

Implement Cross-Cultural Training Programs to Enhance Understanding and Sensitivity among Team Members

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Abstract: *Multicultural organizations are the hubs of many cultures from throughout the world. Managing communication barriers in multinational, multicultural teams may be quite difficult. In multicultural workplaces, efficient communication is critical to the whole system's seamless functioning, just as in the human brain network. Communication is an essential tool for information sharing, building trust, and maintaining good working relationships in a multicultural company. This study's primary objective is to conduct a literature review on the concept of multicultural organizations. The choices available for communicating in a multicultural setting are covered in the next section. The final part discusses the many aspects of communication in a multicultural workplace. The fourth section discusses possible communication challenges in a multicultural workplace. Suggestions for how multicultural groups might address communication challenges are provided in the last section.*

Keywords: Stereotypes, communication, multicultural organizations

I. INTRODUCTION

In the social sphere, political system, economic environment, geographic regions, and cross-border contacts, multiculturalism is a reality of globalization. Given the importance of multicultural organizations (henceforth referred to as MCOs) in the contemporary economic system and the persistent presence of many cultures around us, worker diversity is quickly being recognized as an MCO quality. The number and variety of firms operating on a worldwide scale are also expanding quite quickly. As a result, partners, customers, and clients are becoming more varied (Sudhiir and Sudhiir, 2016:95). When people of an organization collaborate across cultural barriers to accomplish shared objectives, it is said to be "multicultural". MCOs are the global hubs for a broad range of cultures. The percentage of MCOs among organizational workers has grown in the global economy. An corporation must have a thorough grasp of the variety of skill sets that make up its workforce since this group has the ability to greatly improve performance in the contemporary global business climate. Kirchmeyer and McLellan, 1991; Tung, 1993; Cox, 1993; Galbraith, 2000; Kirkman and Shapiro, 2001.

There are numerous examples of cultural diversity throughout the globe. Understanding these differences might make the obligations of multinational corporations and workers easier. Understanding cultural differences makes it easier to collaborate effectively, build trust, resolve conflicts, collaborate productively, and—most importantly—evaluate the contributions of team members (Binder, 2007; McDonough, 2001:111). East Asians, for instance, think that individuals from Western nations treat friends and strangers same. Conversations in Western societies are often precise and straightforward. The statement's meaning is quite evident. This isn't the case in other nations, such as Japan, where formality and decorum are important aspects of communication. Keeping eye contact is seen as disrespectful in some cultures and as hostile in others. Furthermore, embracing someone is often tolerated and seen as very informal in Western and African cultures, but it could not be in Asian societies. Men from societies where women are seen as inferiors also find it very difficult to work with women or to have women as their superiors. Furthermore, welcomes may be given with a handshake in some cultures, a bow in others, or an embrace in still others. Studies show that although North Europeans and Asians glance away or sideways while conversing, Arabs, Latin Americans, and

Southern Europeans stare their conversation partners in the eye. Chinese people see "silence" as a sign of respect, whereas Australians view it as timidity or indifference. In a similar vein, several cultural meanings of "touch" exist. While touching strangers is frowned upon in Thailand, strolling hand in hand with friends and dressed differently in Ethiopia are signs of a love connection (Sudhiir and Sudhiir, 2016:97). Because there are so many MCOs in the workforce, differences in communication styles, understanding, attitudes, and procedures are unavoidable.

Features of Mcos

The power and potential of MCOs are regularly and clearly shown in the literature. MCOs are renowned for selecting the best candidates for employment, fostering a nice work atmosphere and high employee morale, having broad perspectives and deeper thinking, and being accepting and understanding of others. MCOs are also more inventive and creative, competitive, efficient and productive, and technologically sound due to their diverse backgrounds. They also have better problem-solving skills and solid relationships with significant partners in global markets. MCOs are prepared to make judgments, have a wide virtual network, and are flexible and adaptive (Kiss, 2005:220; Singh, 2014:46; Vashishtha & Garg, 2014:3-4; Heyman 2017:21).

