What evidence of this trend do you see in your own life?
2. What are some common American facial expressions or gestures that have other meanings to people from other cultures?
3. What is personal space? How do personal space requirements differ?
4. How should a businessperson present and receive business cards with a colleague from Asia?
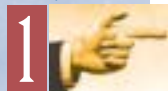
2·2 Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

KEY POINT

Effective cross-cultural communication requires special skill and extra patience.

Communicating Across Cultures

Cross-cultural communication occurs when two individuals from different cultures communicate, whether verbally, nonverbally, or in writing. Because they don't belong to the same culture, they don't share the same assumptions, values, beliefs, feelings, or ways of thinking and behaving. These differences make the communication process challenging.

Most Americans have not been trained to communicate with people from other cultures. Because most Americans do not speak a language other than English, the first barrier often is language. When talking to someone whose first language is not English, some special communication skills are required. There is an element of sensitivity needed toward people who use English as a second language. In addition to the language differences, there are barriers created by cultural traditions, values, and basic assumptions about what is proper and improper. Some of these issues are so subtle that people don't even realize that their values affect the judgments they make.

Guidelines for Cross-Cultural Communication

Effective cross-cultural communication begins with having an open attitude about communicating and about the people with whom you are communicating. Learn to find a common ground on which to communicate. This may require you to adapt your usual methods to suit different situations. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you approach the challenge of communicating across cultures.

Learn About and Accept Cultural Differences

Now that you are aware of some of the differences among cultures, resolve to learn more about people from nations other than your own. Use Internet sources such as *The Web of Culture* to further explore cultural differences. Read books and magazines about other cultures. See foreign movies and videos. Take every opportunity to talk to people from different countries. Be willing to help internationals with their English speaking and writing skills, if they ask.[5]

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[5]Mark Rowh, "Our Expanding World: How You Can Get the Global Edge," *Career World*, January 1999, pp. 22–25.

Be Sensitive Toward People from Other Cultures

Avoid generalizations about groups of people. Even positive stereotypes can be misleading or even damaging. For example, the fact that German people like to work with data and figures does not mean that all of them are accounting experts.

Avoid discussion about politics, religion, and any other potentially sensitive issues during business conversations. Be sensitive to ethnic, religious, and moral values of others. Remember that not everyone celebrates the American holidays of Thanksgiving and Independence Day. Similarly, Christmas and Easter are Christian religious holidays that not everyone shares. While people from other cultures may be aware of those holidays, don't assume that everyone gathers with family, exchanges gifts, or celebrates in any other way during those seasons.

Be Prepared for Language Barriers—And Get Past Them

Dealing sensitively with other employees whose first language is not English makes the workplace a more comfortable place. Because people from some cultures consider feedback or criticism damaging to their reputations, don't correct their English unless they have specifically asked you to do so. Instead, to foster understanding, paraphrase or restate what someone has said to ensure you both understand what is going on.

It may not be necessary for you to learn another language, but at least learn to speak certain key phrases to share with international coworkers or visitors. Learning the phrases that appear in Figure 2-3 could be perceived as a sign of respect and of friendliness. At the very least, it is a courteous gesture and may make someone feel more comfortable.

Language	Hello	Good-bye	Thank you
Arabic	marhaba	ma-Assalamah	(no equivalent)
Chinese	ni hao	zai jian	xiexie
French	bonjour	au revoir	merci
German	guten Tag	auf wiedersehen	danke
Hindi	namaskar	namaskar	dhanya-vaad
Italian	ciao	arriverderci	grazie
Japanese	konnichiwa	sayoonara	domo arigato
Korean	an jung	anyong-i-kaeseyo	go mop sum nee dah
Portuguese	oi	atE' logo	obrigado
Russian	privet	dosvidaniya	spasibo
Spanish	hola	adios	gracias

FIGURE 2-3 Key Phrases in Eleven Languages

TECHNOLOGY

Cross-cultural information is more accessible than ever via the Internet. You can visit an educational site about a country or culture, or take a virtual tour of a foreign country.

DIVERSITY

If you do business in another country, it is a nice gesture to learn about the country's history. For example, be aware of whether that country has an independence day and how people commemorate the occasion.

SCANS
Employability

Interpersonal: Works with Cultural Diversity
Learning a second language may make you more employable.

Keep Messages Simple and Short

Whether speaking or writing to people whose first language is not English, keep your language simple and to the point. If you are speaking, pronounce words especially carefully. Use uncomplicated language and be ready to reword your message if the recipient doesn't understand.

In written messages, use short sentences and paragraphs. Avoid slang, jargon, abbreviations, and acronyms. Here is an excerpt from an e-mail message sent from a manager in Maine to a colleague in France. How many opportunities for misunderstanding can you identify?

> The cut date for the first batch is ASAP. The date for the second ship is 11/8/04.

Tamara, in Maine, used two slang expressions in her message. First, she used "cut date" to mean "cut-off date" or "deadline." Then she used "ship" to mean "shipment." She used the abbreviation "ASAP" for "as soon as possible." Finally, she abbreviated the date, leaving it unclear whether she was following the American convention—month/day/year—or the continental style—day/month/year.

3 Checkpoint

Cross-Cultural Communication

Indicate whether each of the following helps or hinders cross-cultural communication.

