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GLOBAL  
EDITION

# Human Relations

## *Interpersonal Job-Oriented Skills*

TWELFTH EDITION

Andrew J. DuBrin

ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

# Cross-Cultural Relations and Diversity

In 2009, Walgreens opened a distribution center in Windsor, Connecticut, where close to one-third of the workforce consists of people with disabilities. Employees with disabilities work alongside other team members, having the same productivity goals, and earning the same pay. Disabilities include autism and mental retardation, as well as hearing and physical impairments. An on-site training facility assists those with special needs become prepared for employment so that everyone can work productively and effectively.

"We've worked technology and creativity into every inch of this place, but the people here will amaze you," said Walgreen's senior vice president of supply chain and logistics Randy Lewis. "We originally went into this project wanting to change the work environment

but soon discovered we were the ones who changed in dramatic and wonderful ways." Lewis, whose son Austin has autism, developed the idea of the outreach program for people with disabilities.

This giant 700,000 square foot facility can fit 12 football fields inside its walls, and serves hundreds of Walgreens stores throughout the Northeast. The center was planned to be 20 percent more efficient than the company's previous generation of distribution centers and has some of the most innovative logistics systems in the distribution industry.

The Windsor location and the facility in Anderson, South Carolina, that opened in 2007 are now the models for all future Walgreens distribution centers. The company's goal is to fill 10 percent of its distribution center production jobs with people with disabilities. Walgreens is more than halfway there.

For Julia Turner, a person with Down syndrome, a full-time job seemed unat-



## LEARNING Objectives

After reading and studying this chapter and doing the exercises, you should be able to

1. Recognize who is discriminated against
2. Describe the major values and attitudes of cultural differences
3. Overcome many cross-cultural communication barriers
4. Improve your cross-cultural relations

tainable, yet at the Southeastern distribution center in Anderson, it was possible. "I have found what I want, and I'm satisfied," Turner said as she scanned boxes at the center. Fully one-third of the workforce at the distribution center is disabled.

"For many, (working in the distribution center) is their first full-time job," said Lewis. "For a parent to finally see their (his or her) son or daughter experience what it's like to hold a job, be responsible and actually look forward, can fulfill a lifelong dream."<sup>[1]</sup>

The story about the giant drugstore company illustrates how some business firms and not-for-profit organizations value diversity in the workforce by reaching out to potential workers who may have been overlooked or discriminated against by many other employers.

Top management at business firms continues to recognize the importance of a diverse workforce as well as diverse customers. Not only is the workforce becoming more diverse, but business has also become increasingly international. Approximately 15 percent of the U.S. workforce is composed of people born in another country. Small- and medium-size firms, as well as corporate giants, are increasingly dependent on trade with other countries. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of jobs in the United States depend on imports or exports. Also, more and more work, such as call centers and manufacturing, is subcontracted to companies in other countries.

All this workplace diversity has an important implication for the career-minded individual. To succeed in today's workplace, a person must be able to relate effectively to people from different cultural groups from within and outside his or her country. Being able to relate to a culturally diverse customer base is also necessary for success. Being skilled at cross-cultural relations is also an asset in personal life because of the diversity within the society.

This chapter presents concepts and techniques you can use to sharpen your ability to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. To get you started thinking about your readiness to work in a culturally diverse environment, take Self-Assessment Quiz 8-1.

## THE DIVERSITY UMBRELLA

Improving cross-cultural relations includes understanding the true meaning of appreciating diversity. To appreciate diversity, a person must go beyond tolerating and treating people from different racial and ethnic groups fairly. The true meaning of valuing diversity is to respect and enjoy a wide range of cultural and individual differences. Appreciating these differences is often referred to as *inclusion* to emphasize unity rather than diversity. To be diverse is to be different in some measurable way, even if what is measurable is not visible (such as religion or sexual orientation).

To be highly skilled in interpersonal relations, one must recognize and appreciate individual and demographic (group or category) differences, as well as cultural differences. People from the same demographic group often come from many different cultures. For example, the Latino demographic group is composed of many different cultures. Some people are more visibly diverse than others because of physical features or disabilities. Yet the diversity umbrella is supposed to include everybody in an organization. To value diversity is therefore to appreciate individual differences among people.

Appreciating cultural diversity in organizations was originally aimed at assisting women and minorities. The diversity umbrella continues to include more people as the

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1

**Cross-Cultural Skills and Attitudes**

**Directions:** Listed below are skills and attitudes that various employers and cross-cultural experts think are important for relating effectively to coworkers in a culturally diverse environment. For each of the statements, check *applies to me now* or *not there yet*.

	<i>Applies to me now</i>	<i>Not there yet</i>
1. I have spent some time in another country.	_____	_____
2. At least one of my friends is deaf, blind, or uses a wheelchair.	_____	_____
3. Currency from other countries is as real as the currency from my own country.	_____	_____
4. I can read in a language other than my own.	_____	_____
5. I can speak in a language other than my own.	_____	_____
6. I can write in a language other than my own.	_____	_____
7. I can understand people speaking in a language other than my own.	_____	_____
8. I use my second language regularly.	_____	_____
9. My friends include people of races different from my own.	_____	_____
10. My friends include people of different ages.	_____	_____
11. I feel (or would feel) comfortable having a friend with a sexual orientation different from mine.	_____	_____
12. My attitude is that although another culture may be very different from mine, that culture is equally good.	_____	_____
13. I am willing to eat (or have eaten) food from other countries that is not served in my own country.	_____	_____
14. I would accept (or have already accepted) a work assignment of more than several months in another country.	_____	_____
15. I have a passport.	_____	_____
16. I know the approximate difference in value between the U.S. dollar and the euro.	_____	_____
17. I know how many hours difference there is between my time zone and at least two other overseas time zones.	_____	_____

**Interpretation:** If you answered *applies to me now* to 11 or more of the preceding questions, you most likely function well in a multicultural work environment. If you answered *not there yet* to 11 or more of the questions, you need to develop more cross-cultural awareness and skills to work effectively in a multicultural work environment. You will notice that being bilingual gives you at least five points on this quiz.

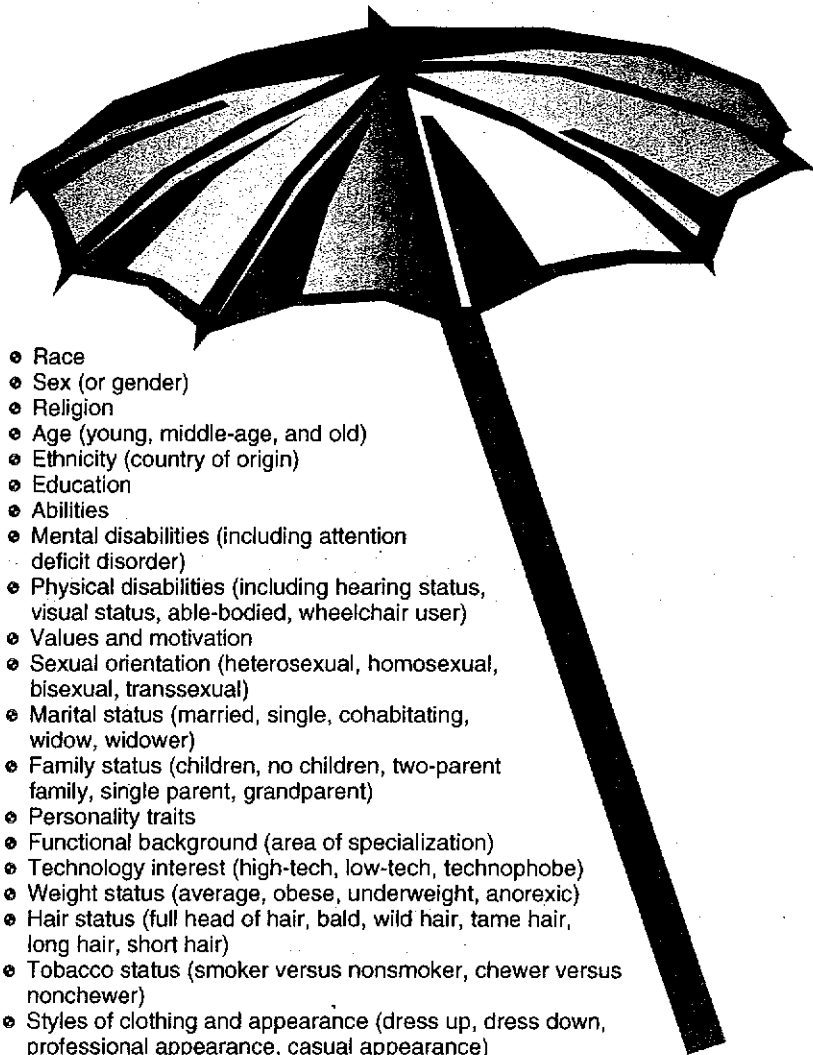
**Sources:** Several ideas for statements on this quiz are derived from Ruthann Dirks and Janet Buzzard, "What CEOs Expect of Employees Hired for International Work," *Business Education Forum*, April 1997, pp. 3-7; and Gunnar Beeth, "Multicultural Managers Wanted," *Management Review*, May 1997, pp. 17-21.

workforce encompasses a greater variety of people. For example, in recent years much attention has been paid to the rights of employees included in the group GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual). Janis Walworth, co-founder of the Center for Gender Sanity, says, "The country is on a path of increasing respect for gays and lesbians as well, and transgender people are riding the coattails."<sup>[2]</sup> The rights of members of diverse religious groups are also receiving attention. At times, some of the religious groups may oppose the advances of the GLBT group.

