



# 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



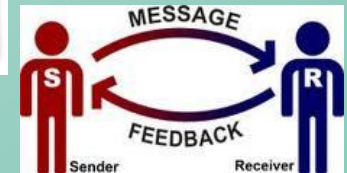
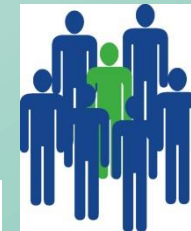
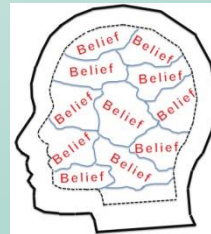
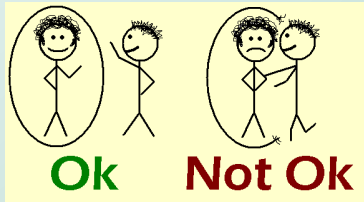
# Why bother talking about cultural differences?



# Most obvious cultural differences...



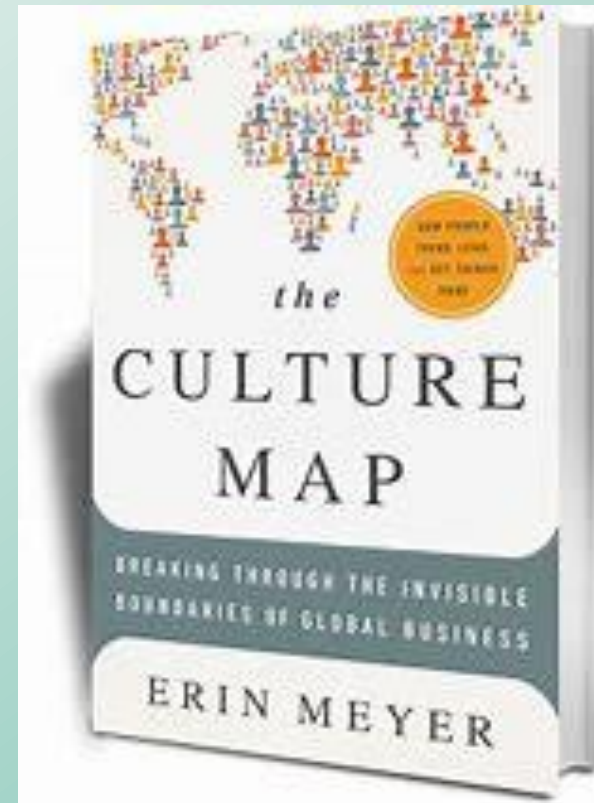
# Less obvious differences...





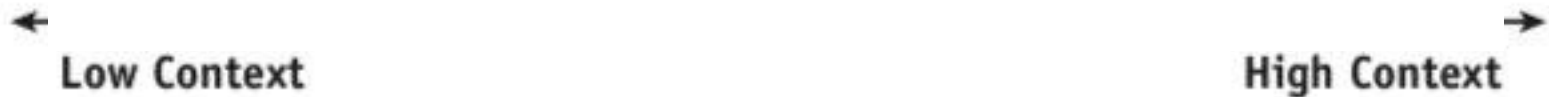
# Eight dimensions of culture

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



# 1. Communicating

FIGURE 1.1. COMMUNICATING



**Low Context** Good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face value. 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.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 1. Communicating — Examples and Implications?

**FIGURE 1.1. COMMUNICATING**



**Low Context** Good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face value. 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.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*