1. Learn a second language to communicate effectively with people from another culture.
2. Make reference to positive stereotypes about groups of people.
3. When talking to people whose first language is not English, talk as you normally would so as not to insult the other person.
4. Assume that people from other countries are well-informed about American ways and customs.
5. Paraphrase or restate the words of a person whose first language is not English.
6. Learn to speak key phrases, such as "hello," "good-bye," and "thank you."

Check your answers in Appendix E.

Strategies for Global Communication

Objective

3

Now that you know how to *approach* communicating with someone from another culture, here are some specific suggestions to help you succeed. In some cases, the information in this list is just a reminder that you may need to do some research to be able to communicate effectively. Cross-cultural communication does take extra effort.

1. *Be adaptable.* American communication tends to be informal, direct, and verbal. In cultures that are more formal, slow down. Take your lead from your international colleagues. Find out what others value in their business communication and adapt your style to theirs.

2. *Use your best English-speaking habits.* Speak somewhat slowly and clearly when speaking to people whose first language is not English. If you must, use specific technical terms to discuss business. When not discussing business, however, use a relatively simple vocabulary and short sentences.

3. *Do not use acronyms, slang, and jargon.* Don't use them even if the person you're communicating with speaks English fluently. Avoid the American tendency to use military and sports terms in business communication. In addition, avoid idioms—words or phrases whose meanings are something different than the literal meanings of the words. For example, think about what it means to "hit the road" or to "take five."

4. *Be aware of a culture's forms of nonverbal communication.* Recognize that even seemingly harmless gestures such as a smile or a nod may send a message other than what you intend. If you are not familiar with a culture's nonverbal communication habits, err on the side of caution.

5. *Use visual aids.* If you are trying to communicate with someone whose first language is not English, don't be afraid to resort to sketching or drawing a picture. Sometimes it even helps to write a difficult word down. The person's comprehension of written English may be greater than his or her understanding of spoken English.

6. *Recognize that people from cultures other than your own have different assumptions.* If you are invited to someone's home, should you take a gift for your host or hostess? What type of gift? If you gave a bouquet of all white flowers to your hostess in Norway, why would she be offended? If you are introducing people, who should be introduced first, the older gentleman or the woman in the group? Basic understandings about social procedures as well as business matters vary from culture to culture. Do some research, or ask a reliable source for advice.

7. *Be careful about using humor.* There are many issues to consider when using humor. First, many businesspeople prefer to separate business and social matters. Save the humor for the social time. Second, jokes are very difficult to understand for someone who doesn't know the language completely. Third, "the one about the guy walking down the street" may seem funny to you, but it may seem senseless or, worse yet, offensive to your listeners. Joking about something that other people take seriously can put a permanent dent in a business relationship.

8. *Maintain personal contact.* Technology allows us to communicate with people all over the world without actually having personal contact with them. People of some cultures are uncomfortable with the impersonal nature of such communication. Make the effort to communicate face-to-face, by means of a videoconference, or at least by voice periodically.

DIVERSITY
In many countries, people beckon by extending the arm and hand, palm downward, and wiggling the fingers.
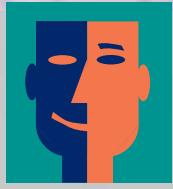
Managing Diversity in the Workplace

As the makeup of the American workforce changes, people react to the changes but do not necessarily embrace them. Handling diversity in the workplace is a process, and it requires change at all levels of a company. That change must take place in company policy and structure as well as in the behavior and attitudes of all employees.

The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) has developed two approaches to training workers for managing diversity. One approach, an awareness-based approach, is designed to make employees more knowledgeable and more aware of diversity issues. This is the first step toward helping employees become more sensitive to their diverse coworkers. Awareness-based training focuses on:

- providing information
- revealing assumptions and biases
- evaluating attitudes and values
- correcting myths and stereotypes

Skills-based training is designed to give employees the tools they need to interact effectively in a diverse workplace. This approach reinforces the concepts taught in awareness-based training. Then the employees are asked to take the next step: to change their behaviors. Skills-based training focuses on:

- increasing knowledge of and sensitivity to diversity
- adoption of appropriate attitudes toward diversity
- building or reinforcing interaction skills ■

Source: "Basic Models for Managing Diversity Training" and "Tips for Starting a Diversity Program," *The Network Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (April 1995); The Workplace Diversity Network: A Project of Cornell/LR and The National Conference; available from **www.ilr .cornell.edu/depts/ wdn/NetNews/1_1/ ProblemSolving.html**; Internet; accessed 16 September 1999.

4 Checkpoint

Strategies for Global Communication

Indicate whether each statement is true or false.

1. If a non-American client seems pretty familiar with English, it is okay to relax and speak just as you would to an American colleague.

2. It is best to be formal and conservative in behavior when conducting business with people from other countries.

3. It is best to avoid drawing a picture to help someone whose first language is not English; it would more than likely insult the person.

4. Jokes are best saved for social time, after business is finished, and only once you are well acquainted with your business colleagues.

Check your answers in Appendix E.

