

# Art of Articulation

How do you define it?

The right **content** in the right **context**  
presented in the right **way** to the right  
**audience** to get the **desired outcome**

## Articulation

### Parameters

- ☐ Use of context
- ☐ Structure and Intellectual Control
- ☐ Audience orientation
- ☐ Identification and use of all available channels of communication
- ☐ Choice of ideas to articulate
- ☐ Ability to drill down and provide details as and when / where required
- ☐ Ability to apply the meaning of a story / instance to a business situation.
- ☐ Plausibility
- ☐ Language (Verbal, Paraverbal, Pronunciation and accent-related, Nonverbal)
- ☐ Handling Questions



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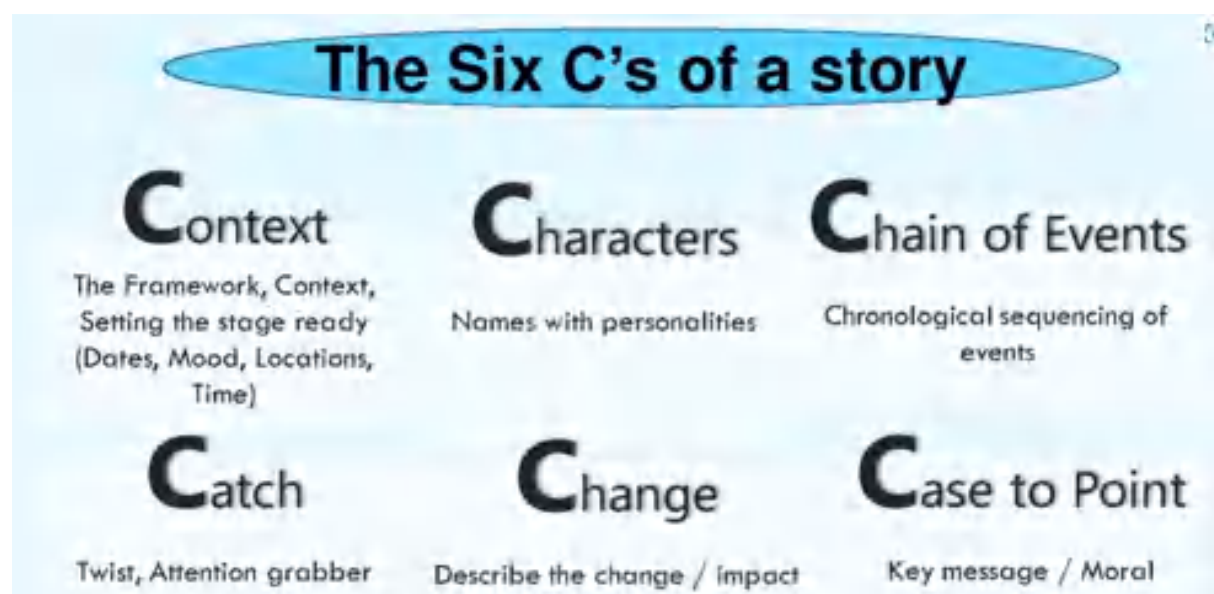
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Duration: 10:00 (Article)

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1. [Learn how to create messages that matter](#)

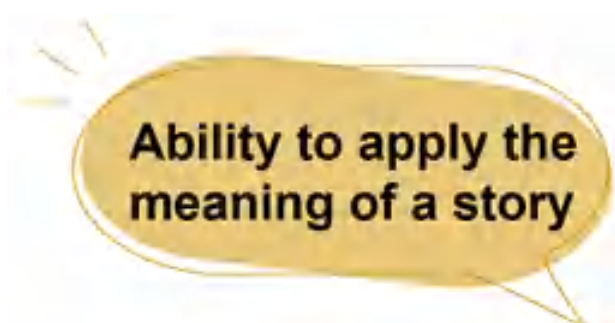
Duration: 05:00 (Article)



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1. [Learn how to run effective meetings](#)

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1. [Learn how to apply the meaning of a story in a business Context](#)

Duration (MM:SS): 03:08 (Video)



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1. [Learn how to make your communication believable](#)

Duration (MM:SS): 12:17 (Video)



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1. [Learn about the importance of tone in communication](#)

Duration (MM:SS): 08:06 (Video)

2. [Learn about the importance of non-verbal communication or body language](#)

Duration (MM:SS): 04:51 (Video)



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1. [Learn about the surprising power of questions](#)

Duration: 05:00 (Article)

2. [Learn about the types of questions](#)

Duration: 05:00 (Article)

To communicate effectively and work seamlessly across global teams one needs to develop a key skill - **Intercultural Skills**.

