

Building trust, strengthening relationships across virtual teams







What makes it so hard to build trust across a global, distributed team?



Small group huddle – 3-4 people

Group
report-outs
– one idea
at a time

Why bother talking about cultural differences?

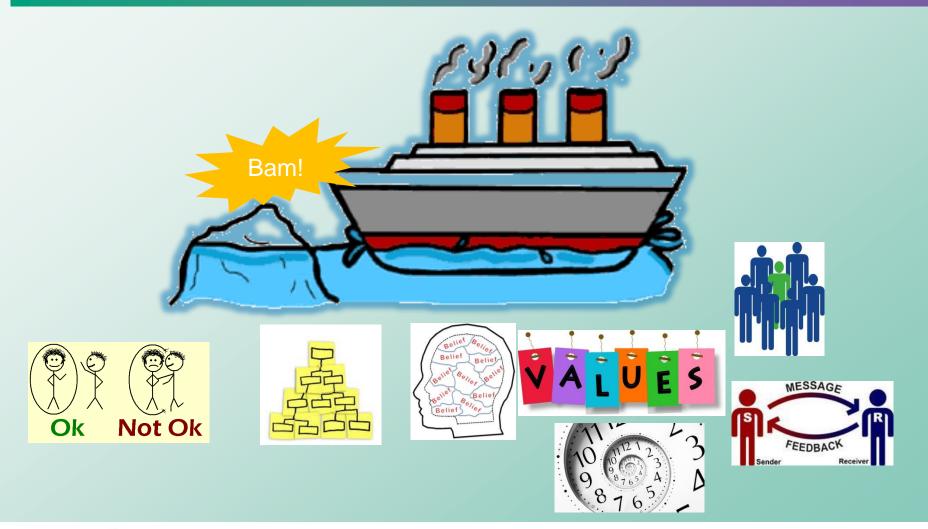




Most obvious cultural differences...



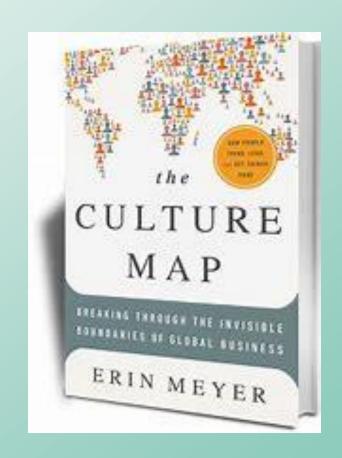
Less obvious differences...





Eight dimensions of culture

- 1.Communicating
- 2.Evaluating
- 3.Persuading
- 4.Leading
- 5. Deciding
- 6.Trusting
- 7. Disagreeing
- 8. Scheduling





1. Communicating

FIGURE 1.1. COMMUNICATING

Low Context

High Context

Low Context

Good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face falue. Repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication.

High Context Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. Messages are both spoken and read between the lines. Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.



1. Communicating — Examples and Implications?

FIGURE 1.1. COMMUNICATING

Netherlands Finland 115 Spain Italy Singapore Iran China Japan Australia Germany Denmark Poland Brazil Mexico France India Kenya Canada Russia Saudi Arabia Indonesia UK Argentina

Low Context **High Context**

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High Context Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. Messages are both spoken and read between the lines. Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.



2. Evaluating



Direct negative feedback

Indirect negative feedback



2. Evaluating — Examples and Implications?

FIGURE 2.2. EVALUATING

Russia France Italy US UK Brazil India Saudi Arabia Japan Thailand Israel Germany Spain Australia Mexico China Korea Canada Netherlands Kenya Ghana Indonesia Denmark Sweden Argentina