Response to Question 3 in Chapter Opener

3. **What potential communication barriers exist in this situation? Does Anita do the right things to overcome those barriers? Explain.**

   The most likely communication barrier is language, of course. In addition, cultural differences are likely to hinder communication. Those cultural differences include ideas and attitudes about punctuality, privacy, appropriate office attire, personal space, and proper greetings. Because Anita and Hans have different ideas about these five issues, the issues are communication barriers. The only attempt Anita makes to avoid offending the German visitors is when she chooses to wear nice slacks instead of jeans to the meeting. Beyond that, Anita does nothing to overcome potential communication barriers. In fact, she doesn't even stop to think that any differences (or barriers) might exist beyond the language difference.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is cross-cultural communication? Why does it present special challenges for both senders and receivers?
2. Why does the use of slang, jargon, or abbreviations in written correspondence complicate cross-cultural communication?
3. How might learning about another culture help you communicate with a person from that culture?
4. Name at least five strategies for communicating effectively with someone from a different culture. Explain the purpose of each strategy.

2·3 Other Diversities in the Workplace

KEY POINT

Company executives as well as all levels of employees must be committed to what is called a culture of inclusiveness—an environment in which people's differences are not just accepted, but welcomed.

Benefits of Diversity

A spokesperson at AT&T made this statement:

> . . . [W]e believe that diversity is key to the success of any corporation. We want to be able to work in an environment where we are all respected and people can work to their maximum potential. That's what keeps us going.[6]

Creating a workplace that all employees perceive as fair and equitable, no matter what their differences are, is very important. More and more companies are addressing the needs of diversity in the workforce.

Once viewed as negative, a diverse group of employees is now seen as an asset. Corporations that want to operate around the globe need to have diverse sources of talent and information to be successful. Roger Wheeler, General Motors Chief Tax Officer, said this about diversity:

> It is well established that, over time, **heterogeneous** [dissimilar] groups outperform **homogeneous** [similar] groups. They are better at problem solving, better at decision making, and better at generating creative ideas. . . .[7]

Diversity in the American workplace is a fact. Even if you are not exposed to international diversity, your coworkers probably come from different ethnic backgrounds, practice different religions, and hold different views on politics, work, and problem solving. To some extent, we take these differences for granted. Everyone is an individual, after all. Recognizing the source or nature of diversity, however, can help make our work relationships smoother and more productive.

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[6]Kenneth Hein, "Making Diversity Work," *Incentive*, February 1997, p. 18+.
[7]Roger D. Wheeler, "Managing Workforce Diversity," *Tax Executive*, November/December 1997, p. 493+.

Challenges of Diversity

In addition to differences in culture and nationality, you are likely to encounter other types of diversity in the workplace. What are some other diversities?

- race or ethnicity
- gender
- physical abilities
- social class
- age
- socioeconomic status
- religion
- personality

Although diversity is viewed as an advantage in an organization, it can sometimes adversely affect communication among members of an organization. Sometimes we are uncomfortable around people whose habits, beliefs, or customs are different from our own. Our discomfort usually arises because we don't understand the differences, or weren't prepared to encounter them. In some cases, our discomfort or our inability to communicate with a colleague arises because of a **stereotype**. A stereotype is an oversimplified belief about a group of people. For example, the notion that all Scandinavians are blonde is a harmless stereotype. The notion that engineers are men who wear dark-rimmed glasses and have short hair is a stereotype that is often inaccurate. That stereotype isn't fair to a female engineer, for example, who can't be expected to conform to someone else's idea of what an engineer "ought" to look like. Stereotypes lead us to judge people as members of a group rather than as individuals.

While growing up, we often acquire stereotypes about people who are different from us. These learned stereotypes hinder understanding. Although people within a group may have certain characteristics, each person is unique in personality, experience, ability, and current life situation.

Diversity Tips

Communication skills are especially important when you communicate with people of diverse backgrounds. In addition to just writing or speaking effectively, you need to add elements of sensitivity, understanding, and tolerance in your communication. It is important to remember not to patronize or talk down to people who do not speak your language fluently. Instead, think of new ways to communicate that help you and your listener understand and be comfortable with each other. Following are some strategies for communicating with diverse coworkers and colleagues. Consider how each tip could help in a workplace situation, whether in an office in the United States, in Canada, or in Korea.

Objective

2

ETHICS

All individuals should have an opportunity to progress in their careers in direct proportion to their ability to contribute to the objectives of the company.

DIVERSITY

Americans are stereotyped by various peoples of the world as careless, self-indulgent, competitive, always in a hurry, besieged by crime, and materialistic. Would you want people to draw conclusions about you personally, based on those stereotypes?

Objective

3
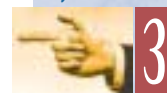
Affirmative Action and Workplace Diversity

According to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other supporting legislation, certain businesses and institutions that receive federal funds are required to maintain affirmative action programs. Specifically, that means that those businesses and institutions may take race, sex, and national origin into account when hiring employees. The program is designed to promote the interests of women and members of minority populations in a workforce dominated by white males.

Over the years, accusations of "reverse discrimination" have been made. White males have said that they were excluded from job opportunities because their employers had to maintain quotas of female and minority employees at certain levels. In some cases, these claims have stood up in court. Other cases have not.

The ultimate question is, "What's fair?" Should the most qualified candidate get the job, regardless of race, sex, or national origin? Or should companies be required to hire a certain percentage of women or members of minority groups?

As the makeup of the American workforce changes, should the affirmative action rules change? As minority groups make up a larger share of the employee pool, perhaps they don't *need* the protection of affirmative action. Should affirmative action be abandoned, with the assumption that employers will carry out fair hiring practices?