## 2. Evaluating

**FIGURE 2.2. EVALUATING**



Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



## 2. Evaluating – Examples and Implications?

**FIGURE 2.2. EVALUATING**

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



**Direct negative feedback**

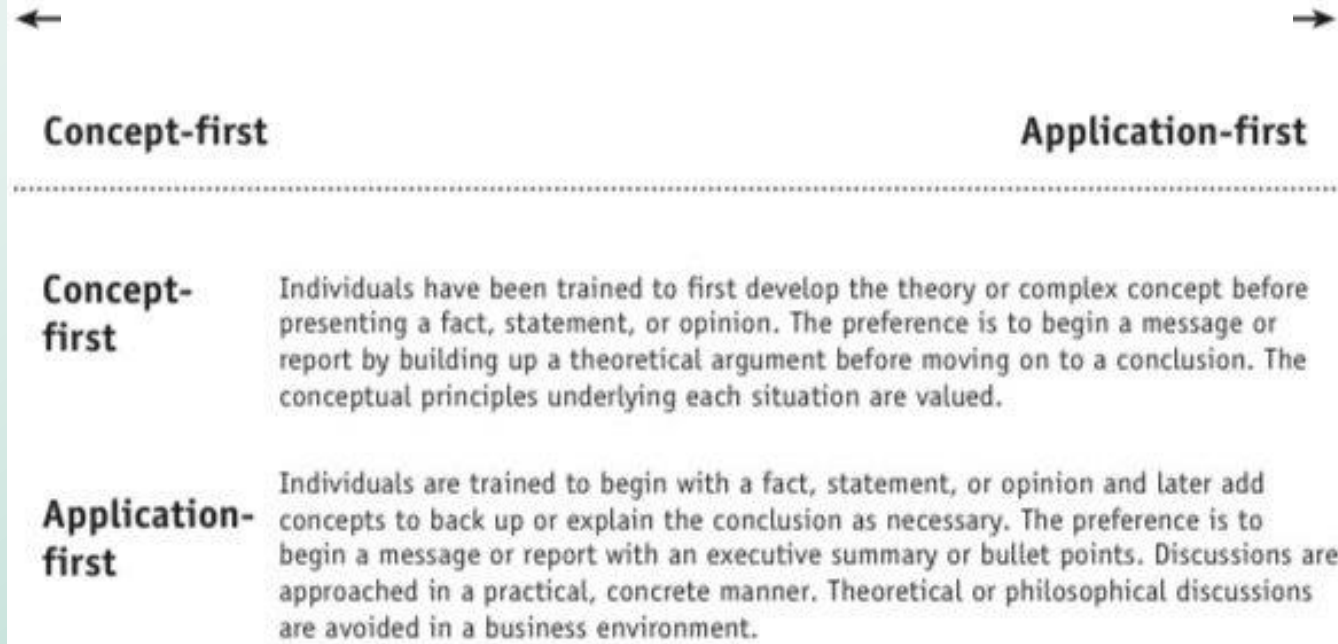
**Indirect negative feedback**

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 3. Persuading

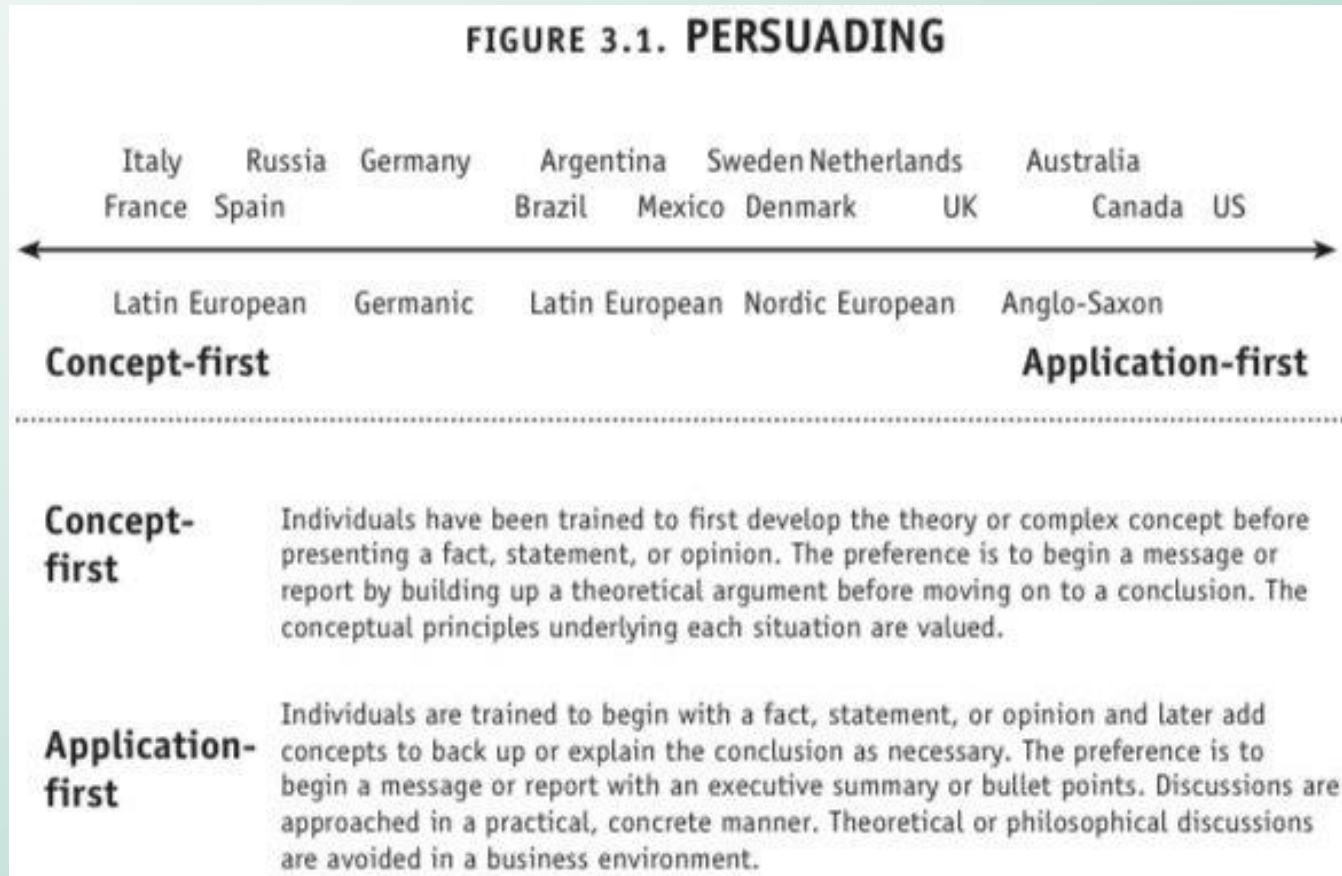
FIGURE 3.1. PERSUADING



Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 3. Persuading – Examples and Implications?



Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 4. Leading

FIGURE 4.1. LEADING



## 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.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*





# 4. Leading – Examples and Implications?

**FIGURE 4.1. LEADING**



- 
- 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.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 5. Deciding

FIGURE 5.3. DECIDING



Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 5. Deciding – Examples and Implications?

**FIGURE 5.3. DECIDING**



Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 6. Trusting

FIGURE 6.1. TRUSTING



## 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.

## Relationship-based

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.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 6. Trusting — Examples and Implications?

**FIGURE 6.1. TRUSTING**



**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.

**Relationship-based**

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.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*