The goal of a diverse organization is for persons of all cultural backgrounds to achieve their full potential, not restrained by group identities such as gender, nationality, or race. Another important goal is for these groups to work together harmoniously.

Figure 8-1 presents a broad sampling of the ways in which workplace associates can differ from one another. Studying this list can help you anticipate the types of differences to understand and appreciate in a diverse workplace. The differences include cultural as well as individual factors. Individual factors are also important because people can be discriminated

FIGURE 8-1 The Diversity Umbrella



- Race
- Sex (or gender)
- Religion
- Age (young, middle-age, and old)
- Ethnicity (country of origin)
- Education
- Abilities
- Mental disabilities (including attention deficit disorder)
- Physical disabilities (including hearing status, visual status, able-bodied, wheelchair user)
- Values and motivation
- Sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transsexual)
- Marital status (married, single, cohabitating, widow, widower)
- Family status (children, no children, two-parent family, single parent, grandparent)
- Personality traits
- Functional background (area of specialization)
- Technology interest (high-tech, low-tech, technophobe)
- Weight status (average, obese, underweight, anorexic)
- Hair status (full head of hair, bald, wild hair, tame hair, long hair, short hair)
- Tobacco status (smoker versus nonsmoker, chewer versus nonchewer)
- Styles of clothing and appearance (dress up, dress down, professional appearance, casual appearance)
- Socioeconomic status, such as some groups having low income and formal education, whereas others have high income and high formal education

against for personal characteristics as well as group factors. Many people, for example, believe they are held back from promotion because of their weight-to-height ratio.

A diverse workforce is noted to have many consequences to the organization, mostly positive, but some negative. A sampling of these consequences is as follows:

- Multicultural experiences are strongly associated with creative thinking, and creative outcomes such as ideas for new products.<sup>[3]</sup> If you work with people from different cultures on the job or association with them in personal life, your creativity is likely to be enhanced.
- A diverse workforce helps generate more profits through such means as having employees onboard who look similar to and share the same customs as their customers.<sup>[4]</sup> Allstate and Wal-Mart exemplify companies whose culturally diverse workforce helps them attract more customers.
- When employees and managers working for a large retailer perceive that a positive climate (atmosphere) for diversity exists, the store is likely to prosper. A one-year study of more than 650 store units at J. C. Penney found that the largest sales growth occurred in stores wherein subordinates and managers perceived highly pro-diversity climates. In contrast, the lowest sales growth was found in stores where both managers and subordinates reported a less hospitable climate for diversity.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Cultural diversity within groups can sometimes lead to so much conflict and disagreement that productivity suffers. Diversity in educational background and age

“In this extreme war for talent, we need to create a culture of inclusion.”  
—Lynn Weaver, vice president of human resources at Yazaki of North America

can also lead to conflict. However, a study in Germany found that in teams where the need for intellectual stimulation was relatively high, team performance increased in the presence of diversity in educational experience and age.<sup>[6]</sup>

- The setting of the diverse workgroup can sometimes influence whether or not cultural diversity leads to enhanced performance. A compilation of many studies found that relations-oriented diversity led to high performance in service industry settings. (Relations-oriented includes race, ethnicity, gender, and age.) In contrast, this type of diversity had slightly negative effects in manufacturing settings.<sup>[7]</sup>

## UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2

The groundwork for developing effective cross-cultural relations is to understand cultural differences. The information about different communication patterns between men and women presented in Chapter 4 is relevant here. Here we discuss six aspects of understanding cultural differences: (1) cultural sensitivity including political correctness, (2) cultural intelligence, (3) respect for all workers, (4) cultural fluency, (5) dimensions of differences in cultural dimensions, and (6) avoidance of cultural bloopers. To work smoothly with people from other cultures, it is important to become competent in all six areas.

### Cultural Sensitivity and Political Correctness

In order to relate well to someone from a foreign country, a person must be alert to possible cultural differences. When working in another country, a person must be willing to acquire knowledge about local customs and learn how to speak the native language at least passably. When working or socializing with people from different cultures, even from his or her own country, the person must be patient, adaptable, flexible, and willing to listen and learn. The characteristics just mentioned are part of cultural sensitivity, an awareness of and willingness to investigate the reasons why individuals of another culture act as they do.<sup>[8]</sup> A person with cultural sensitivity will recognize certain nuances in customs that will help build better relationships from cultural backgrounds other than his or her own.

Another aspect of cultural sensitivity is **political correctness**—being careful not to offend or slight anyone, and being extra civil and respectful.<sup>[9]</sup> An effective use of political correctness would be to say, “We need a ladder in our department because we have workers of different heights who need access to the top shelves.” It would be politically incorrect to say, “We need ladders because we have some short workers who cannot reach the top shelves.” Carried too far, political correctness can push a person in the direction of being too bland and imprecise in language. The ultra-politically person for example will almost never mention a person’s race, sex, ethnicity, or health status when referring to another worker. For example, the ultra-politically person would not make a statement like, “Sadie is German, so she was a natural to be our liaison with the manufacturing group.” (The cultural stereotype here is that Germans are quite interested in manufacturing technology and think precisely.)

Ultra-political correctness also involves using supposedly correct terms to describe people even if a given individual rejects the label. For example, many black people are correctly referred to as “black” rather than “African American” because they might be citizens of Africa, Haiti, England, etc. Also, the same people do not consider themselves to be African American.

Empathy is a major trait and skill that facilitates cultural sensitivity and political correctness. You have to place yourself in the other person’s perspective, and ask yourself questions like, “How would I like it if somebody snarled and said an ugly word when he or she looked at my favorite food.” Kim Oliver and Sylvester Baugh offer this insight into developing the type of empathy helpful in building cross-cultural relations in the workplace, “We want to try to develop an understanding for the majority about what it might be like to be the minority, and help the minority understand what it’s like to be the majority.”<sup>[10]</sup>

### Cultural Intelligence

An advanced aspect of cultural sensitivity is to be able to fit in comfortably with people of another culture by observing the subtle cues they give about how a person should act in their presence. **Cultural intelligence (CQ)** is an outsider’s ability to interpret someone’s

#### cultural sensitivity

An awareness of and willingness to investigate the reasons why people of another culture act as they do.

#### cultural intelligence (CQ)

An outsider’s ability to interpret someone’s unfamiliar and ambiguous behavior the same way that person’s compatriots would.

unfamiliar and ambiguous behavior the same way that person's compatriots would.<sup>[11]</sup> With high cultural intelligence, a person would be able to figure out what behavior would be true of all people and all groups, such as rapid shaking of a clenched fist to communicate anger. Also, the person with high cultural intelligence could figure out what is peculiar to this group, and those aspects of behavior that are neither universal nor peculiar to the group. These ideas are so abstract that an example will help clarify.

