

news & notes

UNDERSTANDING CULTURES

In addition to high-context and low-context cultures, there are other cultural differences that can affect communication. Customs such as dress, food, and holidays vary from culture to culture.

People from other cultures may have a different sense of time than you do. Humor often doesn't translate well from culture to culture. Decision making may take place at a slower pace in other cultures than you are used to. The experiences and world view of people you communicate with may be different from yours.

Business etiquette often differs from culture to culture as well.

- **In Western culture,** maintaining eye contact when speaking in person is considered good manners, whereas in other cultures, sustained eye contact could be viewed as hostile or rude.
- **In some cultures,** people may say "yes" just to be polite, or they may not come out and say "no" directly, but only hint at disagreement because to do otherwise would be considered impolite.



July 2013

Go global

Learn how to communicate in a global workplace

In the twenty-first century, the business world has become a global workplace with companies competing in worldwide markets. As a result, you may need to communicate with coworkers, customers, suppliers, and others from different countries and cultures. Here are seven tips for communicating in a global workplace:

1. **Objectivity.** Be objective about people, countries, and cultural characteristics. Judge people by their work performance, not by personal characteristics.
2. **Openness.** Be open to differences.
3. **Flexibility.** Look for alternative methods and styles of communication, and learn to adjust your approach to suit the individual with whom you are interacting.
4. **Sensitivity.** Be sensitive to diversity that might affect communication, and strive to be considerate of others' cultures and customs.
5. **Self-Awareness.** Don't focus only on others but also on yourself, and root out biases and misconceptions that may interfere with communication.
6. **Knowledge.** Take opportunities to learn about the languages, countries, and cultures of people you communicate with on the job.
7. **Patience.** Be aware that people from other cultures and countries may communicate in ways with which you are not familiar, so you may need to be patient and tolerant in interactions with them.

Also understand that communication takes place in different contexts in different cultures. In **high-context cultures**, people usually learn information more from the context of the communication than from the explicit content. They may feel more comfortable with consensus rather than with competition and indirect communication in which little information is explicitly expressed. They may place a high priority on politeness and social conventions when they do business and rely more on intuition and feelings, as opposed to logic and facts. They may place a lot of importance on nonverbal communication as a means of expression (e.g., facial expressions, body posture, gestures, and tone of voice). They generally emphasize relationships when doing business, which makes rapport and trust-building important components of global business communication.

High-context cultures: Asia, India, Latin America, Middle East, Africa, and Russia.

In **low-context cultures**, people usually rely more on the content of the message than context. They may also prefer direct rather than indirect communication, competition rather than consensus, logic and facts rather than intuition and feelings, and action-oriented rather than relationship-oriented communication.

Low-context cultures include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Northern Europe.

news & notes

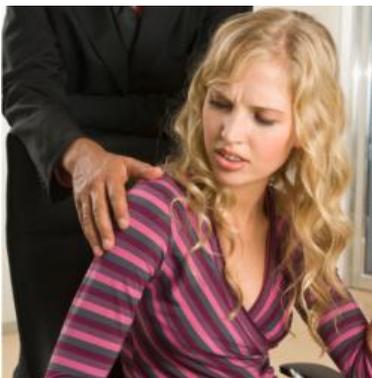
MASTER THE 4 'C'S

It used to be that mastery of the 3 Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) was enough to prepare workers for many jobs; now, executives of U.S. organizations say it is crucial that students and employees also master the **4 Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity)**, according to a recent American Management Association (AMA) report.

"There is an overwhelming belief on the part of American businesses that these emerging skills are important to their workforce," says Edward T. Reilly, who is CEO of the AMA and editor of *AMA Business Boot Camp* (AMACOM 2013). The survey found that nearly 75% of managers and executives who participated in the "AMA 2012 Critical Skills Survey" reported that the 4 Cs will become increasingly important skills in the next 3 to 5 years.

"It is a wise investment to continue to develop these skills in a conscious and formal manner"—training both managers and rank-and-file employees on the 4 Cs, Reilly says.

In AMA's survey, mentoring and in-house job training were cited as the most effective methods to strengthen the 4 Cs. Other effective methods were one-on-one coaching, job rotation, and professional development.



Emergency exercise

Know what to do

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), workplace fires and explosions kill 200 workers and injure more than 5,000 workers each year, at a cost of \$2.3 billion annually. Don't be one of these casualties.

Use this emergency action and fire prevention exercise to make sure you're prepared for emergencies. Choose **Yes** or **No** for each statement.

Do you know:

- The location of fire alarms near your work area? **Yes No**
- How to activate fire alarms? **Yes No**
- How to recognize the emergency signal? **Yes No**
- How to report an emergency? **Yes No**
- Who to contact in an emergency? **Yes No**
- Your emergency assignment? **Yes No**
- The designated evacuation route(s) from your work area? **Yes No**
- Evacuation routes from areas in the workplace other than your work area where you frequently go (rest rooms, break rooms, etc.)? **Yes No**
- The assembly area outside where you must go following evacuation? **Yes No**
- The location of shelter-in-place areas within the workplace? **Yes No**

If you chose **No** for any statements, find out the information now—before an emergency happens.

Summer jobs and sexual harassment

Protect teens in the workplace

There are several reasons why sexual harassment of younger workers presents unique challenges for employers. **First**, younger workers may seem to go along with offensive conduct because they want to be accepted as part of the work group and because they really don't know where the boundaries of conduct lie. Because of their age and lack of experience, many may not understand that inappropriate workplace conduct can be unlawful, or they may hesitate to complain about harassment when it comes from a person in authority.

Second, many summer jobs are in casual work environments like camps, amusement parks, and fast-food restaurants where employees may think there's a more relaxed standard for workplace conduct. **Third**, those who supervise summer workers may be not much older than the workers they supervise and it may be their first time in a supervisory position. Conversely, some more experienced supervisors may take advantage of a teen worker's inexperience in the workplace and threaten retaliation if a worker reports harassment.

Training is key to helping prevent workplace harassment. Here's what you and your teenage co-workers need to know:

- What constitutes sexual harassment in the workplace
- The fact that retaliation is unlawful
- How to report harassment and/or retaliation when it occurs