Conceptualizing Communication in MCOS

Organizational communication is the study of communication within organizations. There are several ways in which communication occurs inside an organization: verbal and nonverbal, formal and informal, vertical and horizontal, written and spoken. It's true that managing communication inside an MCO requires a lot of work. In multicultural workplaces, communication is like the brain network of the human body; when it breaks down, the organism becomes inefficient or useless. Similar to this, effective communication is essential for the development of trust, positive relationships, and information sharing in a multicultural workplace. Like communication in general, corporate communication has a wide range of applications. According to Iedema and Wodak (1999:7), organizations are really "created and recreated in the acts of communication between members," as opposed to relying just on the contributions of its members. "The central means by which individual activity is coordinated to devise, disseminate, and pursue organizational goals" is the definition of organizational communication given by Gardner, Paulsen, Gallois, Callan, and Monaghan (2001:561). Organizations often consist of very unique social systems that include formal and informal boundaries as well as negotiated distinctiveness (Scott, 1997; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Communication protocols are changing to both create and reflect the new links, structures, and processes that MCOs encounter because of their ongoing state of change. MCOs that fail to understand the barriers posed by cross-cultural communication face numerous challenges in many areas of international business communication, such as free trade policies, decisions about localization and standardization strategies, advertising, brand effectiveness, business relationships, international business management, international marketing, international negotiation, and consumer behavior, staffing, industrial relations, interpersonal relationships, negotiation, and teambuilding (Jenifer and Raman 2015:332).

Communication Challenges in MCOS

In MCOs, communication problems are inevitable. The primary communication difficulties in MCOs include language barriers, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, culture shock, attitudes toward task completion, decision-making, conflict resolution, privacy, and nonverbal language.

Language Barrier

Due to the increased likelihood of staff members encountering and interacting with multilingual individuals, language barriers are the most prevalent issue in MCOs (Jenifer and Raman 2015:334). It is undeniable that English is the official standard language for business worldwide and that it is the lingua franca of the modern economic world. Nevertheless, this has led to many non-native English speakers being disregarded and undervalued due to their inability to communicate and understand English and thus express themselves. Even sometimes, there's a potential that supervisors step aside because they can't communicate well across boundaries. This hinders progress and causes ongoing anxiety over time, which undoubtedly lowers organizational productivity (Sudhiir & Sudhiir, 2016:97).

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is the concept that we exaggerate, overstate, or make assumptions about something because we have preconceived beliefs about a certain group of people and their culture. The main reasons of disagreements about other cultures, which lead to misconceptions, are these stereotypes (Jenifer & Raman 2015:332; Sudhiir & Sudhiir, 2016:96). The following are some typical misconceptions that people hold: Chinese see their job as a religion, Swiss place a strong importance on accuracy, Brazilians are known for being late, Japanese are forward-thinking, and Spanish are bitter and discriminating. All of these negative preconceptions have the ability to negatively impact both a country and its people as well as present or future employees. Because of prior beliefs, an employer may act in an unfair manner and make errors while hiring, managing, and terminating workers (Heyman 2017:19).

Ethnocentrism / Cultural Relativism

The idea that one's own culture or group behavior is superior to that of all other groups is known as ethnocentrism or a cultural superiority complex. We unwittingly think that our culture is distinct because of our own cultural experiences when we adopt this mentality. This feeling heightens anxiety, which affects the productivity of the work culture (Jenifer & Raman 2015:332; Sudhiir & Sudhiir, 2016:96). The employees of MCO face several issues as a result of ethnocentrism. Interactions with people from various cultures are hampered and communication is obstructed by ethnocentrism. International workforces need a cultural understanding of local conditions in order to improve competence and efficiency (Singh, 2018:48).

According to the "cultural relativism" philosophy, one should compare the norms and behaviors of target cultures in order to determine what is acceptable and wrong. When individuals believe that customs, norms, and behaviors that are different from those of the other culture are false, this may become problematic (Sudhiir & Sudhiir, 2016:97).