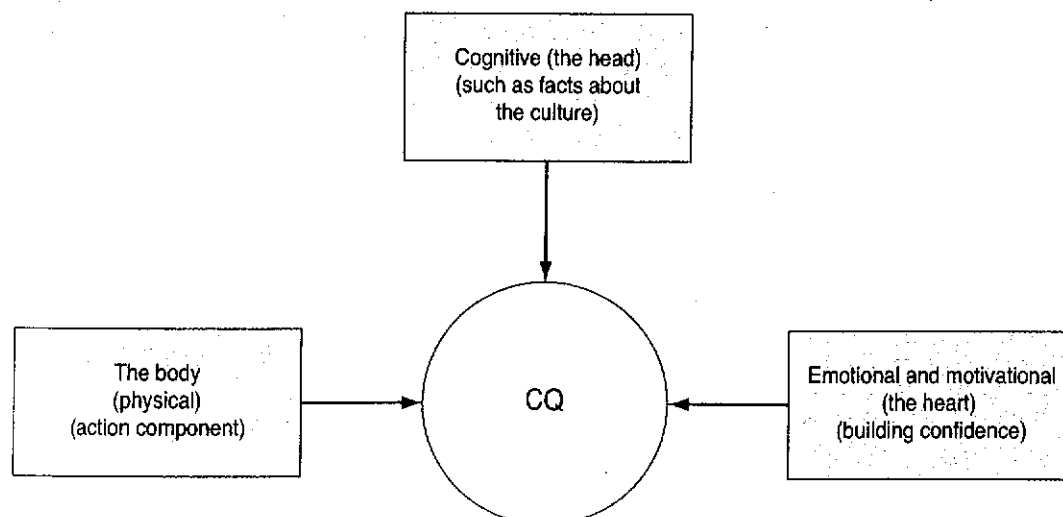
*An American expatriate manager served on a design team that included two German engineers. As other team members floated their ideas, the engineers condemned them as incomplete or underdeveloped. The manager concluded that the Germans in general are rude and aggressive.*

*With average cultural intelligence, the American would have realized he was mistakenly equating the merit of an idea with the merit of the person presenting it. The Germans, however, were able to make a sharp distinction between the two. A manager with more advanced cultural intelligence might have tried to figure out how much of the two Germans' behavior was typically German and how much was explained by the fact that they were engineers.*

Similar to emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence encompasses several aspects of behavior. The three sources of cultural intelligence relate to the cognitive, emotional/motivational, and the physical, shown in Figure 8-2, and explained as follows:<sup>[12]</sup>

1. **Cognitive (the Head).** The cognitive part of CQ refers to what a person knows and how he or she can acquire new knowledge. Here you acquire facts about people from another culture such as their passion for football (soccer in North America), their business practices, and their promptness in paying bills. Another aspect of this source of cultural intelligence is figuring out how you can learn more about the other culture.
2. **Emotional/Motivational (the Heart).** The emotional/motivational aspect of CQ refers to energizing one's actions and building personal confidence. You need both confidence and motivation to adapt to another culture. A man on a business trip to Africa might say to himself, "When I greet a work associate in a restaurant, can I really pull off kissing him on both cheeks. What if he thinks I'm weird?" With strong motivation, the same person might say, "I'll give it a try. I kind of greet my grandfather the same way back in the United States."
3. **The Body (Physical).** The body aspect of CQ is the action component. The body is the element for translating intentions into actions and desires. Kissing the same-sex African work associates on both cheeks is the *physical* aspect just mentioned. We often have an idea of what we should do, but implementation is not so easy. You might know, for example, that when entering an Asian person's home you should

**FIGURE 8-2 The Components of Cultural Intelligence**







take off your shoes, yet you might not actually remove them—thereby offending your Asian work (or personal life) associate.

To practice high cultural intelligence, the mind, heart, and body have to work together. You need to figure out how to act with people from another culture, you need motivation and confidence to change, and you have to translate your knowledge and motivation into action. So when you are on a business trip to London, go ahead and hold your fork in your left hand!

## Respect for All Workers and Cultures

An effective strategy for achieving cross-cultural understanding is to simply respect all others in the workplace, including their cultures. Respecting people from other cultures works equally well in personal life. An example would be not joking at the fact that an acquaintance of yours puts his head on the floor to pray.

An important component of respect is to believe that although another person's culture is different from yours, it is equally good. Respect comes from valuing differences. Respecting other people's customs can translate into specific attitudes, such as respecting one coworker for wearing a yarmulke on Friday or another for wearing African clothing to celebrate Kwanzaa. Another way of being respectful would be to listen carefully to the opinion of a senior worker who says the company should never have converted to voicemail and a voice recognition system in place of assistants answering the phone (even though you disagree).

An aspect of respecting all workers that achieves current attention is the importance of respecting the rights of majorities, particularly white males. Many of these men want to be involved in—not excluded from—bringing about cultural diversity in organizations. For example, they might want to mentor minority group members.

Company policies that encourage respect for the rights of others are likely to create a positive influence on tolerance throughout the firm. An example is that many employers have taken steps to recognize and affirm the existence of gay and lesbian workers. Among these steps are publishing formal statements of nondiscrimination, and the inclusion of issues about sexual orientation in diversity training programs. A major policy change has been to grant same-sex couples the same benefits granted to opposite-sex couples.

Another formal (official) way of demonstrating respect for all workers is to provide for the presence of employee network (or affinity) groups. Such a group is composed of employees throughout the company who affiliate on the basis of group characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or physical ability status. The network group provides members of the same demographic or cultural group and avenue for sharing ideas with management. Employee network groups at McDonald's, for example, include the African-American Council, the Hispanic Employee Network, the Asian Employee Network, and the Gays, Lesbians and Allies at McDonald's.<sup>[13]</sup>

A study of 537 gay and lesbian employees working for a variety of organizations demonstrated that the more prevalent policies dealing with respect, the more equitably sexual minorities are likely to be treated at work. More equitable treatment, in turn, was associated with gays and lesbians being more satisfied, and less likely to leave the firm.<sup>[14]</sup>

## BACK TO THE OPENING CASE

Management at Walgreens continues to be successful in building a culturally diverse workforce that includes persons with physical disabilities, as well as those with developmental (intellectual) disabilities. Management's most important approach to accomplishing this end is to show respect for all workers by treating them equally. Employees with good ideas are listened to, and both majority group members and minority group members

who appear to have leadership skill have an equal shot at being part of the management training program. Should you visit a neighborhood Walgreens, you might notice that the store associates as well as the pharmacists are culturally diverse.



**Developing Cultural Sensitivity**

Carefully observe products and services such as tennis shoes, notebooks, bicycles, and banking services, and attempt to find out how they are marketed and sold in other countries. For a convenient reference source, interview foreign students and foreigners outside class about these products and services. Your digging for information might uncover such nuggets as the following:

- In India, cricket champions are celebrities comparable to U.S. basketball stars who endorse soft drinks like Coca-Cola and Pepsi.

- In Hungary, peanut butter is considered a luxury food item.
- In some countries in warm climates, meat is freshly killed and hung on hooks for sale—without refrigeration or freezing.

After conducting these product and service interviews, arrive at some kind of interpretation or conclusion. Share your insights with other class members.

Source: "Teaching International Business," *Keying In*, January 1999, p. 1. National Business Education Association. Reprinted with permission.

**Cultural Fluency**

A high-level goal in understanding cultural differences is to achieve **cultural fluency**, the ability to conduct business in a diverse, international environment.<sup>[15]</sup> Achieving cultural fluency includes a variety of skills, such as relating well to people from different cultures and knowing a second language. Cultural fluency also includes knowledge of the international business environment, such as how the exchange rate can affect profits. Having high cultural intelligence would contribute to cultural fluency because such intelligence makes it easier to work well with people from other cultures. If you are culturally fluent, you will also find it easier to make friends (real and virtual) from other cultures.

Skill-Building Exercise 8-1 is a warm-up activity for achieving cultural sensitivity, and perhaps respect for all workers.

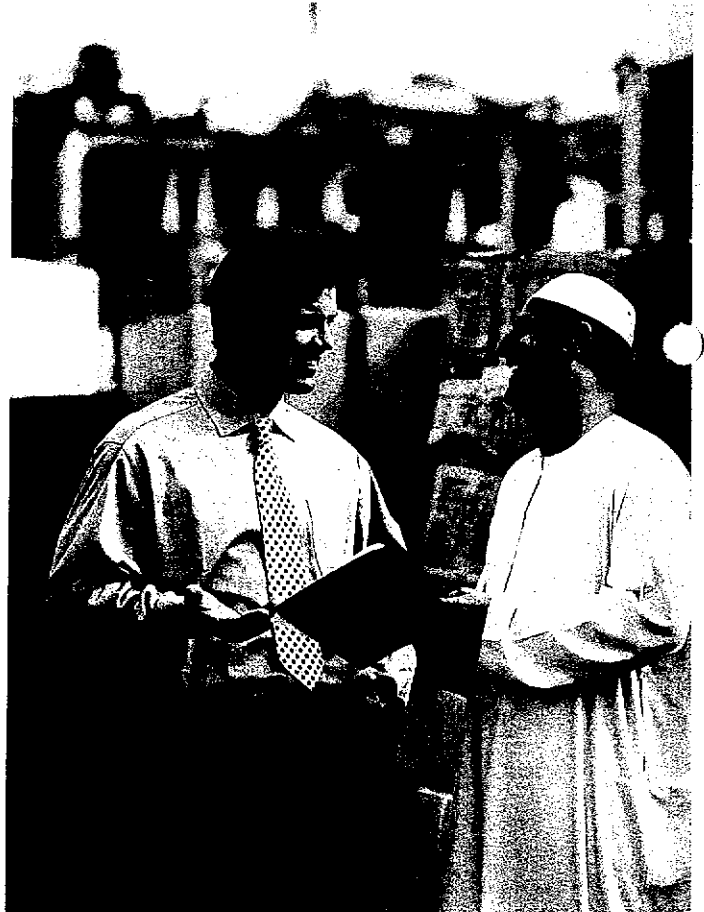
**cultural fluency**

The ability to conduct business in a diverse, international environment.