The whole issue goes back to workplace diversity and how Americans deal with it. Do we develop an inclusive society in which all peoples are welcomed and their contributions accepted? Or do we close our society and require people to have to *earn* our acceptance by proving their skills or acquiring wealth or meeting our expectations in some other way? ∎

14 Simple, Specific Diversity Tips for Writing and Speaking[8]

1. *Remember that diversity has many levels and complexities, including cultures within cultures.* Did you know there is a significant Hispanic subculture in New Zealand? What might or might not a person of Hispanic heritage from New Zealand have in common with a person of Hispanic descent who lives in Mexico? in Spain?

2. *Don't separate people.* Avoid phrases such as "Jewish people understand that. . . ."

3. *Admit what you don't know.* Many people from outside the United States have a relatively large knowledge base about America from seeing television programs and movies. In general, Americans are less informed about people from other nations because we do not watch their films or television programs.

[8]"14 Simple, Specific Diversity Tips for Writing and Speaking," from *Workforce Online*, www.workforceonline .com, copyright May 1999. Used with permission of ACC Communications/*Workforce Online*, Costa Mesa, CA. All rights reserved.

4. *Notice what people call themselves.* Use the same term a person uses to identify herself: Persian or Iranian; Hispanic or Chicana.

5. *Don't make assumptions based on a person's appearance, name, or group.* Don't assume that because a person is of a certain ethnicity, he or she necessarily practices a certain religion or supports a certain political party. Even more importantly, don't assume that a person's religious or political tendencies indicate whether that person is "good," "bad," conservative, or radical.

6. *Don't patronize people.* Avoid phrases such as "Surely you understand…."

7. *Don't doubt the authenticity of what you hear.* Each person is the highest authority on what she or he feels.

8. *Be willing to have your biases changed.* It is not a sign of weakness to change your opinion about a person or a group of people.

9. *When writing, replace judgments with facts.* Describe a person as "retired" or as a "senior citizen" (if relevant), rather than as "elderly."

10. *When writing and speaking, consider whether some references and adjectives should be deleted.* For example, in an article about how single mothers cope with work and family, is it necessary to specify that one of the interviewees is Hispanic and one is Vietnamese? No, not unless that information is vital to the accuracy of the article.

11. *Use parallel titles and terms.* Sometimes men are referred to using their first and last names, but women are referred to with just their first names. Avoid such bias.

12. *Think about your use of "we."* A statement such as the following can be alienating to non-Christians: "As we approach Christmas, contact the HR department if you want to help with party planning."

13. *Do not use judgmental words.* Sometimes when we describe people or their actions, we unwittingly judge their actions or demean them.

14. *When writing, have someone review your work who may have a different perspective.* A second opinion is often helpful in detecting unintentional bias in your writing.

Checkpoint 5

Other Diversities in the Workplace

The following sentences are taken from company memos. Identify the words in each sentence that show bias or that may be offensive to diverse recipients.

1. When dealing with elderly customers, be sure to treat them with respect.

2. Our company has many skilled technicians as well as some excellent female technical assistants.

3. We will no longer play Christmas carols through the office intercom out of respect for our Jewish colleagues.

Check your answers in Appendix E.

Response to Question 4 in Chapter Opener

4. **How might Anita and her new supervisor benefit from their differences? What must they do to recognize and learn from each other's strengths?**
   Anita has expertise in dealing with the employees and general operations at the plant in Detroit. Hans Dortmann has expertise, but not when it comes to working with a plant full of *American* workers. No doubt, however, his experience from working in the German plant can contribute to the productivity of the Detroit plant. Anita and Hans need to recognize each other as experts. On a less businesslike level, Anita and Hans should acknowledge that they don't know much about each other's culture. Once that admission is made, they should make themselves open to learning from each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of diversity in the workplace?
2. Name the kinds of diversity you might encounter in the workplace. What are some challenges that face workers of diverse backgrounds?
3. What are some ways to overcome diversity when communicating in a workplace setting?

2·4 Working Effectively in Teams

Workplace Teams

Workplace teams are a trend in American companies. From manufacturing to service industries, nearly every organization realizes the benefits of using teams to increase productivity and to be competitive in the marketplace.

Every team is different, depending on the personalities and styles of its individual members. You may have participated in teams that "worked" and teams that didn't. What was it that made one team productive and another less productive? Which team was more enjoyable to be a part of?

Look at the profiles of the following two teams. Look for similarities between these teams and your own experiences.

The members of Team 1 hum along in their daily tasks without much fanfare. They pass work back and forth to each other, verify information by telephone, or work in pairs on specific projects—all with little wasted effort.

Team 1 members know what they do well and what other members do well. When they meet, they are relaxed. They accomplish work easily and laugh a lot. The team's results have had a visible impact on company performance. In a crisis, Team 1 rallies to do what it takes to accomplish the immediate goal, but its everyday functioning is not in "crisis mode." People find being on this team satisfying. Other employees wish they could be part of Team 1.

Team 2 members are easy to identify because they are usually in a meeting. They have motivating team slogans on the wall, but frequently leave meetings angry, frustrated, or disgusted. When team members get together in pairs, they spend time blaming one person or the other for the team's failure to get much accomplished. Several members have approached their supervisor about having one of the team members removed.

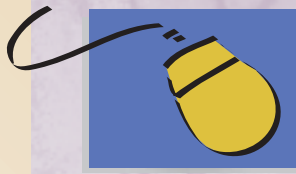Why are some teams successful while others are not?