Direct negative feedback

Indirect negative feedback



3. Persuading

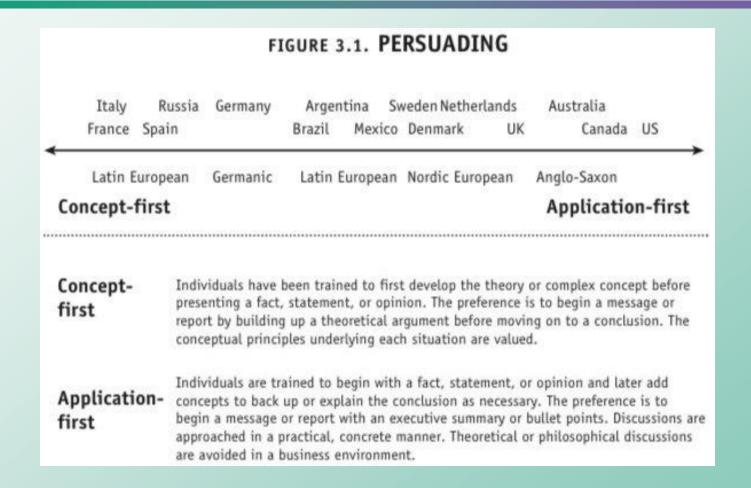
FIGURE 3.1. PERSUADING Concept-first Application-first Concept-Individuals have been trained to first develop the theory or complex concept before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion. The preference is to begin a message or first report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion. The conceptual principles underlying each situation are valued.

first

Individuals are trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and later add Application- concepts to back up or explain the conclusion as necessary. The preference is to begin a message or report with an executive summary or bullet points. Discussions are approached in a practical, concrete manner. Theoretical or philosophical discussions are avoided in a business environment.



3. Persuading — Examples and Implications?





4. Leading

FIGURE 4.1. LEADING Egalitarian Hierarchical Egalitarian The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is low. The best boss is a facilitator among equals. Organizational structures are flat. Communication often skips hierarchical lines. Hierarchical The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is high. The best boss is a strong director who leads from the front. Status is important. Organizational structures are multi-layered and fixed. Communication follows set hierarchical lines.

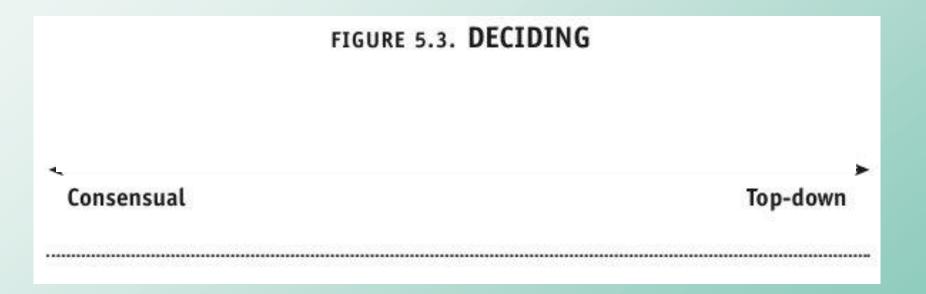


4. Leading — Examples and Implications?





5. Deciding





5. Deciding — Examples and Implications?





6. Trusting

FIGURE 6.1. TRUSTING

Task-based

Relationship-based

Task-based

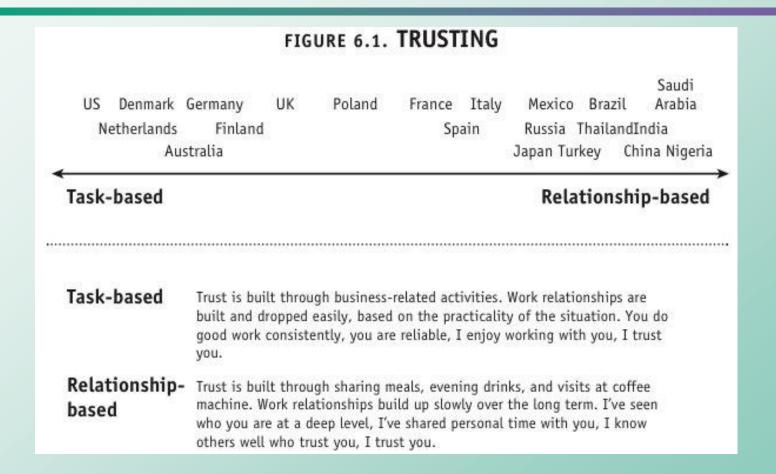
Trust is built through business-related activities. Work relationships are built and dropped easily, based on the practicality of the situation. You do good work consistently, you are reliable, I enjoy working with you, I trust you.

based

Relationship- Trust is built through sharing meals, evening drinks, and visits at coffee machine. Work relationships build up slowly over the long term. I've seen who you are at a deep level, I've shared personal time with you, I know others well who trust you, I trust you.



6. Trusting — Examples and Implications?





7. Disagreeing

FIGURE 7.1. DISAGREEING

Confrontational

Avoids confrontation

Confrontational

Disagreement and debate is positive for the team or organization. Open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact the relationship.

