GLOBAL WORK TEAMS:
ARE WE ADEQUATELY PREPARING OUR STUDENTS?

6th COIL Conference

Susan Bray
March 21, 2014
Global Work Teams: Are We Adequately Preparing Our Students?

PREMISE

DEFINITION

IMPORTANCE

SAMPLE CONTENT

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
There is a new sociology being born in the world of work as organizations find themselves increasingly in global enterprises that are cross-cultural in nature and that interact in virtual, technology-driven environments. Organizations that seek to be competitive in the global marketplace must factor an ability to succeed in these environments into their core capabilities.

- Do we know how to work effectively in these settings?
- Are companies, universities and training / coaching professionals preparing people to work in these environments?
“It is estimated that over 70% of international joint ventures fail due to cultural misunderstanding. This costs global firms billions of dollars annually.”
Center for Intercultural Communications, University of British Columbia

More than half of the children under age 2 in the U.S. are ethnic minorities.
US Census Bureau Report, 2011

“By 2020, 80% of the world’s consumer base will reside outside US boundaries

Enrollment Of Chinese Students Has Soared At Michigan Universities.
Detroit Free Press March 2012

Only 41% of projects met their objectives completely. The rest failed in all together or in critical ways.
IBM Global Business Services
(Making Change Work, 2008)

Toyota’s Culture Faulted in Recall Crisis
Experts say automaker must loosen control, trust non-Japanese execs
Auto News, March 2010 Issue

A 2012 study of employees of multi-nationals who work virtually indicates less than 16% had any preparation
RW3 CultureWizard
A Bicultural Project Team: Italians And Germans

“Our German partners are so rigid! They expect agendas to be defined and circulated 2 weeks prior to the meeting. This is so that they can come thoroughly prepared with detailed answers and solutions. A lot can change in 2 weeks!”

“Our Italian partners are always improvising. They frequently expect us to stay late and, on one occasion, even asked to put back a key deadline at the last moment because of a ‘higher priority’ project requested by one of their local customers. We had to sit around waiting for them to deliver on their schedule!”
What’s Going On Here?
The “MIS” Cycle
What’s Going Here?
Differing Cultural Orientations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monochronic</th>
<th>Polychronic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Belief:** being efficient means paying attention to one thing at a time; time is linear

**So People:** Cut time into pieces; emphasize scheduling; conclude schedules at expense of ‘people’ considerations

**Work Preferences:**
- Time is tangible - save, waste, lose
- Time sets priorities
- Low tolerance of interruption
- Allergic to short notice change

**Belief:** being efficient means relying on long-term relationships and multi-tasking. Time is a point

**So People:** See activities as overlapping; are good at improvising; are skilled relationship builders; people more important than schedules

**Work Preferences:**
- Time less tangible, is fluid, now
- Relationships set priorities
- High tolerance of interruptions
- Change plans often and easily
A New Way of Working: Global or Distributed Teams
Definition: Global Team

A group of individuals who work across time, space, organizational boundaries, and cultures

- Links Strengthened by Communication Technologies
- Complementary Skills
- Common Purpose
- Interdependent Performance Goals
- Hold Themselves Mutually Accountable
The Greatest Challenge: Global Sustainability

- Cross-Cultural Competencies
- Interdisciplinary Global Teams
- New Technologies / Approaches on a Global Scale
- Global Sustainability

- Water Quality
- Climate Change
- Air Quality
- Food Supply
- Renewable Energy
- Agriculture
- Disappearing Species
- Economic / Social Justice
- Health Care
- Affordable Housing

“The future is where our children live”
What Makes for Success in Global Team Environments?

Those Factors that Relate to Virtual Nature of the Work

VIRTUAL

Those Factors that Relate to the Cultural Understanding Required by the Work

CULTURAL

TRUST AND LEADERSHIP

What Makes for Success in Global Team Environments?
High and Low Context Communication Styles:

An Email Activity
Activity: The Feedback Message

- You are working in a global team with colleagues from a mixture of cultural backgrounds.
- You are very dissatisfied with the approach of one team-member to sharing information.
- (S)he has failed to meet the criteria you agreed at the beginning of the project, both in terms of quality of information and deadlines.
- This person shares your cultural background, but works in a different country, so you should use your typical email style.
- His/her role in the project is strategically important.
- This behaviour will put the project in danger if it continues.
- You haven’t met the person yet.
- You are at the same hierarchical level.
- You have 8 minutes to write the person an email.

This email should initiate the feedback process, and suggest a telephone conversation to discuss it.

PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY
# Major Cultural Orientations

**Effective Communication (Hall)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact on….</th>
<th>High Context</th>
<th>Low Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Concept of “effective” communication | • Communication should be indirect  
• Key messages should be implicit  
• We start with relationships (leading to effective tasks)  
• Spoken agreements based on personal trust and loyalty  
• Work life fusion (fluid interchange between social and business) | • Communication should be direct  
• Key messages should be explicit  
• We focus on task (leading to good relationships)  
• Written agreements based on clarity and specificity  
• Work/life balance (business clearly separate from personal communication) |
| Mutual Perceptions | How do you imagine people who value a high context approach would evaluate colleagues with a low context preference? | How do you imagine people who value a low context approach would evaluate colleagues with a high context preference? |
High Context

- Mexico
- The Middle East
- Philippines
- Brazil
- India
- Singapore
- Greece
- France
- Austria
- Scandinavia
- Israel
- Swiss Germans

Low Context

- Japan, Indonesia
- Africa (all)
- China
- Malaysia
- Spain
- Italy
- Costa Rica
- England
- Australia
- USA
- Germany
- The Netherlands
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LOW CONTEXT</strong></th>
<th><strong>HIGH CONTEXT</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I/you focus</td>
<td>We/us focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start with task</td>
<td>Start with relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback in message</td>
<td>Feedback deferred to face-to-face or phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct and explicit – spelled out</td>
<td>Indirect and implicit – between the lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity is primary</td>
<td>Saving face is primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Context emails</td>
<td>High Context emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ I / you</td>
<td>➢ we / our / us / together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ problem</td>
<td>➢ common interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ must / should</td>
<td>➢ would / could / might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ have to / need</td>
<td>➢ maybe / possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ !</td>
<td>➢ ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ ASAP, URGENT, NOW</td>
<td>➢ Please, Thank you,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>➢ “help”, “advise”, “support”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ don’t / haven’t / not</td>
<td>➢ How can I save face for both sides?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ disappointed, delay,</td>
<td>➢ Asking to discuss the problem in a face to face meeting or at least on the phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ late,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ lack of commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ cc boss(es)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ if not, ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Who is guilty? Who made the mistake?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Pressure!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRANSPARENCY**

**RELATIONSHIP**
Subject: a new beginning together

Hello

I’m glad to write you this email and I’d like to thank you for your hard work. As you know we will work together. You know it’s important time now at the beginning of the project, so we can share some information to improve our work. I hope we will have a good time in working. I’m sure we will have a new beginning through our common effort.

This is my telephone number…if you have any time to talk about some things.

Best regards

Nationality???
Subject: problem with unmet criteria

Dear…,

I’m very rushed, so I need to keep the information very short and direct. I’m sorry, but I’m very disappointed and unsatisfied with the way you are working on this project. It does not meet at all the criteria we agreed upon from the start. You really need to do this in a much more professional way and according to our goals and criteria. Otherwise we really have a problem. I suggest that we will have a talk tomorrow. Then I will explain clearly what I mean. Speak to you tomorrow at 14.00.

Nationality???
Email Activity: SCORING

1. Look at the scorecard on the back.

2. Give your low/high context rating
   - (1 = very low context; 10 = very high context).
   - The criteria for your assessment are at the bottom of the page.

3. Next, score your emotional reaction if you personally received this email (😊 ☹️ ☹️)

4. Pass your scored email to the left…
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Personal Low/High</th>
<th>B. Context Rating</th>
<th>B. Emotional Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>😊 😟 😒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>😊 😟 😒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>😊 😟 😒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>😊 😟 😒</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Calculate the average of the low/high context scores

A. Personal Low/High Context Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☹</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Average = 4.0

B. Emotional Reaction

| ☹ | ☹ | ☹ |
| ☹ | ☹ | ☹ |
| ☹ | ☹ | ☹ |

Score = -1

2. Separately, total the emotional reaction scores

☹ = -1
☺ = 0
☺ = +1
NOW …

• Reach a consensus on ONE email which best combines the need for **clarity** with the need to **preserve relationships**.

• Not necessarily the one which makes people happy, but not one which damages relationships

That one gets a sticker!
Technology and Loss of Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Voice Tone</th>
<th>Immed. Feedback</th>
<th>Non-verbals</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Physical Exchange</th>
<th>Informal Exchange</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person to Person</td>
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<td>Video Conf.</td>
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<td>Phone</td>
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<td>Voice mail</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail / IM</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
RECONCILING TRANSPARENCY AND RAPPORT IN GLOBAL TEAMS

Building Transparency

Building Rapport

A clear message, sharp as a razorblade

A diffuse message in a foggy relational context

A warm relationship without direction and meaning

A clear message imbedded in a respectful, empathic relationship

compromise

polarized

reconciled!

low context

high context

polarized
The TOP 8 Success Factors for GlobalTeams

1. Value on intercultural mindset with training provided
2. Emphasis on team start-up with goal to build relationships
3. Predictable and productive communication patterns
4. Explicit and agreed upon technical and ‘soft’ team processes
5. Effective Virtual Meetings
6. Mindful use of collaboration technologies
7. A ‘high trust’ culture featuring teamwork and collaboration
8. Strong leadership ensuring common vision, purpose and understanding of roles
Suggested Solutions

- Recognize the Value of this Content and Teach it
- Create Virtual / Cross-Cultural Team Activities Across Universities
- Offer Seminars and “Backpack” Courses
- Create Continuing Education Programs in Global Team Content
- Prepare faculty / students for this
Back to the Beginning

“The voyage of discovery lies not in finding new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

Marcel Proust
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Thank You For Your Interest!

To Contact Me:

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