**Dimensions of Differences in Cultural Values**

One way to understand how national cultures differ is to examine their values or cultural dimensions. The formulation presented here is based on the worldwide research in 62 societal cultures and builds on previous analyses of cultural dimensions.<sup>[16]</sup> The cultural dimensions presented here are those most directly related to interpersonal skills. Keep in mind that these cultural dimensions are stereotypes that apply to a representative person from a particular culture, and are not meant to insult anybody. These cultural dimensions are differences between national societies and may not be representative of a given individual. As with gender stereotypes in communication, individual differences are substantial. For example, any Americans are not assertive, and many French are willing to work 70 hours per week.

1. **Performance orientation** is the degree to which a society encourages, or should encourage, and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence. Countries high on this dimension are the United States and Singapore, whereas those low on this dimension are Russia and Greece.
2. **Assertiveness** is the degree to which individuals are (and should be) assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with one another. Countries scoring high on this dimension are the United States and Austria, whereas those low on this dimension are Sweden and New Zealand. Assertive people enjoy competition in business, in contrast to less assertive cultural groups who prefer harmony, loyalty, and solidarity.



3. **Time orientation** is the importance nations and individuals attach to time. People with an urgent time orientation perceive time as a scarce resource and tend to be impatient. People with a casual time orientation view time as an unlimited and unending resource and tend to be patient. Americans are noted for their urgent time orientation. They frequently impose deadlines and are eager to get started doing business. Asians, Mexicans, and Middle Easterners, in contrast, are patient negotiators.
4. **Humane orientation** is the degree to which a society encourages and rewards, and should encourage and reward, individuals for being fair, altruistic, caring, and kind toward others. Egypt and Malaysia rank high on this cultural dimension, and France and Germany rank low.
5. **In-group collectivism** is the degree to which individuals express, and should express, pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations and families. Asian societies emphasize collectivism, as do Egypt and Russia. One consequence of collectivism is taking pride in family members and the organizations that employ them.
6. **Gender egalitarianism** is the degree to which a culture minimizes, and should minimize, gender inequality. European countries emphasize gender egalitarianism, and so do the United States and Canada. South Korea is an example of a country that is low on gender egalitarianism, and is male dominated.
7. **Acceptance of power and authority** is the degree to which members of a society expect, and should expect, power to be distributed unequally. Individuals who accept power and authority expect the boss to make the major decisions. These same individuals are more formal; however, being formal toward people in positions of authority has decreased substantially throughout the world in recent years. Examples of societies that score high on acceptance of power and authority are Thailand, Brazil, France, and Japan.
8. **Work orientation** is the number of hours per week and weeks per year people expect to invest in work versus leisure, or other nonwork activities. American corporate professionals typically work about 55 hours per week, take 45-minute lunch breaks, and two weeks of vacation. Americans tend to have a stronger work orientation than Europeans but a weaker one than Asians. U.S. employees average 1,804 hours of work per year, compared with 1,407 for Norwegian workers and 1,564 for the French. Workers in seven Asian countries including South Korea, Bangladesh, and China worked 2,200 hours per year.<sup>[17]</sup>
9. **Social support seeking** is the degree to which people seek out others to help them with difficult problems through such means as listening, offering sympathy, and giving advice. Asians and Asian Americans are more reluctant to explicitly request support from close others than are European Americans. The hesitancy comes about because the Asians and Asian Americans are more concerned about negative relationship consequences, such as disrupting group harmony or receiving criticism from the other person. Another possible reason for the hesitancy is that Asians and Asian Americans expect social support without having to ask.<sup>[18]</sup>

How might someone use information about cultural differences to improve his or her interpersonal relations on the job? A starting point would be to recognize that a person's national values might influence his or her behavior. Assume that you wanted to establish a good working relationship with a person from a high humane orientation culture. An effective starting point would be to emphasize care and concern when communicating with the individual.

*Attitudes toward acceptance of power and authority* can make a difference in establishing working relationships. A worker who values deference to age, gender, or title might shy away from offering suggestions to an elder or manager to avoid appearing disrespectful. This worker would need considerable encouragement to collaborate in decision making.<sup>[19]</sup> *Time-orientation* may create a conflict if you are committed to

### Charting Your Cultural Dimension Profile

**Directions:** For each of the nine cultural dimensions, circle the number that most accurately fits your standing on the dimension. For example, if you perceive yourself to be "highly humane," circle 6 on the fourth dimension (item 4).

1. High performance orientation						Low performance orientation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Low assertiveness						High assertiveness
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Urgent time orientation						Casual time orientation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. High humane orientation						Low humane orientation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. In-group collectivism						In-group individualism
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. High gender egalitarianism						Low gender egalitarianism
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. High acceptance of power and authority						Low acceptance of power and authority
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Work orientation						Leisure orientation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Social support seeking						Social support avoidance
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Scoring and Interpretation:** After circling one number for each dimension, use a pen or pencil to connect the circles, thereby giving yourself a profile of cultural values. Do not be concerned if your line cuts through the names of the dimensions. Compare your profile to others in the class. Should time allow, develop a class profile by computing the class average for each of the nine points and then connecting the points.

making deadlines and a team member has a laid-back attitude toward time. You might explain that although you respect his attitudes toward time, the company insists on getting the project completed on time.

Self-Assessment Quiz 8-2 will help you think about how cultural dimensions might be influencing your interpersonal relations in the workplace.

### Cultural Bloopers

An effective way of being culturally sensitive is to minimize actions that are likely to offend people from another culture based on their values. Cultural bloopers are most likely to take place when you are visiting another country. The same bloopers, however, can also be committed with people from a different culture within your own country. To avoid these bloopers, you must carefully observe persons from another culture. Studying another culture through reading is also helpful.

E-commerce and other forms of Internet communication have created new opportunities for creating cultural bloopers. The Web site developers and workers responsible for adding content must have good cross-cultural literacy, including an awareness of how the information might be misinterpreted.

- Numerical date formats can be readily misinterpreted. To an American, 4/9/13 would be interpreted as April 9, 2013 (or 1913!). However, many Europeans would interpret the same numerical expression as September 4, 2013.
- Colors on Web sites must be chosen carefully. For example, in some cultures purple is the color of royalty, whereas in Brazil purple is associated with death.

- Be careful of metaphors that may not make sense to a person for whom your language is a second language. Examples include “We’ve encountered an ethical meltdown” and “Our biggest competitor is over the hill.”

English has become the language of business and science throughout the world, yet communicating in a customer’s native tongue has its advantages. Being able to communicate your message directly in your customer’s mother tongue provides a competitive advantage. Bilingualism also has career implications. Some telemarketing, banking, engineering, and financial service companies are searching for workers with bilingual skills. The two major contributing factors are the growing immigrant population in the United States, and because companies are engaged more in international business.<sup>[20]</sup>

Furthermore, according to the research firm International Data Corporation (IDC), consumers are four times more likely to purchase a product online if the Web site is in their preferred language.<sup>[21]</sup> The translator, of course, must have good knowledge of the subtleties of the language to avoid a blooper. An English-to-French translator used the verb *baiser* instead of *baisser* to describe a program of lowering prices. *Baisser* is the French verb “to lower,” whereas *baiser* is the verb “to kiss.” Worse, in slang *baiser* is a verb that refers to having intimate physical relationships!

Keep two key facts in mind when attempting to avoid cultural mistakes. One is that members of any cultural group show individual differences. What one member of the group might regard as an insensitive act, another might welcome. Recognize also that one or two cultural mistakes will not peg you permanently as a boor. Skill-Building Exercise 8-2 will help you minimize certain cultural bloopers.

## OVERCOMING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

We have already discussed the importance of overcoming communication barriers in Chapter 4. Cultural differences create additional barriers. Here are some guidelines for overcoming cross-cultural communication barriers.