*Intercultural Agility is the ability to work efficiently across different cultural settings in today's increasingly business environment.*

Intercultural competence is the key skill that makes one culturally agile. It allows a person to...



Recognize one's own culture

Recognize the similarities and differences in a different culture

Use empathy to deal with differences

**What shapes your thoughts, actions and perspectives?**

Your circumstances and environment define the lenses through which you view the world.

# Do you know Yourself?

Think of two habits that you would refuse to change under any circumstances.

Think of two habits that you would be ready to change if circumstances demanded.



“The two habits that you would have **refused to change** under any circumstance **belong to your Core.**”



-The two **habits you would change belong to your Flex.**-

**Now identify your 'knots'. That's the place from which conflict will arise.**

We become aware of our own mindsets, habits, biases when we are taken out of known cultural contexts and placed in unfamiliar ones.

Cultural competency means being positive about different worldviews.

A person's outlook towards the world is shaped by individual upbringing, social norms and religious beliefs.

# Others' Culture

**Are you able to identify how a person's culture is different from or similar to yours?**

## 1. Cognitive flexibility

**Cognitive flexibility is the ability to shift perspectives. This helps understand how others look at the world.**

**A flexible mindset is one of the core skills that allows one to flourish in an intercultural setting.**

**Developing Cognitive Flexibility takes time. It's a behavioural shift. But knowledge of customs and social**

practices is easy to pick up and can be accomplished quickly. One can start with that.

## 2.Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Do you look for information that supports your beliefs and validates your thought process?

Or do you look for information that gives you an understanding of the situation?

If your response is 'Yes' to the second question, you have the required mindset to deal with uncertainty.



### Tips to deal with uncertainty

1

"Do not panic"

2

"Look for information that helps you understand the situation"



“Methodically determine the best approach to deal with the situation”

## **Empathy and Rapport Building**

**Every human being feels emotions. Demonstrating empathy includes the ability to connect emotionally with people.**

# **What is Intercultural Empathy?**

**It is the ability to understand the dynamics of a different culture even when the value systems of that culture are different from yours.**

**What does this mean exactly? It means that when you deal with a person from a different culture you are able to:**

Put yourself in the other person's shoes.

Recognize and support feelings and emotions of that person

Adjust your behavior according to the needs of the other person.

## Practice Empathy



## Empathy > Emotional Connect > Good Rapport > Trust

### Topic 1: Effect of business culture of stakeholders on project completion

Module 1: How to schedule meetings with location-independent stakeholders so that time is not wasted

#### Objectives

Points covered in the module:

- Importance of an agenda in a multicultural meeting
- Same definition of "the meeting starts on time"
- Planning a meeting: key factors when working in location-independent teams
- The effect of language and accent on the duration of a meeting
- Time wasters for some, relationship building for others
- Getting down to business versus small talk
- Non-verbal and para-verbal communication

## AGENDA

Meetings without agendas seem unprofessional.

- 1 Share agenda in advance to allow for preparation
- 2 When preparing the agenda, choose topics which are important
- 3 Invite only those who are required for the meeting.



Some questions to keep in mind while planning the agenda:

- Why is the topic on the agenda?
- What is the expected outcome of the meeting?
- How will the participants contribute to the meeting?

## LANGUAGE OF A MEETING

For some, the language of the meeting might not be the first language.



Less fluent participants may take more time to express themselves.

- Avoid showing impatience
- Empathize
- Speak slowly
- Use simple language
- Articulate clearly

## DURATION OF A MEETING

Factor in buffer time

- 1 Confirm primary language of communication before-hand.
- 2 If necessary, account for interpreters. Incorporate up to 100% more meeting time if using the service of interpreters.
- 3 Less fluent participants may take more time to express themselves. Factor this in while estimating the duration of the meeting.



