Dimensions of Culture: Possible Communication Strategies

If the other person seems to be ...	...to optimize communication, you should...
More universalist (rules oriented)	• Help them understand how their work ties into their values and beliefs • Provide clear instructions, processes and procedures • Keep promises and be consistent • Give people time to make decisions • Use an objective process to make decisions yourself, and explain your decisions if others are involved
More particularist (relationship oriented)	• Give them autonomy to make their own decisions • Respect others' needs when you make decisions • Be flexible how you make decisions • Take time to build relationships and get to know people so that you can better understand their needs • Highlight important rules and policies that need to be followed
More individualist (focus on the individual)	• Praise and reward individual performance • Give people autonomy to make own decisions and to use their initiative • Link people's needs with those of the group or organization • Allow people to be creative and to learn from their mistakes
More communitarianist (focus on the group)	• Praise and reward group performance • Don't praise individuals publically • Allow people to involve others in decision-making • Avoid showing favouritism

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If the other person seems to be …	…to optimize communication, you should…
More specific (reluctant to mix personal and business lives)	• Be direct and to the point • Focus on people's objectives before you focus on strengthening relationships • Provide clear instructions, processes and procedures • Allow people to keep their work and home lives separate
More diffuse (comfortable mixing personal and business lives)	• Focus on building a good relationship before you focus on business objectives • Find out as much as you can about the people you work with and the organizations you do business with • Be prepared to discuss business on social occasions, and to have personal discussions at work • Try to avoid turning down invitations to social functions
Neutral	• Manage your emotions effectively • Watch that your body language doesn't convey negative emotions • "Stick to the point" in meetings and interactions • Watch people's reactions carefully, as they may be reluctant to show their true emotions
Emotional	• Open up with people to build trust and rapport • Use emotion to communicate your objectives • Learn to manage conflict effectively, before it becomes personal • Use positive body language • Have a positive attitude

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If the other person seems to be …	…to optimize communication, you should…
Achievement-oriented	- Reward and recognize good performance appropriately - Use titles only when relevant - Avoid flattery (i.e. don't be a "yes man" and don't "suck up") - Be a good role model
Ascriptive (status-conscious)	- Use titles, especially when these clarify people's status in the organization - Show respect to people in authority, especially when challenging decisions - Don't "show up" people in authority (which causes them to "lose face") - Don't let your authority prevent you from performing well in your role
Sequential time oriented	- Focus on one activity or project at a time - Be punctual - Keep to deadlines - Set clear deadlines
Synchronous time oriented	- Be flexible in how you approach work - Allow people to be flexible on tasks and projects, where possible - Highlight the importance of punctuality and deadlines if these are key to meeting objectives
Inner directed (an internal locus of control)	- Allow people to develop their skills and take control of their learning - Set clear objectives that people agree with - Be open about conflict and disagreement, and allow people to engage in constructive conflict

If the other person seems to be …	…to optimize communication, you should…
Outer directed (an external locus of control)	• Provide people with the right resources to do their jobs effectively • Give people direction and regular feedback, so they know how their actions are affecting their environment • Reassure people that they're doing a good job • Manage conflict quickly and quietly • Do whatever you can to boost people's confidence • Balance negative and positive feedback • Encourage people to take responsibility for their work