Cross-Cultural Communication Skills as a Key Element for Success

1. TIPS: WORD CHOICE MATTERS

- Write emails with short, clear sentences – action items and deadlines must not be buried.
- Recognize that in some cultures, beginning an email without a friendly hello is considered impolite.
- Use visuals instead of words, when possible.
- Avoid words that can cause confusion (see examples below):
  - Egregious
  - Nuance
  - Caveat
  - Glitch
  - Batch
  - Bandwidth
  - Wheelhouse
  - Brainstorm
  - Streamline
  - Deal-breaker
  - Alas
  - Thus
  - Chagrin
  - In lieu of
  - ...and many others

- Avoid clichés and ambiguous phrases that can cause confusion (see examples below):
  - We got the green light
  - Pull the trigger
  - Rule of thumb
  - Too many cooks in the kitchen
  - On the fence
  - Push the envelope
  - On our radar
  - Switch gears
  - In a pinch
  - Chalk it up to
  - Get in the swing of things
  - Get a jump on it
  - Icing on the cake
  - From scratch

2. TIPS: BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS

- Use video conferences to interpret body language and build rapport.
  - Seeing colleagues also helps to avoid interrupting while others are pausing (eg, often to think of the English words they want to say).
- Remember that body language differs in all cultures.
  - Hand gestures, proximity to the listener, eye contact
- Recognize that not everyone is comfortable speaking another language in meetings. Make sure their voices are heard.
  - Write a clear agenda
  - Ask for questions to be submitted before the meeting
  - Speak slowly during the meeting
  - Give everyone the chance to provide input
  - Revisit with the opportunity for follow-up questions after the meeting
3. RESOURCES TO READ

✓ *The Culture Map* by Erin Meyer
✓ *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands* by Terri Morrison and Wayne Conaway
✓ *Global Dexterity* by Andy Molinsky
✓ *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* by David Livermore. The author’s general advice to English speakers is as follows:
  • “Slow down. Slow down. Slow down. Slllooooowwwwwww down.”
  • Use clear speech. Enunciate carefully.
  • Repeat important points using different words to explain the same thing.
  • Use visual representations (pictures, tables, graphs, etc) to support what is being said.
  • Mix presentations with a balance of story and principles.
  • Hand out written summaries.
  • Pause more frequently.
  • Avoid colloquial expressions and idioms.
  • Avoid long, compound sentences.
  • Avoid jokes, especially if a translator is involved.
✓ Search *Forbes, Harvard Business Review*, and other online professional magazines for the word “culture” or the phrase “cultural intelligence.”

4. RESOURCES TO VIEW

✓ On YouTube, search for Erin Meyer’s numerous videos, such as:
  • How to Lead a Successful International Team
  • Yes or No Questions When Working Internationally
  • How Cultural Differences Affect Business
  • Low-Context vs High-Context Societies

REMEMBER:

Be genuinely open and curious!

Have fun getting to know your global colleagues and learning about various cultures.