KEY POINT

Many managers believe that the results produced by an effective, cohesive team can be greater than the results produced by individuals working separately.

Virtual Office "Space" for Virtual Teams

One of the challenges of managing or working on a virtual team is keeping track of schedules, documents, and lines of communication. Do the original or current copies of documents reside with one person who circulates them to other team members? Or does everyone have a copy of all documents all the time, with updates distributed by appropriate personnel? Anyone who has ever worked on a team knows the confusion that arises when different people are looking at different versions of a report or proposal. For virtual teams, is this just a chronic condition that exists because they do not share physical office space? How can virtual team members ever tell whether they have the most current version of a document?

The answer to the problem is to establish virtual office "space" in which to conduct virtual team business. That space is on the Web, of course. A number of commercial sites allow subscribers to establish virtual offices. For a monthly fee, subscribers get a certain amount of storage space for shared files and discussion groups. In addition, team members can establish a shared calendar and hold synchronous chats in private conference rooms. Virtual team members can also use a threaded discussion list or bulletin board to keep each other informed of progress or post queries to the group.

Virtual teams are relatively new on the work front. It only makes sense that the answers to managing these teams involve the technology that makes the teams possible in the first place. ■

Source: "Building a Virtual Office for Virtual Teams," Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.; available from **www.ragan .com/newsletter**; Internet; accessed September 1999.

Objective

1

SCANS
Employability

**Interpersonal:
Working on Teams**
Employees in the twenty-first century must be able to do more than "work well with others." They must be able to collaborate in spite of cultural and personal differences.

Effective Work Teams

Effective work teams don't just happen. Team members seldom come out of the first meeting knowing that they are finally participating in one of those great teams that gets things done and enjoys visible success. It may take many meetings before anyone has that feeling. Most teams go through several stages before they become effective, productive bodies. Those stages have to do with giving the individuals on the team time to get acquainted and to establish their group roles.

1. *Stage 1.* Team members learn about each other. They exchange ideas and information about themselves and about the team's tasks.
2. *Stage 2.* Team members begin to get down to work. The team establishes goals and tasks. During this stage, individuals may face the conflict of sacrificing individual goals for team goals.
3. *Stage 3.* Team members establish or fully clarify their roles and tasks. The team agrees how to proceed. Individuals take responsibility for specific tasks.

4. *Stage 4.* The team carries out its work. Team members deal with disagreement by compromising. Team members share information and support each other in various ways as they carry out individual and group tasks. Open discussion and exchange of ideas continues.
5. *Stage 5.* The team develops its own identity—as a team rather than as a group of individuals. Team members identify with the team and are committed to its goals.

Team Membership

Successful teams are made up of individuals who have different backgrounds. In an organization, effective work teams have to be based on function, purpose, or individual expertise rather than on personality. All people are different, and organizations can use these differences to advantage in work team situations.

Each person who is part of a team fulfills some sort of role on that team. To be successful, any team has several roles that must be filled. Figure 2-4 describes those roles and how each contributes to a team's overall make-up. These roles are seldom assigned, but most groups include people who naturally assume these positions.

Objective **2**

The Leader	This person makes sure everyone understands the objectives and that all team members are committed to the task.
The Challenger	The challenger is not afraid to question ineffective techniques or strategies. He or she is always trying to improve the team.
The Doer	The doer gets the team back on track after distractions and keeps everyone focused on the task at hand.
The Thinker	This person carefully considers other members' ideas and seeks to improve them by making tactful suggestions.
The Supporter	The supporter eases tensions. He or she also makes sure the team members maintain good working relationships.

FIGURE 2-4 Roles for Individuals on Successful Teams

Characteristics of Effective Teams

Do effective work teams simply have the best individual employees on them? Or are the best teams the ones whose members are all friends even before the team is formed? There is no magic formula for building a good team. However, most effective work teams do share some characteristics. Many high-performance teams tend to have the following qualities in common.[9]

Objective **3**

[9]"Make Sure Your Work Teams All Have These Qualities . . . and These People," *Manager's Intelligence Report,* May 1998, p. 4.
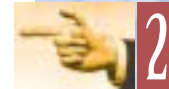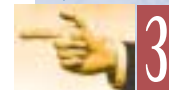
KEY POINT

Once a consensus about team goals is reached, all members of an effective team accept it and focus on successfully carrying out the team's tasks.

Objective

4

TECHNOLOGY

Working in virtual teams requires good communication skills because you don't have the advantage of meeting face-to-face with team members.

- Members have a shared team vision and a commitment to clear, challenging objectives.
- Work is done in a supportive atmosphere. There is a strong, positive group identity.
- The team members learn from successes and failures by reviewing their procedures after each project.
- Team members are constantly striving to improve performance.
- The team is stable; team members have worked together for an extended time.
- Team members are able to talk about their differences. This part of effective team functioning is the hardest and usually takes longest to develop.

Virtual Teams

A **virtual team** is one whose members don't share a physical work space but work together on specific or long-term projects using communications technology. This technology can range from such basic technology as faxes and telephone conference calling to videoconferencing and Internet-based technologies using e-mail and web pages.

Virtual teams are most likely to exist in multinational companies that need to overcome large geographical barriers. However, these teams are growing in popularity throughout the United States as well. Chapter 5 of this text will recommend ways to handle e-mail, an important communication tool for members of virtual teams.