1. **Be sensitive to the fact that cross-cultural communication barriers exist.** If you are aware of these potential barriers, you will be ready to deal with them. When you are dealing with a person in the workplace with a different cultural background than yours, solicit feedback in order to minimize cross-cultural barriers to communication. Being aware of these potential barriers will help you develop cultural sensitivity.
2. **Show respect for all workers.** The same behavior that promotes good cross-cultural relations in general helps overcome communication barriers. A widely used comment that implies disrespect is to say to another person from another culture, “You have a funny accent.” Should you be transposed to that person’s culture, you, too, might have a “funny accent.”
3. **Use straightforward language and speak slowly and clearly.** When working with people who do not speak your language fluently, speak in an easy-to-understand manner. Minimize the use of idioms and analogies specific to your language. A computer analyst from Greece left confused after a discussion about a software problem with her manager. The manager said, “Let’s talk about this another time because *I can’t seem to get to first base with you.*” (The manager was referring to the fact that the conversation was headed nowhere because he couldn’t come to an agreement with the analyst.) The computer analyst did not ask for clarification because she did not want to appear uninformed.
4. **Observe cultural differences in etiquette.** Violating rules of etiquette without explanation can erect immediate communication barriers. A major rule of etiquette in many countries is that people address superiors by their last name unless they have worked together for a long time. Or, the superior might encourage being on a first-name basis with him or her. Be aware that an increasing number of cultures are moving toward addressing each other and customers by using the first name only. Yet, it is best to error on the side of formality.

“The Fortune 100 companies I deal with are asking more frequently for managers who speak Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese and other languages. And when it’s not mandatory for some jobs, being bilingual is icing on the cake.”

—Dayna Romanick, a national recruiter for Manpower Professional<sup>[22]</sup>

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3

## SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 8-2

### Cultural Mistakes to Avoid with Selected Cultural Groups

#### EUROPE

- Great Britain*
- Asking personal questions. The British protect their privacy.
  - Thinking that a businessperson from England is unenthusiastic when he or she says, "Not bad at all." English people understate their positive emotion.
  - Gossiping about royalty.
- France*
- Expecting to complete work during the French two-hour lunch.
  - Attempting to conduct significant business during August—*les vacances* (vacation time).
  - Greeting a French person for the first time and not using a title such as "sir," or "madam," or "miss" (*monsieur, madame, or mademoiselle*).
- Italy*
- Eating too much pasta, as it is not the main course.
  - Handing out business cards freely. Italians use them infrequently.
- Spain*
- Expecting punctuality. Your appointments will usually arrive 20 to 30 minutes late.
  - Making the American sign for "okay" with your thumb and forefinger. In Spain (and many other countries) this is vulgar.
- Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden, Norway)*
- Being overly rank conscious. Scandinavians pay relatively little attention to a person's rank in the hierarchy.

#### ASIA

- All Asian countries*
- Pressuring an Asian job applicant or employee to brag about his or her accomplishments. Asians feel self-conscious when boasting about individual accomplishments; they prefer to let the record speak for itself. In addition, they prefer to talk about group rather than individual accomplishment.
- Japan*
- Shaking hands or hugging Japanese (as well as other Asians) in public. Japanese consider these practices to be offensive.
  - Not interpreting "We'll consider it" as a "no" when spoken by a Japanese businessperson. Japanese negotiators mean "no" when they say "We'll consider it."

#### China

#### Korea

#### India

#### Thailand

#### MEXICO AND LATIN AMERICA

#### Mexico

#### Brazil

#### Most Latin American countries

- Not giving small gifts to Japanese when conducting business. Japanese are offended by not receiving these gifts.
- Giving your business card to a Japanese businessperson more than once. Japanese prefer to give and receive business cards only once.
- Using black borders on stationery and business cards, because black is associated with death.
- Giving small gifts to Chinese when conducting business. Chinese are offended by these gifts.
- Making cold calls on Chinese business executives. An appropriate introduction is required for a first-time meeting with a Chinese official.
- Saying no. Koreans feel it is important to have visitors leave with good feelings.
- Telling Indians you prefer not to eat with your hands. If the Indians are not using cutlery when eating, they expect you to do likewise.
- It is considered extremely rude to point the soles of your shoes at anyone. (It's not too cool in other countries also.)

- Flying into a Mexican city in the morning and expecting to close a deal by lunch. Mexicans build business relationships slowly.
- Attempting to impress Brazilians by speaking a few words of Spanish. Portuguese is the official language of Brazil.
- Wearing elegant and expensive jewelry during a business meeting. Latin Americans think people should appear more conservative during a business meeting.

**Note:** A cultural mistake for Americans to avoid when conducting business in most countries outside the United States and Canada is to insist on getting down to business quickly. North Americans in small towns also like to build a relationship before getting down to business. The preceding suggestions will lead to cross-cultural skill development if practiced in the right setting. During the next 30 days, look for an opportunity to relate to a person from another culture in the way described in these suggestions. Observe the reaction of the other person for feedback on your cross-cultural effectiveness.

5. Be sensitive to differences in nonverbal communication. Stay alert to the possibility that a person from another culture may misinterpret your nonverbal signal. Hand signals of various types, such as a thumb up or the okay sign to indicate acceptance, are the most liable to misinterpretation. Another key area of cross-cultural differences in nonverbal communication is the handshake. In some cultures, a woman is expected to extend her hand first to shake with a man. In other cultures, people hug, embrace, or bow instead of shaking hands.<sup>[23]</sup> (With good cultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence, you can figure out what to do when meeting another person.)

Behavioral mirroring, as described in Chapter 4, is another example of how the effectiveness of nonverbal behavior might be influenced the other person's culture. Three experiments with bank managers required Anglos and Latinos to interact with an interviewer who was trained to mirror the behavior of the interviewee. It was found that Latino interviewees rated interviewers higher who used behavioral mirroring. Also, the Latinos experienced more anxiety when the interviewer did not mirror their behavior.<sup>[24]</sup> The intercultural explanation for these findings is that Latians, as a group, value nonverbal behavior more than do Anglos. The implication of the experiment for cross-cultural communication is to attempt to determine if you are making appropriate use of nonverbal communication techniques when interacting with a person from another culture.

6. **Do not be diverted by style, accent, grammar, or personal appearance.** Although these superficial factors are all related to business success, they are difficult to interpret when judging a person from another culture. It is therefore better to judge the merits of the statement or behavior.<sup>[25]</sup> A brilliant individual from another culture may still be learning your language and thus make basic mistakes in speaking your language. Also, he or she might not yet have developed a sensitivity to dress style in your culture.
7. **Be attentive to individual differences in appearance.** A major intercultural insult is to confuse the identity of people because they are members of the same race or ethnic group. An older economics professor reared in China and teaching in the United States had difficulty communicating with students because he was unable to learn their names. The professor's defense was "So many of these Americans look alike to me." Research suggests that people have difficulty seeing individual differences among people of another race because they code race first, such as thinking "He has the nose of an African American." However, people can learn to search for more distinguishing features, such as a dimple or eye color.<sup>[26]</sup> In this way, individual differences are recognized.
8. **Pronounce correctly the names of people you interact with from other countries.** Communication is much smoother when you correctly pronounce the name of another person. For many Americans, this is a challenging task because they are accustomed to names with one or two syllables that are easy to pronounce, such as Bob or Ann. A trouble spot for many people whose only language is English is that "H" and "J" might be silent in another language.<sup>[27]</sup> Suppose one of your work or personal associates has the first name "Hyuntak." After listening to his name for the first time, develop a phonetic spelling that will help you pronounce the name in the future. (How about "High-oon-tack"?)

## TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONS

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4

Many training programs have been developed to improve cross-cultural relations and to help workers value diversity. All of the information presented so far in this chapter is likely to be included in such programs. In this section, we describe programs for improving cross-cultural relations, including cultural training, cultural intelligence training, language training, diversity training, and cross-cultural mentoring.

### Cultural Training

For many years, companies and government agencies have prepared their workers for overseas assignments. The method most frequently chosen is **cultural training**, a set of learning experiences designed to help employees understand the customs, traditions, and beliefs of another culture. In today's diverse business environment and international marketplace, learning about individuals raised in different cultural backgrounds has become more important. Many industries therefore train employees in cross-cultural relations.

#### cultural training

A set of learning experiences designed to help employees understand the customs, traditions, and beliefs of another culture.