Avoids confrontation Disagreement and debate is negative for the team or organization. Open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony or negatively impact the relationship.



7. Disagreeing — Examples and Implications?

FIGURE 7.1. DISAGREEING

Israel Germany Denmark Australia US Sweden India China Indonesia France Russia Spain Italy UK Brazil Mexico Kenya Ghana Japan Netherlands Singapore Saudi Arabia Thailand

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8. Scheduling

FIGURE 8.1. SCHEDULING

Linear time

Flexible time

Linear time

Project steps are approached in a sequential fashion, completing one task before beginning the next. One thing at a time. No interruptions. The focus is on the deadline and sticking to the schedule. Emphasis is on promptness and good organization over flexibility.

Flexible time Project steps are approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities arise. Many hings are dealt with at once and interruptions accepted. The focus is on adaptability and glexibility is valued over organization.



8. Scheduling — Examples and Implications?

FIGURE 8.1. SCHEDULING Saudi Arabia Germany Japan Netherlands Poland Spain Italy Brazil China Switzerland Sweden US UK Czech Republic France Russia Mexico India Nigeria Denmark Turkey Kenya Linear time Flexible time Linear time Project steps are approached in a sequential fashion, completing one task before beginning the next. One thing at a time. No interruptions. The focus is on the deadline and sticking to the schedule. Emphasis is on promptness and good organization over flexibility. Flexible time Project steps are approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities arise. Many hings are dealt with at once and interruptions accepted. The focus is on adaptability and glexibility is valued over organization.



Top Tips for Cultivating Trust, Virtually

Establish norms for trusting behavior

- · Fair treatment vs. favoritism
- · Checking in vs. micromanaging
- · Motivating vs. pushing

Hold each other accountable

- Agree on specific standards of behavior
- · Apply consistently to all, even when it's hard
- · Encourage everyone to call it like they see it
- Name behaviors out loud e.g. multitasking

Make it safe

- Provide a space where people can ask for help, admit shortfalls, or reveal vulnerabilities
- Encourage reasonable risk-taking
- Model candor



Tips for Creating Social Capital

Replicate the office water cooler

 Create a venue where people can convene easily and quickly, whenever they want – e.g. team portal, chat forum, polling, IM, etc.

Build the human dimension into all interactions

- Ask "safe" questions to reveal more of the person
- Create a "fun fact sheet" for each team member
- Set aside time for sharing, learning as a team

Be a connector for your team

- Design work in a way that requires people to share ideas, experience, knowledge
- Introduce each team member to one new connection each month
- Encourage conversations between members

Building a Level Playing Field

Small steps that add up

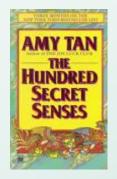
- Adjust group discussions to accommodate different styles, other differences
- Try holding meetings the same way for all

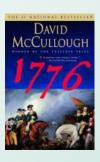


Giant leaps

- Provide important information to all team members @ same time
- Dole out coveted projects evenly
- Shift power, roles from time to time
- Give everyone an equal chance to shine

Cultivating your cultural literacy













Language

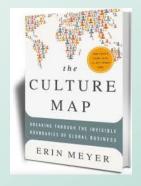
Communication

← Courtesies

Rituals

Roles

Customs





Creating cultural competency across your team

- Set aside time for real-time conversations
- Start with your own observations
- Invite others to share theirs
- Ask people to share cultural insights
- Decide how/whether to adjust team collaboration, communication norms

In closing...

"It is useful to know something about another nation's habits in order to judge our own in a healthier fashion, and not to imagine everything which differs from ours should be dismissed as ridiculous or illogical, as is frequently done by those who haven't seen anything."



For More Information...



Leading Effective Virtual Teams

Overcoming Time and Distance to Authore Exceptional Resurs

Nancy M. Settle-Murphy

Visit my Guided Insights website, search for related articles and guidelines, subscribe to *Communique*, my monthly E-newsletter at <u>www.guidedinsights.com</u>

My book is available from <u>Amazon</u> and <u>CRC Press</u>. Written as a series of tips, this book presents practical ideas to help virtual leaders engage and motivate their team members across time and distance. I also have downloadable tips guides for purchase on my site.

Let's talk - nancy@guidedinsights.com