6 *Checkpoint*

Working Effectively in Teams

Indicate whether a statement describes an effective team or an ineffective team.

1. The team learns from its successes and failures.
2. Team members are individuals who do not necessarily agree on the team's vision.
3. Before beginning work on the team, members get to know one another.
4. Team members are people with similar skills and attitudes so that conflict will not arise.
5. The team is made up of people who have different backgrounds.

Check your answers in Appendix E.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the differences between Teams 1 and 2 mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this section. What could have caused Team 1 to be more successful than Team 2?
2. Do you agree with the five stages of effective team development? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever been a team member? Was your team successful? Why or why not?

CASE 2:

Summary

Because Anita was not familiar with German customs, she should have been on her best behavior at the initial meeting. She should have worn business attire for this important meeting, and she should have taken every precaution to make sure she arrived on time. Once she did arrive, Anita might have taken a cue from the closed door. She should have knocked, then waited to be admitted. Finally, she should have waited to be introduced. Her eagerness to be friendly made the Germans uncomfortable. As a hostess, Anita should have let the visiting Germans set the tone for the meeting.

After participating in employee training on the differences between German and American cultures, Anita learned that Germans don't tend to mix their social lives with business. Therefore, she learned to behave more formally at work and to save informality for after-work activities with her new German coworkers. She found that many of these colleagues enjoyed the warmth and friendliness of the Americans as long as business and pleasure were kept separate.

Chapter Summary

Section 2.1   Cultural Differences at Home and Abroad

1 **Define "cultural diversity," "multicultural," and "multinational."** We live and work in a world of cultural diversity, meaning that people from different nations have different languages, customs, values, manners, perceptions, social structures,

and decision-making practices. Multicultural means that our society is made up of many cultures. Multinational companies conduct business in more than one country.

2 **List population trends that indicate the U.S. workplace is becoming more multicultural.** More than one million immigrants arrive in the United States each year. More than 20 million United States residents were born in other countries. There are at least 300 different cultures in the United States. Hispanics will make up the largest U.S. minority group. Immigrants from China, Korea, India, and Eastern Europe are immigrating to the United States in increasing numbers.

3 **Identify three projections for the global workplace of the twenty-first century.**
1. Technology, especially the Internet, will enable more businesses to enter the global workforce.
2. There will be an explosive growth of companies doing business across borders.
3. Continual emergence of a world marketplace will require development of an international workforce.

4 **List, describe, and give examples of differences among cultures.** There are inherent differences in language, customs, values, manners, perceptions, social structures, and decision-making practices. Outward differences experienced in business situations include language, body language, facial expressions, space perception, and use of business cards.

Section 2.2 Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

1 **Define "cross-cultural communication."** Cross-cultural communication is a process by which two individuals who do not belong to the same culture communicate with each other, either orally or in writing.

2 **List and explain four guidelines to help people communicate effectively across cultures.**
1. Learn about and accept cultural differences. Use resources such as books, newspapers, magazines, videos, and the Internet.
2. Be sensitive toward—and tolerant of—people from other cultures. Be aware of possible ethnic, religious, and moral differences.
3. Be prepared for language barriers. Listen carefully; learn to speak "key" phrases.
4. Keep messages simple and short. Pronounce words carefully; use short, simple sentences; avoid slang, jargon, abbreviations, and acronyms.

3 **Identify strategies for effective global communication.**
1. Be adaptable in your communication style.
2. Use your best English speaking habits.
3. Do not use acronyms, slang, and jargon.
4. Be aware of a culture's forms of nonverbal communication.
5. Use visual aids.
6. Recognize that people from cultures other than your own have different assumptions.
7. Be careful about using humor.
8. Maintain personal contact.

Section 2.3   Other Diversities in the Workplace

1 **List benefits of diversity in the workplace.** Businesses and organizations need diverse sources of talent and information to be successful. Diverse groups are better at problem solving, decision making, and generating creative ideas.

2 **Recognize types of diversity in the workplace and understand the challenges diversity creates.** In addition to culture and nationality, diversities include race or ethnicity, gender, physical abilities, social class, age, socioeconomic status, religion, and personality.

3 **Use communication tips for handling diversity.**
1. Remember that diversity has many levels and complexities.
2. Don't separate people.
3. Admit what you don't know.
4. Notice what people call themselves.
5. Don't make assumptions based on a person's appearance, name, or group.
6. Do not patronize people.
7. Don't doubt the authenticity of what you hear.
8. Be willing to have your biases changed.
9. When writing, replace judgments with facts.
10. When writing and speaking, consider whether some references and adjectives should be deleted.
11. Use parallel titles and terms.
12. Think about your use of "we."
13. Do not use judgmental words.
14. When writing, have someone review your work who may have a different perspective.

Section 2.4   Working Effectively in Teams

1 **Identify five stages in effective team development.**
1. Members get to know one another.
2. Members set goals and tasks.
3. Members clarify roles and responsibilities.
4. The team carries out its work.
5. Members identify with and support the group.

2 **Name and describe five roles needed for effective teams.**
   1. The leader makes sure everyone understands objectives and members are committed to the team's work.
   2. The challenger questions ineffective team strategies and works to improve the team.
   3. The doer keeps the team on track.
   4. The thinker considers others' ideas and tries to improve them.
   5. The supporter eases tensions and helps team members maintain good relations.