In some cultures:

**Meeting starts at 10 AM**  
= Meeting starts at 10 AM sharp

The actual meeting is expected to start on time.

In some other cultures:

**Meeting starts at 10 AM**  
= Meeting starts around 10 AM

The actual meeting might start at around 10:15 AM. Participants usually are late between 15:00 AM to 10:30 AM.

Same definition of  
"the meeting starts on time"

In cultures which are  
task-oriented:

The job at hand is important. Agendas will be followed strictly. "Let's get down to business" or "time is money" are commonly used expressions. The purpose of a meeting is to conduct and conclude business. Someone from a task-focused culture will leave a meeting when the time for it is up, irrespective of whether it is affecting the meeting.

In relationship-oriented  
cultures:

The stress on completing the task may appear rather robotic and impersonal. The purpose of the meeting is to get to know people to build personal relationships, and establish trust.

Someone from a relationship-based culture will not leave a meeting when the time is up as that could imply disrespect to those present and jeopardize the relationship. Meetings getting over yet this does not mean the meeting is over.



**Create protocols and establish norms of the meeting from the very beginning.**

- Explain to participants that these norms will be followed. People must know you mean what you say.
- Be flexible about the process followed.
- Use multiple platforms to initiate and maintain interactions.
- If possible, familiarize yourself in advance with the culture of the different stakeholders to avoid interpreting their behaviors, values and beliefs through the lens of one's own culture.
- Understand why people behave in a particular way.
- Focus on cultural prototypes or cultural averages instead of cultural stereotypes.
- Intercultural competency is a two-way street: be aware of the culture of different stakeholders as well as one's own culture, and how it might be perceived.
- Keep in mind that not only countries, organisations and even teams have their own unique cultures.



In some cultures, disagreement leads to loss of face for the counterpart.

In such cultures, people might find it difficult to contradict seniors in a meeting. Ask the team to email their thoughts to the points at the agenda. Some might find it easier to disagree with an idea than with a person.



Module 2: What to do during meetings with pluricultural stakeholders so that everyone wins/feels heard/benefits

**Objectives**

Points covered in the module:

- Different approaches to hierarchy and decision-making in a pluricultural team meeting
- Culturally relevant approaches for presentations
- Cultural pointers towards audience orientation and customer focus
- Building trust in a pluricultural team through reciprocal relationships, benefitting all
- Leveraging the pluricultural team's specific cultural traits and practices to strengthen the team's work and relationships

**Cultural differences among members in a meeting**

Different approaches to hierarchy and decision-making leading to irritation and conflict in team work.

- Some people may make decisions quickly (those from individualist cultures, like USA, Australia ...)
- Some people may prefer to arrive at a consensus incorporating each member's opinion (those from individualist cultures, like Sweden, Netherlands ...)
- Some people may prefer to consult their teams first, before declaring their decision (those from collectivist cultures, like Malaysia, Japan ...)

**Tips**

- Don't assume that everyone will make decisions using the same approach during a meeting.
- Be aware that silence or a lack of specific responses from any member of a different culture may indicate their disagreement, or discomfort with the current opinion.
- Don't imagine that those with different approaches are trying to sabotage the project's work.
- Be willing to explain why you would like others to cooperate with your approach.
- Identify ways in which one's behaviour or approaches can be adapted, in order to encourage others to participate more willingly.
- Avoid rigid thinking. Be open-minded and refrain from judging others.
- Be cooperative. This will encourage team members of other cultures to be willing to make a few adjustments.
- Be conscious of working together towards a common objective. This helps to encourage empathy and cooperation.

**Preferred culture-wise approaches for presentations**

Each culture has its own preferred approaches for presentations.

- Linear structure, brief and focused: coming to the point as soon as possible (like in the US, UK, Australia ...)
- A strong basis in philosophical and intellectual argument; lengthy, research-oriented (like in France ...)
- A historical flow, emphasis on the organisation's reputation, clear and aesthetic visual communication, graphs, charts, minimal text (like in Japan ...)