## Mexican Call Center Workers Learn to Deal Effectively with Americans

In a high-rise office building, one dozen young Mexicans are studying the customs of a country most of them have never visited. One by one, the students present their conclusions about the United States. "Americans think Mexicans eat mostly tacos and drink Margaritas everyday. They give big tips if they like you. Unless they are Latino-Americans, they probably speak only one language," says Maria. "People are self-centered. The average American uses a credit card even to pay for lunch in a restaurant," says Hugo.

The Mexicans, who range in age from 20 to 29, have been hired to take calls from confused or angry Americans who are having a functioning problem with their prepaid cell phone. The problem could be technical, or relating to customer service problem such as their prepaid minutes not being accurately recorded or their phone being shut down. The cell phone company works on a slim profit margin, so it cannot afford to maintain a tech support and customer service center in the United States. The company offers a Web site for providing technical support and customer service, yet many customers feel the need to interact with a live person.

To communicate with the Americans, the Mexican workers must communicate in their second language but a culture that is foreign. "We're not saying that Mexico is better or the United States is better," says their trainer, Tanya. "We just want our tech support staff to develop cultural awareness so there is better rapport when someone calls in for help."

Call centers for inexpensive cell phone service took root in Mexico when the demand for mobile phones skyrocketed in the mid-2000s, yet many people did not have good enough credit to purchase traditional cell phone service. Large prepaid cell phone providers like Tracfone wanted to provide the best tech support they could yet still remain profitable.

At first, training at the tech support centers and customer service centers was simple. The centers gave employees names that were easy for Americans to understand such as Pedro, Suzie, Maria, and Bob in cases where they had names difficult for Americans to pronounce. The new hires were instructed to watch American television shows to get an idea of American pop culture. In this way, if there was a waiting period during the help session, they could make a few minutes of small talk.

Shortly after the support center was established, problems in dealing with the Americans began to surface. Although the customers were paying the minimum price possible for cell phone service, they were often quite demanding and aggressive. One man swore at the customer service rep because he couldn't figure out how to use his phone to make a call to Ontario, Canada. Roberta, the recipient of the outrage, attempted to explain that instructions on how to telephone Canada from the United States are presented on page 8 of the manual that comes with the phone. A woman kept calling another rep a

"stupid fool" because the rep couldn't understand her problem having to do with not being credited for enough minutes.

The Mexican support staff felt uncomfortable in being too firm with belligerent customers. Instead of being assertive about the company's position on a particular problem, the reps tended to be too conciliatory, often blaming the company for the problem. However, being conciliatory did not result in customers being totally satisfied. Problems were often left unresolved. As a result, the prepaid cell phone service company noticed that renewal rates were slipping. A renewal in this sense is a customer purchasing more minutes at a store or through the company Web site.

The cell phone company hired a firm that offers cultural training to help the Mexican call center workers deal more effectively with upset American customers. (Tanya was the trainer assigned to the account.) The workers were given careful instructions on how to express sympathy, using phrases such as "I am sorry that you are having this problem. I know that your phone is important to you." When a customer is explosively angry, the call center workers were coached on how to let the customer finish the outburst, and then say, "I hear that you are upset. But let us see how we can get this problem solved."

New hires as well as experienced employees were also taught to defend the company when the company is right. For example, to fix a technical problem such as the voicemail feature not working, the caller usually has to key in a long series of numbers. A frustrated customer often has difficulty with such a task. To deal with the frustration, the call center worker is taught to say something like, "Please try entering the numbers again slowly and carefully." If the customer enters the sequence of numbers incorrectly again, the worker is coached on how to be assertive, such as "This method does work. If you want to fix your phone, you have to do it carefully."

Many customer complaints that get back to the company deal with not being able to understand the English spoken by the call center workers. So the Mexican workers are coached on how to speak key English words with a general American accent. For example, instead of saying "She-ca-go" for "Chicago," the worker is taught to say "Sha-ca-go." And the workers are coached to pronounce "nine" as "nyne" instead of "neen."

### Questions

1. What do you see as a major cultural difference between Mexicans and Americans that make the call center job so challenging for Mexicans?
2. Some of the call center representatives in Mexico are instructed to identify themselves as students in Kansas City, in addition to giving them American first names. What is your take on the ethics of these disguises?

Source: Case history collected from human resource specialist at the mobile phone company in question.

Cultural training is also important for helping people of one culture understand their customers from another culture in particular, such as Chinese people learning to deal more effectively with their American customers. For example, in one training program Chinese businesspeople are taught how to sprinkle their e-mail with English phrases like "How are you?" "It was great to hear from you," and "Can we work together?"<sup>[28]</sup>

The Job-Oriented Interpersonal Skills in Action Box describes how cultural training can improve the effectiveness of establishing call centers overseas.

To practice improving your cross-cultural relations, do Skill-Building Exercise 8-3.



Role-Play

Ritu, a call center representative in India, whose specialty is helping customers with cell phone problems. Another student plays the role of Todd, an irate American. His problem is that he cannot get his camera-equipped cell phone to transmit his photos over e-mail. He is scheduled to attend a party in two hours, and wants to take loads of photos with his cell phone. Todd is impatient, and in the eyes of Ritu,

somewhat overbearing. Ritu is good natured and pleasant, but feels she must help Todd solve his problem without being bullied by him. Because Ritu is instructed to spend the minimum time necessary to resolve the problem, she spends about five minutes on this problem.

The observers should make note of how well Ritu has made the necessary cross-cultural adaptations.

### Cultural Intelligence Training

A new development in assisting people work more effectively with workers in other cultures is *cultural intelligence training*, a program based on the principles of cultural intelligence described earlier in this chapter. A key part of the training is to learn the three contributors to CQ—head, heart, and body. Instead of learning a few simple guidelines for working effectively with people from another culture, the trainee is taught strategies for sizing up the environment to determine which course of action is best. The culturally intelligent overseas worker would learn how to determine how much humor to interject into meetings, what kind of handshake is most appropriate, and so forth. The following excerpt will give you a feel for what is involved in cultural intelligence training:

*A Canadian manager is attempting to interpret a "Thai smile." First, she needs to observe the various cues provided in addition to the smile gesture itself (e.g., other facial or bodily gestures, significance of others who may be in proximity, the source of the original smile gesture) and to assemble them into a meaningful whole and make sense of what is really experienced by the Thai employee. Second, she must have the requisite motivation (directed effort and self-confidence) to persist in the face of confusion, challenge, or apparently mixed signals. Third, she must choose, generate, and execute the right actions to respond appropriately.*

*If any of these elements is deficient, she is likely to be ineffective in dealing with the Thai employee. A high CQ manager has the capability with all three facets as they action in unison.<sup>[29]</sup>*

As the example illustrates, to be culturally intelligent you need to apply cognitive skills, have the right motivation, and then put your knowledge and confidence into action. Armed with such skills you would know, for example, whether to greet a Mexican worker on a business trip to Texas with a handshake, a hug, or a kiss on both cheeks.

### Language Training

Learning a foreign language is often part of cultural training, yet it can also be a separate activity. Knowledge of a second language is important because it builds better connections with people from other cultures than does relying on a translator. Building connections with people is still important even if English has become the international language of business. Many workers, aside from international business specialists, also choose to develop skills in a target language. Speaking another language can help build rapport with customers and employees who speak that language. As mentioned earlier, it is easier to sell to customers when using their native language.

Almost all language training has elements similar to taking a course in another language or self-study. Companies invest heavily in helping employees learn a target language because it facilitates conducting business in other countries. For this reason, companies

## SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 8-4

### Using the Internet to Help Develop Foreign Language Skills

A useful way of developing skills in another language, and learning more about another culture, is to create a computer "bookmark," "favorite," or front page written in your target language. In this way, each time you go to the Internet on your own computer, your cover page will contain fresh information in the language you want to develop.

Enter a search word such as "Italian newspaper" or "Spanish language newspaper" in the search probe. After you find a suitable choice, enter the edit function for "Favorites" or "Bookmarks" and insert that newspaper as your front page. For example, imagine that French is your target language and culture. The search engine

might have brought you to the site <http://www.france2.fr>. This Web site keeps you abreast of French and international news, sports, and cultural events—written in French. Every time you access the Internet, you can spend five minutes on your second language, thereby becoming multicultural. Another advantage is that your foreign-language site is likely to present brief videos, giving you an opportunity to hear your target language. You can save a lot of travel costs and time using the Internet to help you become multicultural, including developing proficiency in another language. You might be able to find an app for your smart phone for learning another language by linking to an appropriate Web site.

that offer language training and translation services are currently experiencing a boom. Medical specialists, police officers, and firefighters also find second language skills to be quite helpful because clients under stress, such as an injured person, are likely to revert to their native tongue. Learning a second language is particularly important when many of your customers and employees do not speak your country's official language. For example, Casa Rio, in San Antonio, Texas, found that its English-speaking managers were unable to communicate with Spanish-speaking employees regarding benefits and other issues.<sup>[30]</sup>

Skill-Building Exercise 8-4 presents a low-cost, pleasant method of enhancing your foreign language and cross-cultural skills.

