

Раздел 3. Деловая коммуникация.
MODULE 3. Business Communication

ПР17. Межличностные и межкультурные отношения.

ПР17. Interpersonal and Intercultural Contacts

When you observe people from a certain culture, some characteristics – such as dress and the way people greet each other are easy to see. Others are not so easy.

Culture is sometimes compared to an iceberg, some of which is visible, but much of which is difficult to see, or invisible.

Exercise 1. Look at the list of components of national culture, and place each one in one of the three categories:

A things which you can recognize quite easily

B things which you recognize only when you are very familiar with a culture

1. Beliefs
2. Family values
3. Language
4. Expectations
5. Food
6. Manners
7. Holidays and festivals
8. Rules of conduct
9. Greetings
10. Attitudes to the environment
11. Physical gestures
12. Work ethic
13. Roles of males and females
14. Art and architecture
15. Punctuality
16. Humour

Add any other elements which you think are important in defining a national culture.

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ПР18. Interpersonal and Intercultural Contacts

When you meet people for the first time, greet them politely and warmly. Use a mix of questions during the first conversation – try to discover what things you have in common. Be sensitive to the cultural background of the other person during the meeting.

Exercise 2. Nigel Hastings is a director of an intercultural consultancy. Listen to him talking about managing first meeting in different cultures and answer the questions.

1. Why does Nigel say it's important to manage first meetings well when working internationally?
 - a) Because it establishes positive relationship with international partners.
 - b) Because it helps to learn a foreign language.
2. What does he describe as the purpose of first meetings in the Arab world?
 - a) To start talking about business as soon as possible.
 - b) To get to know your partner and build trust.

3. When he goes to China, how does he usually start small talk?
 - a) He talks about Shanghai.
 - b) He talks about a person's roots.
4. Why is asking 'open questions' important?
 - a) It's a way to create an emotional connection with your partner.
 - b) It's a way to learn about your partner's background.

Audio transcript

Interviewer: How important is it to handle first meetings well?

Nigel: Very important, and breaking the ice can be more difficult due to language differences, cultural unfamiliarity and so on. But when we have to work with people across the globe we don't see very often, it becomes critical to manage that first moment positively, to get the relationship going.

Interviewer: In terms of cultural differences in first meetings, what have you experienced?

Nigel: Well, being British I do a little small talk about the weather, how I travelled to the place, some of the challenges I faced on the way, and a touch of humour but quite quickly getting down to business because I don't want to take up too much of the time of the individual I'm talking to. In other cultural contexts, I've learned you need to take a different approach. For example, working in the Arab world, I think the concept of 'small' talk is less relevant because those opening social moments are critical in a relationship-orientated culture. And showing respect for the local culture, saying positive things about what you've seen, what you know, why you appreciate where you are, showing and receiving hospitality. There's a slower transition into business, more exchange on the personal level before getting down to the task. And that builds trust. All this can be seen as slow and time-wasting in a UK context.

Interviewer: What kinds of positive things do you say?

Nigel: I think when I go to China I often find myself asking where someone comes from because I know quite a lot about China and it's an opportunity to show a kind of interest which I have for the country and a sensitivity to that person's roots. So I would say something like 'Oh, you come from Shanghai, I've been there a couple of times and I love it there.' This creates a positive impression. And it's true. I do love it there!

Interviewer: Does asking open questions generally work across all cultures to stimulate conversation?

Nigel: I think it definitely does. The open questions beginning with 'what' and 'how' open people up, give you an opportunity to listen to people speak, understand their interests ... so questions are very important as a way to create common ground.

Interviewer: Is this one of the secrets of success – creating common ground?

Nigel: I think so. You can ask an open question, listen to the response and then connect your experiences. You have the potential to build common ground also at an emotional level in terms of going through some common challenges. However, you can also ask closed questions to show interest in something around you.

Exercise 3. It is important to find things in common when responding to what people tell you. Match each comment to a response.

Comments

1. I've been to Italy a few times.
2. I studied mechanical engineering at uni.
3. I grew up just outside Madrid.
4. So these are the new offices.
5. Business is a bit challenging at the moment.

Responses

- a) I know the city quite well but not the region around it.
- b) Really? My brother did something similar and now works in construction.

- c) Indeed, but I read that things should be improving by the year end.
- d) Impressive. Looks like a nice place to work. Our offices are very different.
- e) Have you? Me too. I love the South.