3 **List qualities shared by successful teams.** Members have a shared team vision. Work is done in a supportive atmosphere. The team learns from successes and failures. Team members are constantly striving to improve performance. The team is stable; team members have worked together for an extended time. Team members are able to talk about their differences.

4 **Define "virtual team."** A virtual team is one whose members don't share a physical work space but who work together on projects using telecommunications technology.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How do people from diverse cultures differ from each other?
2. How can you communicate more effectively with people from other cultures?
3. What are the projections for diversity in the workplace and how can you be prepared to work in a diverse society?
4. Other than cultural diversity, what are other diversity issues and how should they be addressed?
5. What strengths would you bring to a workplace team? How would you help to improve an ineffective team?

Applications

DIVERSITY

Part A. You have just been informed that the empty cubicle next to yours will soon be occupied by a new employee from your company's international headquarters. Create a fictitious person of another culture as your new coworker. Give this person a name and a nationality. Conduct research to discover what cultural differences you should expect. Assume that the person has a working knowledge of English, but no real, day-to-day experience with the language or with American culture. What will you do to simplify communication between the two of you?

Part B. You work for a medium-sized company with about 500 employees. The company's management feels that employees could benefit from some diversity training to better deal with the different types of employees in the workplace. You have been asked to serve on a committee to provide suggestions for overcoming barriers to communication created by diversity in the workplace. What suggestions will you offer other committee members? Consider also how the diversity training should be delivered. Should employees be required to attend seminars? Or will a memo or newsletter do the job? Include your suggestions for distributing the information along with your specific ideas about overcoming communication barriers.

DIVERSITY

Part C. You and several other employees have been asked to do a feasibility study to determine whether your company will benefit substantially from conducting business on the Internet. Last year you attended a seminar on teams in the workplace and you know that it will take some time for this new team to get up and running. It is your job to e-mail the other four team members with an initial work plan, along with meeting schedules and agendas. Compose an e-mail that proposes the tasks and goals of your team's first four meetings. Keep in mind the five stages that teams go through before they become truly effective and productive.

TECHNOLOGY

TEAMWORK

Part D. Languages Unlimited is a company in Columbus, Ohio, whose employees translate documents and act as interpreters. The interpreters sometimes work in courtrooms or in hospital emergency rooms. At other times, they serve almost as cultural mentors when a company hosts international visitors. Write a letter of application to Kristine Wilson, the president of Languages Unlimited. Convince her that your sensitivity to multicultural issues in the workplace and your broad knowledge of world cultures makes you the perfect candidate for a position in her company.

DIVERSITY

Editing Activity

Edit the following memo, which was issued to employees prior to a visit from a company's international distributor.

> As most of you're aware, June 14th–16th is the date on which our colleagues from Indonesia will visit. They will be in the office, shadowing indiviuals from each department. As our main distributor in Asia, Emarnco is real important to us. We want our visitors to feel good about our products as well as about us, who make them. For that reason, following are some reminders to help you make a good impression on and communicate effectively with our visitors.
>
> 1. Our guests are native Malays and prefer to be called that. Don't call them Asians or Indonesians.

2. People from the Indonesian culture are comfrtable with silence. If you ask a questoin, give the person time answer. Indonesians consider it polite to leave a respectful pause before respondign.

3. In general, while our guests are here, plan to spend more time being a host or hostess than working. Showing respect, being polite, and not being hurried or rushed are all important to Indonesians. For that reason, it may seem as if you spend a great deal of time being introduced and making the acquaintance of the the visitors. Don't feel that you need to look especially bussy or productive to impres them. They are here to get aquainted, not to check our production schedules.

Case Studies

DIVERSITY

1. During a crowded cocktail party in Mexico, Elaine noticed her business client waving to her from across the room. Talking with someone else, she saw the wave and thought, "How friendly!" and waved back. A little while later he waved again—more adamantly and vigorously. Again, she waved back more enthusiastically. In the days that followed, her client wouldn't return phone calls and canceled appointments with her.

   Why do you think the client became cool to her?

TEAMWORK

2. Maria and Carlos were given the task of developing a flow chart for a new software program. They were to put together a team quickly, develop the flow chart in a matter of weeks, and find developers to write the program. Maria was in charge of the team, and Carlos was a technical expert. They didn't know each other very well before the project, nor did they know about the other's capabilities or how they worked with others.

   In the first meeting, Maria took charge, getting input from all team members and handing out assignments. Carlos said little throughout the meeting and stalked out angrily after it was over.

   When Maria caught Carlos in the hall and discussed an idea she had, he seemed to understand what she was saying. But a week passed, and nothing happened. Maria felt that Carlos was trying to undermine the team by deliberately doing nothing. Carlos felt that Maria was stupid, or worse, that she didn't care very much about the project.

   The team became divided between those who liked Maria's leadership style and those who respected Carlos's expertise. The project dragged on with little being accomplished.

   Why do you think Maria and Carlos had problems working together? What could they do to improve the situation?

3. In what country would you most like to do business in the future? Choose a nation that interests you. Then search the Internet to find information on that country's business and social culture. Based on the information you find, prepare an oral presentation to orient your classmates with the business etiquette and social norms of that country. As with any oral presentation, a visual aid will enhance the information you present.