**Disaster can strike – if we have not oriented our presentation to the customer's cultural expectations.**

**Tips**

- Be culturally aware when presenting to the customer.
- Learn in advance about the preferred approach for presentations in the customer's culture.
- Refrain from imposing your culture's presentation approach on the customer, especially if it is very different.
- Prepare for correct audience-orientation. Read up on Presentation Styles in the customer's culture (Useful reference source: [Ultimedia > iEvolve > GlobeSmart > Selected Country essay](#)).
- Engage the customer / stakeholder in conversation during or after the presentation. Elicit questions from them. Listen to their perspectives.
- Respond appropriately to the customer's questions. If you don't have the answer immediately, let them know when you would be able to respond, then follow through, as asked.

T1: Effect of business culture of stakeholders on project completion

M2: What to do during meetings with pluricultural stakeholders so that everyone wins/ feels heard/ benefits

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### Building trust in a pluricultural team through reciprocal relationships, benefitting all

Building trust in a pluricultural team is not possible when Team leads and members:

- Harp on how difficult it is to deal with differences
- Insist on imposing their own cultural style on all the members – as the most evolved and appropriate style to adopt
- Disregard the viewpoints or different cultural preferences of some of the team members

Are cultural differences, then, a costly and painful overhead that we have to endure, when working in a pluricultural team?

**Or**

Are cultural differences a factor which we can use creatively and skillfully to leverage each others' strengths and optimize our work in the Project?

#### Tips

- Respect the viewpoints and approaches of team members with different cultural preferences
- Acknowledge the fact that the typical approach followed (for any specific process) may have some limitations and cultural blind spots, when implemented in a pluricultural team
- Seek to explore specific cultural traits or practices from the team members' varied cultures, which can be leveraged to strengthen the team's work and relationships
- Encourage an open atmosphere of sharing and continuous improvement, to allow for each team member – regardless of their cultural differences – to reach their potential.



Module 3: What to say? When to say? How to say? to improve productivity in geographically dispersed teams

### Objectives

Points covered in the module:

- Asking effective questions
- Decoding Silence
- Working around time differences in geographically dispersed teams
- Different perspectives on what motivates
- How to say what you say
- Intercultural empathy
- Asking for help



**When interacting with a team member from another culture:**

- 1 Do not be in a hurry to judge.
- 2 When someone asks you a question, no matter how simple or silly it may appear to you, the person asking you is doing so because he/she wants to understand your culture.
- 3 Do be empathetic when you respond to queries about your culture. Help your team member decode the stories of your culture.
- 4 Remember, you have probably put together only a small piece of this puzzle. At any given time, the person is dealing with several pieces you're unaware of.
- 5 A callous reaction from you, could shut the person out and he/she might be hesitant to share with you.
- 6 Likewise, when asking questions about a particular aspect of your colleague's culture, be careful of the words you choose and articulate your question tactfully.
- 7 Use humour carefully so that it does not backfire.

**During meetings in geographically dispersed multicultural teams:**

- 1 Show empathy for people joining in from different time zones.
- 2 Rotate time slots for the meeting so that team members do not feel disadvantaged because they are in a particular time zone. The inconvenience of joining a virtual meeting beyond the regular office hours should be shared by all.
- 3 In certain cultures, praising in public is embarrassing for those being praised. Be alert and if you see that your colleague is uneasy, refrain from praising publicly.