Cultural Shock

Cultural shock is the unintentional interaction of an employee with some unfamiliar and unexpected cultural practice. When workers reach another country or region, they tend to endure cultural shock, which is the diffidence and disorientation induced by experiencing a foreign culture. They may not be familiar with how to behave, may fear losing face and self-confidence, or may get emotionally dissatisfied. Some folks isolate themselves, while a few even opt to return back home from the following trip. Cultural shock is practically common, which occurs even on a move from one advance country to another (Singh, 2014:47-48).

Attitude toward Conflict Resolution

The way that people handle disagreement has a big impact on the workplace, particularly when it comes to teamwork. Divergent approaches to conflict resolution are used by the world's many cultures. Americans, for instance, see conflict favorably and like to resolve it quickly and in person; in contrast, Easterners view conflict negatively and prefer to manage disagreements in private or in silence (Kiss, 2005:216).

Approaches to Tasks' Completion

Westerners are individualistic and focus on one activity at a time, but Asians and Africans work in collective ways, juggling many activities at once. Individualistic nations, such as the US and France, place a higher value on individual objectives and have a tendency to be more self-centered. Individualistic civilizations tend to produce more self-centered people. They demonstrate a desire to advance into more senior positions and highlight their professional or financial accomplishments. Conflicts over employment and ambitions to move up the social ladder are particularly prevalent in the USA. It is more important to get to the goal than it is to worry about who could get lost. On the other hand, collective cultures prioritize groups above individuals and are more likely to think in terms of "we" rather than "I." Collectivists put maintaining unity and allegiance ahead of inciting conflict. It is inappropriate to openly disagree with someone's beliefs in China. It is necessary to take more intimate and private action to shield someone from "loss of face." Cultures that value collectivism seldom tolerate direct conflict. Instead of speaking "no" aloud, words or phrases that express disapproval or criticism are employed. Saying "no" would mean putting the cohesion of the group at risk. Trust, harmony, and a profound comprehension of ethical principles are the foundations of every interaction between an employer and employee or business partners (Kiss, 2005:216).

Different Decision-Making Styles

MCO managers exhibit greater and deeper levels of decision-making ability. This is because they make quite different decisions in their daily meetings. A productive staff is cognizant of how various cultural decision-making approaches

vary. The decision-making roles that people play differ greatly throughout cultures. For instance, in the US, individuals often follow the "rule of majority" when making choices in groups, whereas in Japan, "consensus" is the favored method (Kiss, 2005:216).

Different Attitudes toward Privacy

The most crucial component of a culture is privacy. It's a philosophy that has to do with productivity and efficiency. Managers of MCOs may build more competency among them if they are fully aware of the employee's views toward privacy. Diverse cultural backgrounds offer varying perspectives on privacy. For example, it's noteworthy to note that Americans value privacy less and generally prefer to be in public. Thus, they become more visible and exposed to friends, coworkers, and the general public. Conversely, the populations of China, Germany, France, and other countries are secluded. They share very little with the public and enjoy a great degree of privacy (Shanthi, 2014:50).

Different Ways of Building Trust and Relationship

Productivity and trust have a favorable relationship. Cultural differences are the foundation of trust and relationships. In the United States, for example, trust is based on performance over time. By "coming through" and finishing assignments on time, one might win the respect of their peers in this situation. Developing relationships is crucial for professional activity in many different regions of the world, including several Asian and Latin American countries. In these nations, dining at restaurants and having lengthy conversations about non-professional subjects are common ways to boost one's confidence. Only discuss business topics with the other person after you feel at ease discussing personal matters with them. Before members of a multicultural team have had an opportunity to build any kind of trust with one another, cultural differences may lead to misinterpretations. Thus, developing trust is essential to the formation and growth of MCO teams (Shanthi, 2014:50).

