

Being In-Sync: Communication and Time

Module: Being In-Sync

Learning Path: Workplace Success - Cultural Intelligence

Key Concepts

High vs Low Context Communication

How much meaning is carried by context versus explicit words.

- High-context: Meaning in what's NOT said, context carries the message
- Low-context: Meaning in the words, explicit communication valued

Proxemics

How cultures use physical and virtual space to communicate.

- Close space cultures: Proximity shows engagement
- Distant space cultures: Space shows respect

Monochronic vs Polychronic Time

Linear versus flexible approaches to time and scheduling.

- M-Time: Time is linear, punctuality sacred, one thing at a time
- P-Time: Time is flexible, relationships primary, multiple parallel activities

The CLEAR Framework

Making coordination explicit across cultures.

- Context Provided: Different levels for different needs
- Levels of Detail: Multiple depths of information
- Expectations Explicit: Define shared terms
- Adaptation Zones: Fixed versus flexible elements
- Rhythm Agreements: When to use which time style

Summary Points

1. Being 'clear' is culturally relative—explicit to some is insulting to others.
2. Time orientation affects everything from meeting punctuality to project planning.
3. Context and time intersect to create complex coordination challenges.
4. The CLEAR framework helps create systems that translate between styles.
5. High-context evolved in stable communities; low-context in diverse societies.

Practical Application

Writing for multicultural audience

Layer information: headlines for scanners, details for deep-divers.

Running global meetings

Build buffers: official start time with content beginning 10 minutes later.

Reflection Questions

- How do the concepts in this module apply to your current work environment?
- What cultural patterns have you observed but not previously understood?
- Which framework from this module will be most immediately useful to you?
- How might you adapt your approach based on what you've learned?