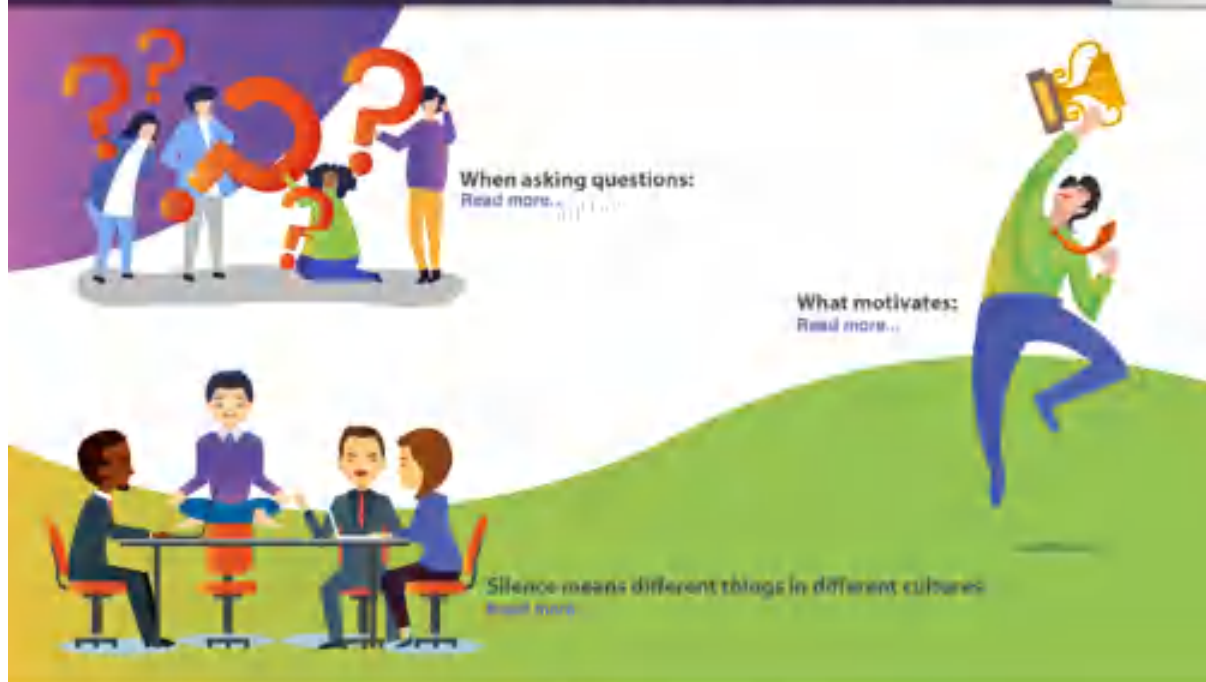


- 4 In certain cultures, the group matters far more than the individual, while in others, individuals getting singled out for praise is perceived as a key motivator.
- 5 While asking for help in certain cultures could imply incompetence, it is advisable to seek help when required since it would facilitate timely project completion. Also, do offer your support to a colleague whose culture stops him/her from asking.
- 6 If you are leading a pluricultural team where team members hesitate to ask for help, cultivate an environment which embraces risks so that team members know it is okay to fail fast.

T1: Effect of business culture of stakeholders on project completion

M3: What to say? When to say? How to say? so that timelines are respected, in geographically dispersed teams

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#### When asking questions:

Remember why you are asking the question. Are you asking the question to understand the story and what it felt like? Or are you asking to find out whose fault it is?

While what you say is important, how you say what you say is equally, if not more important.

Try asking the question in the third person. What does someone else think or feel about the question? This has the following advantages:

- It gives your colleague the space to avoid offending you.
- It gives you the opportunity to scout for multiple perspectives.
- It gives your colleague the scope to share his/her thoughts/opinions in an indirect way (more relevant in some cultures than others).

#### What motivates:

Not all cultures have the same parameters for what motivates. While in some cultures it is autonomy, in others it is praise, while in still others it could be challenging work, an environment encouraging work-life balance, a role change or a salary hike.

That said, do note that individuals belonging to the same country culture might not always behave in the same manner in a given situation. Other factors like organization culture, team culture or an individual's unique culture could equally influence behaviors.

Since culture depends so much on the lens through which it is viewed, remember there is always more to something than meets the eye. Look to empathise with the various perspectives.

#### Silence means different things in different cultures:

In some cultures it is a sign of respect, in others, it implies agreement. In some cultures it is a way of refusing politely. Silence is also a useful tool for negotiation particularly since it can unnerve those belonging to a 'talking' culture. Then again sometimes, silence could also mean that one is thinking of a response or is formulating what to say in their minds (relevant when the language of the meeting is not the first language of the speaker).