TECHNOLOGY

DIVERSITY

Career Case Studies

COMMUNICATION FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURE CAREERS

Jill Terrell started her own landscaping business in Atlanta about 10 years ago. Her company has grown, and she now has eight full-time employees, plus another dozen seasonal employees. When she hires seasonal help, Jill is careful to choose people who are willing to work hard and who have some interest in landscaping and in working with their hands.

For the past several seasons, most of Jill's seasonal employees have been Hispanic. Jill chose them carefully, as always, and has been pleased with her work crews. They follow directions well, learn new skills willingly, and work hard. Jill's problem, though, is getting the seasonal employees to work well with the full-time employees.

The full-time employees are mostly landscape designers. They often go to job sites to supervise the work crews. Though the seasonal workers are respectful, the designers have complained that the workers are uncooperative. Jill guesses that the designers simply feel left out. When the workers talk among themselves, they speak in Spanish. They bring their own lunches and keep to themselves during breaks and lunchtime. In addition, Jill's office manager seems to have difficulty communicating with the seasonal workers about withholdings, taxes, and other payroll issues.

Jill's business has been steady enough that she would like to expand her full-time staff. A couple of her seasonal workers are her first choices for those positions. But she's worried that the good team atmosphere of the company won't be the same, that the Hispanic workers won't really feel part of the group.

1. What can Jill do to help her current full-time staff feel more comfortable with the seasonal workers?
2. If Jill hires some of the seasonal workers as full-time staff, what further steps can she take to ensure that *all* of her employees work well together?

Video Case

Seeing the Person Behind the Gender

Millennium Design, the company that employs Marie and Max in its warehouse, engineers and markets desk accessories for businesses and home offices. In its 25-year history, Millennium Design has never hired a female engineer. To create more diversity among its engineers and designers, the company president asked Oliver Rainer, the director of engineering, to increase the number of female engineer managers on his staff. Oliver interviewed and hired Emily Lu.

Once they started working together, however, Oliver became uncomfortable. Emily found it difficult to make eye contact with him. She seemed uneasy when Oliver complemented her successes in front of her staff. Oliver was also concerned that Emily seemed too friendly with her staff. He wondered whether Emily was a tough enough manager.

Several months after Max and Marie's visit to the Human Resources department, Oliver spotted Max in the cafeteria. Oliver had heard about Max's conflict with Marie. Oliver told Max of his problems with Emily, expecting a sympathetic ear. Oliver believes he and Emily simply have a cultural and gender difference—that all Asians, particularly women, are retiring and nonconfrontational. Oliver asks Max.

"Maybe it's not 'Asians' or 'women,' " Max answers. "Maybe Emily is just different from you."

Questions
1. Do you think that working at Millennium Design—where there has been little diversity—has affected Oliver's interpretation of Emily's behavior? Support your opinion.
2. Can you think of another explanation for Emily's behavior that is not based on her race or gender?
3. Imagine a conversation between Oliver and Emily. Take the role of one person and describe what you would say to the other.
4. In a team of 3–4 people, search the Web to find information on company diversity policies. After sharing research and brainstorming, your team will draft a "Workplace Diversity Statement" for Millennium Design.

Continuing Case....

Cultural Communication?

Eva and her Uncle Ramon have chosen October 1 as the grand opening of their new business, the NetCafe. By mid-September, workers had set up the computer stations throughout the shop. Some of the stations stand alone. Others are in clusters so that several customers—maybe coworkers from a nearby business—can talk with each other as they work. All of the stations provide space not only for papers and files, but also for mugs of steaming coffee and plates of tasty pastries that will be available at the shop.

Ramon already has his coffee makers installed. He will contract with several companies to get a variety of coffees. He is still negotiating with a bakery for pastries.

Eva's computers will interface with the Internet through cable modems instead of phone lines. Using cables will be cost-efficient over time and speed up access to the Internet.

Two weeks ago, Luis Colon, a salesman from the cable provider, had come to the shop to talk with Eva about the cable installation. He was from Puerto Rico, like Eva's family. He had even visited the small town where some members of her family still lived.

"Well, Eva," he said, "you don't have to worry about a thing. We'll get this all taken care of for you." He had patted her shoulder and given her a big smile.

Eva had smiled back, but it bothered her that Mr. Colon had called her by her first name. Patting her like a child didn't help, either. She had been worried that people would not take her seriously because of her age and maybe her gender. Now it seemed that she had reason to worry.

The installation of the cable wiring had been scheduled for September 26, but no workers appeared that day. Eva called the company the next morning. The scheduler promised the installers would be there that afternoon.

Eva stayed at the shop until 6:30 p.m., waiting for installers who never came. She was furious as she drove home—and worried that NetCafe would not be ready to open on time.

Early the next morning, Eva called the cable provider again. She asked for Mr. Colon this time. "Your workers have to install the cable this morning!" she told him, trying to keep the anger out of her voice. "The shop opens in three days!"

"Eva, Eva! You worry too much," he said. "Are you sure you're Puerto Rican? Don't you know that tomorrow always comes?"

"Get them here today!" Eva told him through clenched teeth.

1. What assumptions does the salesman seem to make about Eva?
2. Do you think the salesman is more influenced by Eva's age, her gender, her ethnic background, or another factor? Explain your answer.
3. Members of a group can have mistaken assumptions about other members of the same group. Describe an example that is unrelated to Eva and the salesman. Why might this happen?
4. Write a letter from Eva to the salesman. Without insulting him, explain the mistakes in his assumptions.