As with any other skill training, investments in language training can pay off only if the trainee is willing to work hard at developing the new skill outside the training sessions. Allowing even 10 days to pass without practicing your target language will result in a sharp decline in your ability to use that language.

### Diversity Training

The general purpose of cultural training is to help workers understand people from other cultures. Understanding can lead to dealing more effectively with them as work associates or customers. Diversity training has a slightly different purpose. It attempts to bring about workplace harmony by teaching people how to get along better with diverse work associates. Quite often the program is aimed at minimizing open expressions of racism and sexism. In recent years, diversity training has acquired the additional goal of accepting all dimensions of diversity based on the belief that enhanced business performance will result. For example, learning how to relate effectively to diverse customers can increase sales.<sup>[31]</sup>

**Forms of Diversity Training.** Diversity training takes a number of forms. Nevertheless, all center on increasing awareness of and empathy for people who are different in some noticeable way from oneself. Training sessions in appreciating cultural diversity focus on the ways that men and women or people of different races reflect different values, attitudes, and cultural backgrounds. These sessions can vary from several hours to several days. Training sessions can also be held over a long period of time. Sometimes the program is confrontational, sometimes not.

An essential part of relating more effectively to diverse groups is to empathize with their points of view. To help training participants develop empathy, representatives of various groups explain their feelings related to workplace issues, including how they have felt different in a way that made them feel uncomfortable. A representative segment of a training program designed to enhance empathy took the following format. A minority group member was seated at the middle of a circle. First, the coworkers listened to a Vietnamese woman explaining how she felt excluded from the in-group composed of whites and

#### diversity training

Training that attempts to bring about workplace harmony by teaching people how to get along better with diverse work associates.

## SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE 8-5

### Developing Empathy for Differences

Class members come up to the front of the room one by one and give a brief presentation (perhaps even three minutes) of any way in which they have been perceived as different, and how they felt about this perception. Sometimes this exercise is referred to as "When I Felt Different." The difference refers to feeling different from the majority. The difference can be of any kind, relating to

characteristics such as ethnicity, race, choice of major, physical appearance, height, weight, hair color, or body piercing. After each member of the class (perhaps even the instructor) has presented, class members discuss what they learned from the exercise. It is also important to discuss how this exercise can improve relationships on the job.

African Americans in her department. "I feel like you just tolerate me. You do not make me feel that I am somebody important." The next person to sit in the middle of the circle was a Muslim. He complained about people wishing him Merry Christmas. "I would much prefer that my coworkers stop to think that I do not celebrate Christian holidays. I respect your religion, but it is not my religion."

Another form of diversity training is cross-generational diversity, or relating effectively to workers much older or younger than you. Cross-generational awareness training is one component in the corporate training program. The premise behind the program is that after acquiring cognitive knowledge, engaging in dialogue, and role-playing, employees will learn to accept people's differences, some of which are age driven. For example, younger employees might feel less guilty than would seniors when calling in sick just to have a day's vacation. Another part of cross-generational training would be to help older and younger generations appreciate their different preferences in communication. An example would be sending e-mails versus text messages for disseminating brief bits of information.

**Concerns about Diversity Training.** Diversity training has frequently improved cross-cultural relationships in the workplace. Yet such programs can also create ill will and waste time. One problem is that participants are sometimes encouraged to be too confrontational and express too much hostility. Companies have found that when employees are too blunt during these sessions, it may be difficult to patch up interpersonal relations in the work group later on.

Another potential negative consequence of diversity training is that it sometimes results in perpetuating stereotypes about groups, such as people from Latin America not placing much value on promptness for meetings. A related problem is that diversity training might focus too much on differences instead of similarities.<sup>[32]</sup> For example, even if people are raised with different cultural values, they must all work harmoniously together to accomplish work. Although a worker believes that relationships are more important than profits, he or she must still produce enough to be a good investment for the company.

Skill-Building Exercise 8-5 provides you an opportunity to simulate an empathy-building experience in a diversity training program.

### Cross-Cultural and Cross-Gender Mentoring Programs

An advanced method of improving cross-cultural relations is mentoring members of targeted minority groups. The mentoring demonstrates the company's interest in enhancing cross-cultural relations, and simultaneously enhances the minority group member's opportunities for advancement. To achieve cross-culture and cross-gender mentoring, companies often assign the member of the minority group a mentor who is typically an experienced manager. For example, a 24-year-old African-American woman might be mentored by a 45-year-old Caucasian middle manager. Or, a minority group member could be the mentor, such as a 45-year-old African-American woman mentoring a 24-year-old Indian man.

As described in Chapter 12, mentors might help the person being mentored in such ways as making the right contacts, and learning useful professional skills. A challenge noted with cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring is a shortage of mentors with the right knowledge and interpersonal skills.

Sprint started a trial mentoring program with 50 employees at company headquarters. Although open to all employees, the program targeted minority groups. Soon the program had 500 participants. "The demand was overwhelming," says Tammy Edwards, director of inclusion and diversity, "who became a mentor to several employees. She adds that the mentee (person who is mentored) became so large that each mentor is paired with up to five mentees."<sup>[33]</sup>

## SELF-ASSESSMENT QUIZZES IN OVERVIEW

Self-Assessment Quiz 8-1 provides a reminder of your cross-cultural skills and attitudes mostly based on previous experiences. As you develop more exposure to cross-cultural relations, your score is likely to increase. The weight given to knowing a second language is an alert to its importance in the modern world even though English has become the official language of business and science. Self-Assessment Quiz 8-2 asks you to assess a finer point about cross-cultural relations—where you stand on nine key cross-cultural dimensions. A subtle point here is that people from the same culture often vary widely on these dimensions despite stereotypes of the average person from that culture. For example, many Mexicans have an urgent time orientation, and many Americans have a casual time orientation.

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cultural intelligence (CQ) 162

cultural fluency 165  
cultural training 170

diversity training 173

) Today's workplace has become more culturally diverse, and business has become increasingly international. As a result, to succeed one must be able to relate effectively to people from different cultural groups from within and outside one's country. The true meaning of valuing diversity is to respect and enjoy a wide range of cultural and individual differences. The diversity umbrella continues to include more people as the workforce encompasses a greater variety of people.

A diverse workforce brings potential advantages to the organization, including higher creativity, more profits because of a demographic match with customers, and overall business prosperity. Cultural diversity within groups can lead to conflict. Results suggest that relations-oriented diversity leads to high performance in service industry settings.

The groundwork for developing effective cross-cultural relations is to understand cultural differences. Six key aspects of understanding cultural differences are (1) cultural sensitivity including political correctness, (2) cultural intelligence, (3) respect for all workers and all cultures, (4) cultural fluency—the ability to conduct business in a diverse and international environment, (5) differences in cultural dimensions, and (6) avoidance of cultural bloopers. Cultural intelligence is based on cognitive, emotional/motivational, and physical (taking action) factors.

Countries differ in their national values or cultural dimensions, leading to differences in how most people from a given country will react to situations. The dimensions studied here are (1) performance orientation, (2) assertiveness, (3) time orientation, (4) human orientation, (5) in-group collectivism, (6) gender egalitarianism, (7) acceptance of power and authority, (8) work orientation, and (9) social support seeking.

An effective way of being culturally sensitive is to minimize actions that are likely to offend people from another

culture based on their values. These cultural bloopers can take place when working in another country or when dealing with foreigners in one's own country. Studying potential cultural bloopers is helpful, but recognize also that individual differences may be of significance.

Communication barriers created by cultural differences can often be overcome by the following: (1) Be sensitive to the fact that these barriers exist; (2) show respect for all workers; (3) use straightforward language and speak slowly and clearly; (4) observe cultural differences in etiquette; (5) be sensitive to differences in nonverbal communication; (6) do not be diverted by style, accent, grammar, or personal appearance; (7) be attentive to individual differences in appearance, and (8) pronounce correctly the names of people you interact with from other countries.

Cultural training is a set of learning experiences designed to help employees understand the customs, traditions, and beliefs of another culture. In today's diverse business environment and international marketplace, learning about individuals raised in different cultural backgrounds has become more important. Cultural intelligence training includes developing strategies for sizing up the environment to determine which course of action is best. Learning a foreign language is often part of cultural training, yet it can also be a separate activity.