## Objectives

Points covered in the module:

- Scheduling virtual meetings across time zones
- Factoring in Daylight Saving Time (DST) / Summer Time while scheduling international calls
- Establishing a Definition of Done (DoD) for the appointment timings of pluricultural meetings
- Reaching out to stakeholders from other cultures:
  - *Personal time vs. Professional time*
  - *Using a lingua franca in pluricultural meetings: Controlling paraverbal differences in communication*
- Addressing stakeholders according to their preferred style in formal meetings
- Decoding communication between senior and junior members in hierarchical teams

**T1: Effect of business culture of stakeholders on project completion**

**M4: What risks to embrace when working in multicultural teams**

**Factoring in differences in time zones and Daylight Saving Time (DST) protocols**

Scheduling meetings across different countries implies:

- 1 Being aware of the time zones and time difference between the cities in question
- 2 Being conscious that many large countries have multiple time zones; for instance, the time difference between New York and Mumbai is different from that between Seattle and Mumbai
- 3 Paying attention to the time difference between the time zones for the specific date and time slot required
- 4 Checking whether Daylight Saving Time (DST) may be prevalent in certain months for the concerned cities, as DST could impact the time difference between cities

**Tips**

- 1 Familiarize yourself with facts on Daylight Saving Time (DST): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daylight\\_saving\\_time](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daylight_saving_time)
- 2 Check the time difference for a targeted date and time, and information about the prevalence of DST between specific cities from a reliable website like: <https://www.worldtimebuddy.com/>
- 3 Do note that professionals from countries with a linear approach to time (like the UK, Northern Europe, US, Australia) believe that "Time is money"
- 4 Do not expect schedules to be stretched to allow for any party's delay while joining in a call. Meetings across time zones are likely to be cancelled, in such circumstances

[1] Address client members by their first name, if they may already have requested you to do so. Persisting with the formal mode of address (Mr / Ms / Dr + Surname) could cause awkwardness.

- In direct communication cultures, (US, UK, Australia, Canada, etc.) client members generally prefer informal ways of being addressed, on subsequent meetings.



### Establishing a Definition of Done (DoD) for meeting appointment timings

- 1 Each participant in a work team may interpret a task or protocol according to his/her own cultural and personal lens. This can lead to misunderstandings, particularly in a multicultural work team.

- For instance, the abbreviation "EoD" (End of Day) which is often used in business to signify by when an action will be completed or submitted.
- For monochronic time cultures, like Germany, Northern Europe, USA, UK, Australia, "EoD" would mean the end of the typical work day for the person addressing the task.
- In polychronic time cultures, (like India, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, etc.) the work day is often stretched, in order to complete tasks or achieve deadlines. For instance, "EoD" in India may well stretch to 10 PM IST, or later.

- 2 People in India joke about Indian Standard Time (IST) being "Infinitely Stretchable Time".



#### Tip

- Find out, discuss and agree on what the Definition of Done (DoD) might be for all work submissions, tasks and protocols among all the parties involved in a business situation. This is especially relevant in multicultural contexts.
- Once the DoD is clearly established, business proceeds much more smoothly.

### Decoding communication between senior and junior members in hierarchical teams

- In hierarchical cultures (like India, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, etc.), junior associates generally hesitate to speak openly to their seniors.
- Junior members from hierarchical cultures may refrain from expressing disagreement with their senior's opinion, even when they may have sufficient reason to do so.
- Junior members from egalitarian cultures voice their opinions and express their disagreement with their seniors' ideas more freely, if they can substantiate their opinion reliably.
- In hierarchical cultures, there may be a tendency for senior members to stand on their authority and make the difference of hierarchical status very obvious during their interactions with junior members.
- Bossy attitudes and rudeness from a senior may be understood by members in the egalitarian cultures as displaying a lack of respect for the individual. Such attitudes are not at all appreciated.



#### Tips

- Do maintain decorum and respect for the people you are interacting with, especially in multicultural situations.
- Be suitably firm or assertive when speaking, while maintaining sufficient politeness. This is an expectation in business situations, regardless of the hierarchical status of the people in interaction.

### Reaching out to stakeholders, especially clients members, from other cultures

#### Personal time vs. Professional time

- 1 People from Individualist cultures (US, Australia, UK, Northern Europe, etc.) prefer to keep their professional time and personal time separate.
  - Planning for the day factors in their professional and personal tasks and activities.
  - Professional requirements spilling over into personal time is taken to be a mark of poor time management, and is avoided.
- 2 In many individualist countries, employees have started asserting their right to disconnect from office email and official mobiles after office hours.
  - In 2017, France passed a law ensuring a worker's right to disconnect after office hours. It is illegal to expect office workers in France to respond to official emails after office hours, now.
- 3 In collectivist cultures (India, Arab countries, several LATAM countries, etc.), it is often taken as a sign of commitment to one's organisation, to extend one's work day to well beyond the official work hours.
  - Relationship focus may be viewed as more important than managing the separation of one's personal and professional time in collectivist countries.