Non-Verbal Communication

Without using words, a lot of communication is done via body language such as tone, touch, emotions, and gestures. While music, dancing, painting, and sculpture are forms of creative and artistic non-verbal communication, folded arms and crossed legs are protective. Non-verbal cues include facial expressions, body language, posture and gestures, personal appearance, dressings, touch, colors, silence, proxemics (the study of reflecting relationships between people), paralanguage (vocal characteristics and sounds that enhance words), pitch (altering our voice pitch), tempo (speaking at a fast or slow pace), resonance (changing the volume from soft to loud), and voice quality, which gives words more body and soul. In any communication scenario, nonverbal communication is crucial. It often serves as an addition to the spoken material that is conveyed verbally. Individuals from many cultural backgrounds exhibit distinct nonverbal communication methods. Understanding various nonverbal cues is very crucial to preventing misunderstandings and other communication obstacles. Their norms around taking turns, using quiet, posture, eye contact, closeness, touch, tone of voice, nod, facial expression, gesture, and other aspects vary (Sudhiir and Sudhiir, 2016:96).

Overcoming Communication Challenges in MCOS

Understanding is essential for effective cross-cultural communication and, thus, for avoiding pitfalls. People must be aware of the potential communication problems that MCOs can encounter and make a concerted effort to address them. The implementation of a sustainable communication platform, language training, cross-cultural understanding training, cautious hiring, assignment matching based on interest and experience, and Shanthi, 2014:52, are just a few of the steps an MCO can take to address the communication problems (Singh, 2014:48–49; Vashishtha & Garg, 2014:4). First and foremost, hiring employees into MCOs has to be well thought out at the point of entry, in writing or orally. The recruiting process should include an oral or written approach for determining the degree of ethnocentrism shown by a candidate. It may be decided to choose candidates who score low on ethnocentrism and other potentially troublesome characteristics. It may be useful to assess whether the desire to travel and live overseas is a required condition attitude. To make sure that serving abroad is effectively supported, it may also be essential to find out how the employee's spouse feels about the assignment. After being appointed, an MCO employee's second necessity is assistance with language training. To hasten the process of readjusting to a new nation, many businesses push their employees to learn the lingua franca, or native tongue. They provide instructions before giving out tasks. Included is often orientation to the area, customs, culture, and political environment in which the workers would be living. Thirdly, employees need to be aware of the existence of cultural differences in terms of views, values, perspectives, and interpretations. Employees should get basic cross-cultural training to assist them grasp the distinctions in cross-cultural work situations.

Overcoming communication barriers including culture shock, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism may be made easier with the help of cross-cultural training. Fourth, with a varied workforce, good communication is critical. Executives at MCOs must ensure that employees have open routes and platforms for exchanging new ideas, grievances, recommendations, and feedback. A cultural context must allow variety to be valued rather than merely accepted. Each and every employee must understand the moral and competitive advantages of diversity. They must respect and encourage cultural diversity by recognizing distinct religious and cultural holidays, open days, weeks, anniversaries, and festival celebrations. Fifth, the distribution of tasks in MCOs must take into account each employee's areas of interest and competence. Employees will adjust to their new location more quickly if they are placed in similar countries, especially if this is their first overseas assignment. Consequently, addressing workplace cultural diversity issues may be facilitated by assigning tasks that are in line with an employee's interests and background.

II. CONCLUSION

MCOs will continue to proliferate as globalization lowers entrance barriers across national borders. People on opposite sides of the world are becoming closer. International business methods that are successful need cooperation between people with different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the key to success in business is to learn how to bring people together who have different points of view. It is crucial that the business understands these variations and has procedures in place to deal with any issues that can arise from cross-cultural communication. It is more important than ever to address differences head-on, make sure everyone is understood, and comprehend the underlying assumptions that shape communication styles in order to enhance relationships, performance, and collaboration in a multicultural workplace. Gaining proficiency in communication is essential for working in a global environment. Managers need to be culturally sensitive and provide adaptable leadership that encourages passion and creativity in order to accomplish company goals and stay clear of potential pitfalls. To handle diversity in an MCO and educate organizational management, new paradigms and time are needed. Strategic diversity management requires a shift in viewpoint from one that values efficiency above all else to one that values fostering human connections more highly. Achieving the objectives of the MCOs while preserving the distinctive cultures of the workforce must be balanced.

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