

## FIT5122 Cross cultural communication issues -

The following taken from <https://www.communicaid.com/> (with thanks).

**Understanding across cultures can mean that multicultural teams can develop strategies not only to cope with their differences but harness them for more effective team working and productivity.**

### *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS),*

A number of scholars and experts have tried to explain the impact of cross cultural differences on people's behaviour to help reduce the intercultural risks of international business. Dr. Milton Bennett, co-founder of the Intercultural Development Research Institute, believes that the more experience a person has with cultural differences the more that person will develop intercultural competence, becoming more effective when working across cultures.

According to Bennett's *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS), there are six stages on this path to developing intercultural competence, each characterised by certain perceptions and behaviour towards the "own" and the "other" culture.

As the graphic below illustrates the main change along the line of intercultural competence occurs from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. In other words, from an understanding of your own culture as being superior to an understanding of your own culture as equal in value and complexity to any other culture.

Each of the six phases of Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity are described in more detail below:

**DENIAL:** When in this first stage, individuals refuse all interaction with other cultures and show no interest in discovering cultural differences. They may also act aggressively during cross cultural situations.

**DEFENSE:** In this stage, individuals consider all other cultures to be inferior to their own culture and will constantly criticise behaviour or thoughts by someone from another culture.

**MINIMISATION:** When this stage is reached, individuals will start believing that all cultures share common values. They will also minimise any cultural differences by correcting people to match their expectations.

**ACCEPTANCE:** At this stage, individuals may still judge other cultures negatively but they will tend to recognise that cultures are different and they may become curious about cultural differences

**ADAPTATION:** During this stage individuals gain the ability to adapt their behaviour more easily and effectively by intentionally changing their own behaviour or communication style.

**INTEGRATION:** This stage tends to only be achieved by long term expatriates living and working abroad or Global Nomads. In this stage, individuals instinctively change their behaviour and communication style when interacting with other cultures.

Progressing from 'Ethnocentrism' to 'Ethnorelativism' on the scale takes time, yet it is vital for the success of any business person working in what is an increasingly global economy. Becoming more interculturally sensitive can be achieved through a combination of first hand experience with other cultures and participation on intercultural training courses like Effective Global Leadership or Doing Business in India.

While the final stage 'integration' is seldom reached, a combination of experience living and working in other countries and taking part in tailored intercultural training courses allows global business people to reach the 'adaptation' stage, acquiring a high level of intercultural competence that will ensure they are successful working internationally.

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## A MULTICULTURAL WORKFORCE ENHANCES CREATIVITY

Migration, the relocation of skilled workers and flexible working practices have all played their part in the changing face of modern organisations. While we are now all accustomed to hearing multiple languages spoken in the office and working with different communication styles, we are probably not aware of the productivity gains that a multicultural workforce brings to our team and organisation.

A multicultural workforce is able to 'do' and 'view' things differently – and that can make all the difference

In an article published by [Fast Company](#), creativity is explored in the context of a multicultural experience. The author observes that most creative people have two skills that are more prominent than in the general population: they are able to consider more than one way to do something, and they are able to see things from more than one perspective.

How can benefit from your international colleagues' different values and attitudes?

That is, they are able to 'do' and 'view' more broadly than people who tend to see their environment in more black and white terms.

So how does a multicultural workforce enhance creativity? More specifically, what can you learn from other people with different [cross-cultural backgrounds](#), especially if they have arrived in your country recently or you are working in a new country?

And how can you learn to benefit from their different values and attitudes?

### DIFFERENT WAYS OF DOING THE SAME THING

If the "newcomer" has not been exposed to failure or *indoctrinated* with the "accepted" way of doing things they will feel free to suggest new ways

The 'do' part of the equation leads many people to think about alternative ways something can be approached. This can be something pleasurable, such as enjoying a meal for its own pleasure as well as the leisurely conversations that may take place at that meal.

Contrast this with a busy lunch in a culture where the main purpose of the meal is to 'refuel' and then move on quickly to whatever they need to do next.

Equally, if the "newcomer" has not been exposed to failure or indoctrinated with the "accepted" way of doing things they will feel free to suggest new ways of doing things that local hires might not.

### **DIFFERENT WAYS OF VIEWING THE SAME THING**

The 'view' part of the equation leads many people to think about something from another perspective. In the example above, a 'refueler' might have the opinion that a slowly paced meal is a waste of valuable time, especially if they are anxious to move onto the next task and the conversation is separate from that task.

Seeing this style of meal as a chance to build a relationship, which may benefit everyone in the long run, allows creativity to flourish and perhaps other opportunities will arise.

### **INVENTIVENESS IN THE WORKPLACE**

Creativity also allows people to come up with new ideas and process them differently as well

In the corporate world, 'do'-ing and 'view'-ing things creatively expands most organisations' global reach.

Creatively finding different ways to accomplish a wide range of goals, from problem solving to negotiating to time management to earning trust, can benefit the organisation as a whole, not just in its own culture. Creativity also allows people to come up with new ideas and process them differently as well.

### **THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX**

Maybe the old cliché to think outside the box seems tired. But for those people who can 'do' different things with that box and 'view' the box from multiple angles will provide the creativity needed to build a better box, both inside and out.

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