#### Tip

- Do respect sensitivities pertaining to the degree of separation of personal and professional time when working with stakeholders from multiple countries.

### Reaching out to stakeholders, especially clients members, from other cultures

#### Using a lingua franca in pluricultural meetings: Controlling paraverbal differences in communication

Business English is the most typical lingua franca...

*Read More...*

Tips: (For Non-native speakers of English) Aim to listen more carefully...

*Read More...*

Further tips: (For native and non-native speakers of English) Do...

*Read More...*

- Business English is the most typical lingua franca currently used in global business.
- The speech of non-native speakers of English may display aspects that are typical of their mother tongue (first language):
  - Pronunciation and accent
  - Paraverbal speech aspects: pace of speech, tone of voice, volume, intonations and verbal rhythm
    - Speaking English at an extremely fast pace, as many Indians tend to do, makes the difference in accent even more difficult for native speakers to understand.
  - Non-verbal aspects: specific facial or hand gestures that accompany certain speech acts.
- The impact of such key areas of Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) can lead to low comprehension or misunderstandings during pluricultural business meetings.

#### Tips:

- (For Non-native speakers of English): Aim to listen more carefully, and speak more slowly while in meetings or calls with members from a different culture.
- (For Native speakers of English): Do be aware that non-native English speaking participants of a pluricultural meeting may be at a bit of a disadvantage. It helps to be patient and refrain from speech patterns that would make it more difficult for the non-native speakers to understand and communicate during such meetings.
  - Such native speech patterns in a pluricultural business meeting can include:
    - Strong regional accents: Do aim to speak more slowly and clearly with non-native English speakers during business meetings.
    - Using idioms, slang and jargon: Do aim to curb the use of such speech patterns during pluricultural business meetings. Such usages may prove incomprehensible to non-native speakers during business meetings.

#### Further Tips:

- (For Native and Non-native speakers of English): Do familiarise yourself in advance with the English accent and dialect patterns of typical speakers from different countries with which you need to interact. You may like to listen to recordings from the International Dialects of English Archive: <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/>
- (For Non-native speakers of English): You may like to familiarize yourself in advance with business idioms in English from a resource like: <https://www.westernunion.com/blog/common-english-idioms-in-the-workplace/>

## Module 5: How and when to handle disruptions in a multiculturally sensitive team

### Objectives

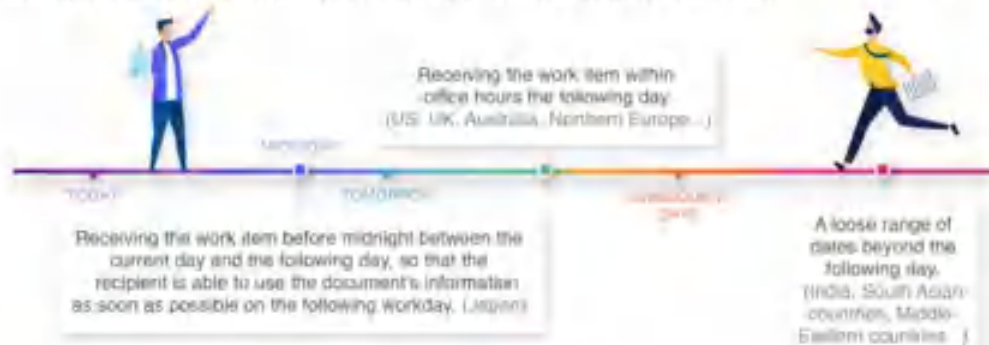
Points covered in the module:

- Arriving at a common understanding with all stakeholders about the delivery schedule across time zones
- Finding out from leads and stakeholders about the overseas customer's work expectations
- Availing of mentoring to be sensitized to the different work cultures at play when working across cultures
- Building in work ownership to enhance one's participation in a global team
- Cultivating a positive mind-set towards one's work and one's interaction with multicultural stakeholders