Diversity training attempts to bring about workplace harmony by teaching people how to get along better with diverse work associates. Another goal of diversity training is to improve business performance. Most forms of diversity training center on increasing awareness of and empathy for people who are different in some noticeable way from you. Cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring are advanced methods of improving cross-cultural relations. The minority group member or woman is assigned a mentor who helps the person advance in his or her career.

1. What is your evaluation of the fairness of Walgreens expecting workers with physical disabilities to attain the same productivity goals as those of able-bodied workers?
2. What can you do this week to sharpen your cross-cultural skills?
3. Some companies, such as Singapore Airlines, make a deliberate effort for all customer-contact personnel to be of the same ethnic group (Singapore natives). How is this practice justified in an era of cultural diversity and valuing differences?
4. Provide an example of cultural insensitivity of any kind that you have seen, read about, or could imagine.
5. What have you personally observed about Asians and Asian Americans being less likely to ask for social support when they are facing a difficult problem?
6. Many workers in the United States who were born in other countries assign themselves short names, easy-to-pronounce by Americans, such as "Joe" and "Sue." What do you see as the pros and cons of this practice of shortening a foreign name?
7. How useful is the adage "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" for someone who wants to work in another country for a while?
8. If you were a supervisor, how would you deal with a group member who had a very low acceptance of power and authority?
9. The cultural bloopers presented in Skill-Building Exercise 8-2 all dealt with errors people make in regard to people who are not American. Give an example of a cultural blooper a person from another country might make in the United States.
10. Many people speak loudly to other people who are deaf, blind, and those who speak a different language. Based on the information presented in this chapter, what mistakes are these people making?

**<http://www.DiversityInc.com>**

(Extensive information including videos about cultural diversity in organizations.)

**<http://www.berlitz.com>**

(Information about language training and cultural training in countries throughout the world. Investigate in your second language to enhance the cross-cultural experience.)

**Internet Skill Builder: Avoiding Cultural Insensitivity**

One of the most effective ways of hampering relationships with people of another culture is to be grossly insensitive. If you can avoid these gross errors, you will be on your

way toward at least acceptable relationships with people from another domestic or foreign culture. Two examples of cultural insensitivity uncovered on the Internet are: In Alberta, Canada, a sign in the window of a large chain restaurant read, "No drunken Indians allowed." Wal-Mart performed poorly in Germany because it did not recognize the cultural fact that Germans do not like to spend a lot of time shopping by walking through a giant store and waiting on line. Search the Internet for examples of cultural insensitivity. You may have to dig hard to find these nuggets of insensitivity, but the activity will help you become more culturally sensitive and aware.

# Developing Your Human Relations Skills

## Interpersonal Relations Case 8.1

### **What to Do with Shabana?**

Shabana was raised in Pakistan and graduated from the University of Punjab with a major in commerce. She then moved to Chicago, Illinois, to live with her married aunt, as well as to begin a career in business in the United States. Shabana is fluent in her native Punjabi, but also has spoken and written English since the beginning of her primary education.

Having a sponsor in the United States made it possible for Shabana to enter the job market in Chicago. In addition to having a good formal education, Shabana makes a positive physical appearance that includes a warm smile, and a comfortable, relaxed manner. After a two-month long job search, Shabana found employment as a store associate in a cell-phone store of one of the major mobile phone providers. She was content with this position because she thought it would be a stepping stone to store management in the field of consumer electronics.

Shabana enjoyed interacting with the other store associates, as well as the customers. An important part of her role was explaining some of the intricacies of cell phones, as well as the contracts, to customers. She willingly worked Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons, store hours unpopular with other associates.

From time to time, Shabana was perplexed as to why some customers did not understand her. With a few of the older customers, Shabana attributed their lack of understanding to limited knowledge of technology, or hearing impairments. One customer looked straight at Shabana and said, "I do understand a word you are saying."

One day Trevor, the store manager, took Shabana aside and told her, "You are a wonderful sales associate in

many ways. The other associates enjoy working with you and you get along well with many of our customers. Yet we are getting too many complaints by e-mail and phone that many of our customers cannot understand you. It seems like some of these Chicago people just can't understand English with a Pakistani accent."

"Maybe some of our customers aren't the most sophisticated, but they are still customers. And we need every dollar we can take it to meet our sales goals. You need to become better understood by all our customers, or we can't keep you as a sales associate."

A little perplexed, Shabana replied, "I am so sorry to know that I have disappointed you and some of our valued customers. Please give me several weeks to correct this situation of my not being so well understood by all our customers."

Trevor replied, "Okay, but I am going to keep close watch on your progress."

### **Case Questions**

1. What should Shabana do to improve her ability to be understood by more customers?
2. Is the problem of language comprehension in this case really a problem of customers not being too sharp mentally?
3. What actions do you recommend that Trevor take to help Shabana improve her ability to be understood by her customers? Or, should he just fire her?
4. To what extent do you think Trevor is practicing job discrimination by even hinting that he might fire Shabana if she is not better understood by a wider variety of customers?

## Interpersonal Relations Case 8.2

### **Akiak Wants to Fit In**

Akiak Nori was raised in Noorvik, Alaska, and then attended a career school in Juneau, Alaska, majoring in electronic technology. Approaching graduation, he sorted

out dozens of job offers he had obtained, several of which did not even require an in-person interview.

Akiak accepted a position with a construction company in International Falls, Minnesota, because of the job

opportunities and the long brisk winters that would be natural and comfortable for him. He was assigned to a construction team for new buildings, and was also assigned maintenance work for existing electronic systems in office buildings, factories, and mills.

Akiak's goal from the first day on the job was to perform well and fit in with his coworkers. He recognized that fitting in with a non-Eskimo group would require some patience on his part. Akiak had been counseled by several teachers that patience was not one of his strong points.

During employee orientation, two other new employees asked Akiak if his name meant kayak in Eskimo language. With a smile, Akiak replied, "No, it means brave. I guess my parents thought I would have to be brave to grow up in Noorvik, where you have to be tough to survive."

Later that morning, Akiak was asked if ice fishing and seal hunting were his two favorite sports. "Not at all," said Akiak, "We had a first-rate hockey rink in town, so I got to love hockey. And, I'm a Minnesota Viking (professional football team) fan. That's why I took a job in Minnesota." (Said with a smile.)

During lunch, Mary, another new employee, asked Akiak, "Tell me Akiak, are you an Eskimo? Or are you an Inuit? I don't want to make a mistake."

Akiak responded, "It's no mistake to call me an Eskimo. It's no mistake to call me an Inuit. Some people

think that the term Eskimo is wrong, and that we should be called Inuit. It doesn't matter to me or to my friends and family. We like both terms."

"Yet, Mary, the mistake you are making is not thinking of me as just another American. Alaska is one of the 50 states. We vote. We pay and receive Social Security. And, we learn English in school, and we eat at McDonalds."

"I'm sorry," said Mary. "I was just trying to be friendly."

Ned, the supervisor of the orientation program, said to the group. "I think we have asked Akiak enough about his cultural heritage for now. Yet, I have just one favor to ask Akiak. I wish he would show us how he positions his arm, head, and body to spear a big fish."

Akiak said with a sarcastic tone, "Time out. I'm taking a break from this orientation right now. I have to go back to my igloo and chew on some frozen fish."

### Case Questions

1. What does this case tell us about cultural sensitivity?
2. How might have Akiak's coworkers related better to him during the orientation?
3. How might have Akiak done a better job of relating to his new coworkers so far?
4. Does Akiak have an *attitude* (meaning negative attitude problem)?

## Interpersonal Skills Role-Play

### Building a Relationship with an Eskimo Electronic Technician

Several class members play the role of new workers at the company in International Falls, Minnesota, as described in the case presented above. One of the other new workers is Akiak Nori. You want to welcome him, and help him feel part of the group. At the same time, you believe that recognizing his Eskimo heritage would be part of showing respect for his culture. Yet, you do not want to be patronizing or make Akiak feel that he is unusual. Another student plays the role of Akiak who regards himself as an American, yet is also proud of his Eskimo heritage.

Conduct this role-play for about seven minutes. Observers rate the role players on two dimensions, using a 1-to-5 scale from very poor to very good. One dimension is "effective use of human relations techniques." Focus on the cross-cultural sensitivity of the workers attempting to build a relationship with Akiak. Also provide feedback about Akiak's interpersonal skills. The second dimension is "acting ability." A few observers might voluntarily provide feedback to the role players in terms of sharing their ratings and observations. The course instructor might also provide feedback.