# 7. Disagreeing

**FIGURE 7.1. DISAGREEING**



Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 7. Disagreeing – Examples and Implications?

**FIGURE 7.1. DISAGREEING**



Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 8. Scheduling

FIGURE 8.1. SCHEDULING



**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 things are dealt with at once and interruptions accepted. The focus is on adaptability and flexibility is valued over organization.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 8. Scheduling — Examples and Implications?

**FIGURE 8.1. SCHEDULING**



**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 things are dealt with at once and interruptions accepted. The focus is on adaptability and flexibility is valued over organization.

Content from these charts ©Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*



# 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

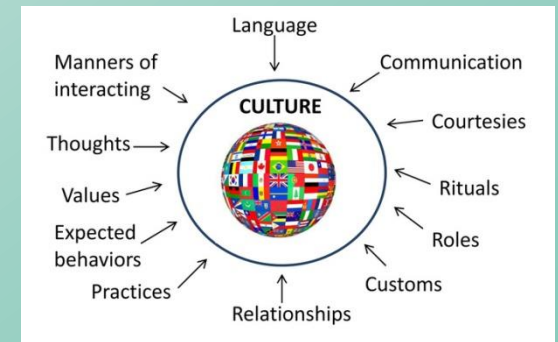
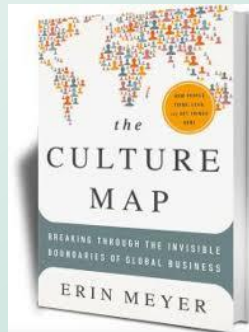
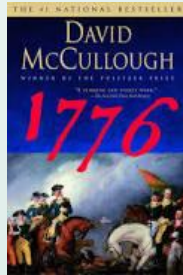
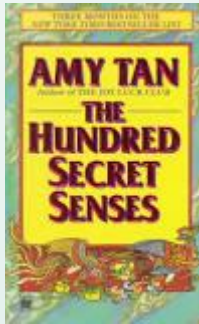


## Giant leaps

- 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



# 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...



Visit my Guided Insights website, search for related articles and guidelines, subscribe to *Communique*, my monthly E-newsletter at [www.guidedinsights.com](http://www.guidedinsights.com)

My book is available from [Amazon](http://Amazon) and [CRC Press](http://CRC Press). 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](mailto:nancy@guidedinsights.com)