### Overstretching the Delivery Schedule

- Expectations pertaining to work delivery schedules can be interpreted very differently by customer groups from different countries. Thus, to expect to receive a work item "tomorrow" can mean:

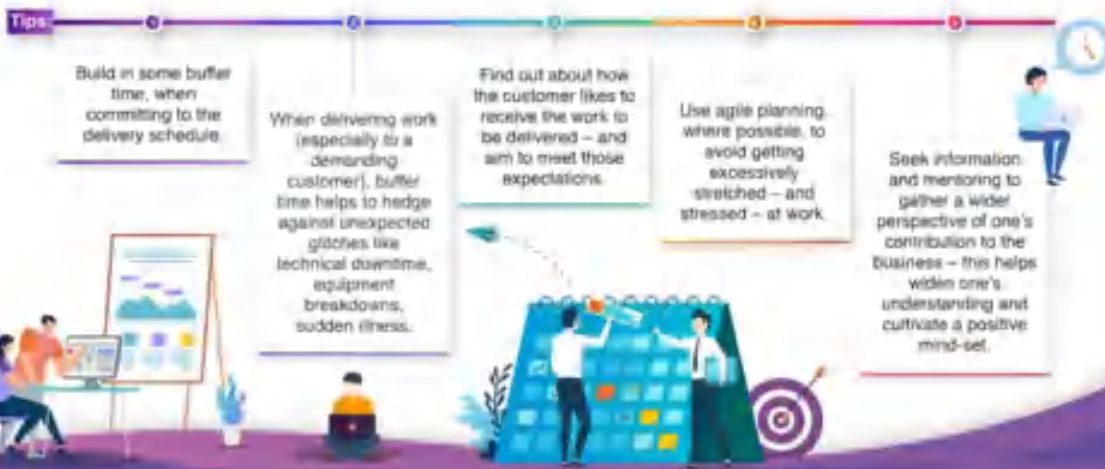


- Not setting such expectations properly in advance can lead to huge stress and tension for all the parties concerned.
- "Getting the work done" can also mean different things for different business cultures. The degree of attention given to a work item's visual design, user-friendliness and aesthetics – over and above its technical accuracy and functional completeness – may have a lot of weightage for customers from some business cultures.

**Tips:** Arrive at a common understanding with your stakeholders for the expected time for receiving the work delivery.

### Deconstructing the Delivery Delay

- It helps to know how one's work fits into the whole workflow, especially when delivering work to an external customer.
- Becoming curious and seeking information about the customer and their expectations will make it possible to plan the delivery schedule more carefully.
- Such work ownership makes it easier to build in the mental flexibility needed to adjust to working across time zones and to different expectations from the varied customer groups with which one works.



### Revisions and New Planning

- 1. Understanding where and how one's work contributes to the whole is useful in order to build up a sense of ownership towards the work – a strong requirement especially when working across cultures. Enquiring about such information from project / account leads is helpful.
- 2. Understanding the wider context may also encourage one to participate in decisions related to the delivery, and can help one overcome a sense of being oppressed by work demands.
- 3. Taking responsibility for one's work helps to prevent downstream remedial work efforts that might be needed to be done by colleagues in the customer's country – in order to meet the customer's expectations.
  - Work colleagues in the concerned overseas geography would then be required to pitch in far more than is due from them, in order to ensure a proper delivery.
- 4. Sending in incomplete work, delivered in an unpunctual manner, and which is not in line with the customer's expectations, can become a major source of dissatisfaction and lack of harmony in global teams.
- 5. Offering one's ideas and suggestions is beneficial. When suggested to the right authority, in the specific business and cultural context, such ideas may open up new possibilities to improve the entire delivery process.

#### Tips

1. Seek guidance from mentors who are knowledgeable about the various cultural work patterns at play, to be better sensitized to the multicultural work context and delivery situation.

2. Step up to shoulder the work responsibility as thoroughly as possible.

3. Refrain from misunderstanding or judging the intentions of overseas work colleagues.

- Sometimes, preferred practices in different country cultures may intervene.
- An overseas colleague may prefer to complete the remaining work herself rather than explicitly communicating how unsatisfactory the work received from you may have been, in view of the customer's work expectations.

