

Cross Cultural Persuasion

The Situation

You are a senior at BTU (Beaver Technical University), the top engineering school in your country with a double major in Mechanical Engineering and management science. This is the summer between your junior and senior year, and you are interning with Course Management International (CMI). CMI, a five-year-old company, developed and now sells educational software that helps faculty manage many of the administrative tasks associated with teaching a course. For example, CMI software can store a photo of every student in a course, and when instructors click on a particular photo, it can provide them with demographic information on that student, a list of all his/her grades, and a sample of his/her assignments.

As part of the internship, you have been placed in a team with five other students from different universities. The composition of the team is three men and three women, all of whom are between their junior and senior years in school. By the end of the summer, you are to submit a report that describes two new functions that CMI should develop for the newest release of the software.

The Problem

One of the members of the team is consistently late for team meetings and not pulling his/her weight. (If you feel it's important to know the gender of the team member, you can choose whichever you prefer.) Because you were the team leader, you must talk to the team member about this problem.

The Complication

You, your teammates, and CMI exist in one of the following two cultures:

BLUE CULTURE

Beliefs, Values and Attitudes that Underlie Your Culture's Communication

You believe a person's first loyalty is to his/her family.

Obedience to elders and those in authority is very important.

You believe in feelings more than reasoning, and you believe people's feelings should be protected at all costs.

Yours is a hierarchal culture.

The past is considered more important than the future or the present.

Members of your culture tend toward holistic rather than analytical thinking.

(over)

Verbal/Nonverbal Traits of Your Culture

Speakers use an indirect communication style.

Members of your culture frequently express positive attitudes about others while downplaying their own worth.

Your conversation distance is close (about 15 inches, face-to-face).

Eye contact depends on the relative status of the individuals engaged in a conversation.

Silence is respected.

YELLOW CULTURE

Beliefs, Values and Attitudes that Underlie Your Culture's Communication

You believe that people determine their own destinies and should make their own choices based on their own preferences, desires, and needs.

You make decisions in a democratic manner.

You believe in reason over feelings.

You believe time is a valuable commodity, and you don't want to waste any.

You believe conflict is a way of reaching good decisions.

Members of your culture tend toward analytic rather than holistic thinking.

Verbal/Nonverbal Traits of Your Culture

Your conversation distance is far (about 35 inches, face-to-face).

You openly express emotions (e.g., anger, dissatisfaction, happiness).

You ask many questions.

You are direct in expressing your ideas and opinions, and you look people in the eye when you do so.

You don't express thanks to others because in your view people chose their actions to create their own destinies; in other words, if someone does something for you, he/she is also doing it for himself/herself.

The Task

From the perspective of BOTH the Blue Culture and the Yellow Culture, each group should outline the key points that the team leader should make in trying to persuade the team member to change his/her problematic behavior. Be ready to describe those strategies and tactics or to role play the interaction if called upon.

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