



Cross Communication Faux Pas

CROSS CULTURE MANAGEMENT

Faux pas

- ▶ What is it?

What is it?

- ▶ What does faux pas mean?
- ▶ What does it mean “Cross communication faux pas”?
- ▶ How does it impact me?
- ▶ How I can avoid it?

Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ What could be wrong with...
- ▶ Sipping vodka in Russia?



Don't sip your vodka

- ▶ Vodka is not made for sipping.
- ▶ It is made for taking shots.
- ▶ If you're not keen on vodka shots, it is better to say "no" than to sit there gingerly sipping away at your shot glass.

Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ What could be wrong with...
- ▶ Eating with your left hand in India.





Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ Eating with your left hand in India
- ▶ In India, as right across Asia, the left hand is for wiping your bottom, cleaning your feet and other unsavoury functions (you also put on and take off your shoes with your left hand), while the right hand is for eating, shaking hands and so on.

Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ What could be wrong with...
- ▶ Patting the back of a colleague in Korea to thank them for a "job well done"?



Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ Patting the back of a colleague in Korea to thank them for a "job well done"?
- ▶ Koreans consider it a personal violation to be touched by someone who is not a relative or close friend.
- ▶ Avoid touching, patting or back slapping a Korean.

Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ In many countries, these actions are harmless.
- ▶ But in others, they can give a wrong impression or cause offense.
- ▶ They could even damage a relationship or ruin a major deal.

Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ In fact, whatever culture you're from, it's likely that you routinely do something that could cause offense somewhere else in the world.

Understanding the Impact of Cross-Cultural Differences

- ▶ Why it is so important to be aware of different cultural traditions?
- ▶ If you want to build good working relationships with people from these cultures,
these are some gestures and actions to avoid

The Importance of Cultural Awareness

- ▶ It's not just professionals working overseas who need to learn cross-cultural business etiquette.

The Importance of Cultural Awareness

- ▶ Stop and think about how many different cultures you come into contact with at work.

The Importance of Cultural Awareness

- ▶ Even if you work in your home country, your colleagues and suppliers could hail from other cultures.
- ▶ Your organization might decide to acquire or merge with an organization in a different country.
- ▶ And your customers, too, may be located in dozens of countries worldwide.

The Importance of Cultural Awareness

- ▶ Our world's diversity is what makes it so fascinating.
- ▶ When you take time to understand the reasons for this diversity, you show respect for other people's cultures.
- ▶ And when you do this in a business context, you'll improve your working relationships and develop your own reputation.



Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ Consider the following questions when thinking about how a culture might differ from your own:

Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ What values does this culture embrace?
- ▶ How do those values compare with those of your culture?



Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ How do people make decisions, conduct relationships, and display emotion?

Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ How does this culture treat time and scheduling?

Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ What are the social rules and boundaries surrounding gender?

Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ How does this culture display and respect power?
Which authority figures are revered?



Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ How do individuals relate to their employers?

Considering Cultural Differences

- ▶ How do people in this culture communicate?
- ▶ How direct are they in what they say and mean?

Tip

- ▶ Be humble.
- ▶ Whatever you learn about cultural differences, there will be local and regional variations that you won't know about.

Admit that you're keen to learn, and encourage people to tell you about these variations.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

- ▶ Below is the listed actions and items that could cause offense in a variety of cultures and countries

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Food

- ▶ People abstain from eating and drinking certain foods for many religious and cultural reasons.
- ▶ Manners and expectations at the table can also differ.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Food

- ▶ In Asian and Russian cultures, it's common not to talk during a meal because the food is the focus.
- ▶ Most conversation takes place after dinner.
- ▶ This isn't the case in, for example, Japan, where colleagues often discuss work after hours and while socializing over a meal.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Food

- ▶ How much you eat can cause offense in some cultures.
- ▶ For example, your hosts in Russia, Greece, and Italy could be offended if you don't eat enough.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Food

- ▶ Pay careful attention to how you use your chopsticks in Asian countries.
- ▶ Never use them in a gesture or for pointing, and never stick them upright in your rice bowl: this is an omen of death. Don't use them to spear a piece of food or to tap a glass or bowl, either.
- ▶ And never cross your chopsticks; they should always lie side by side.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Food

- ▶ Try to avoid turning down vodka in Russia – when it's offered, it's a sign of trust and friendship.
- ▶ Vodka is served neat, and you should drink it all at once; Russians consider sipping vodka to be rude.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Food

- ▶ Muslims, Mormons, and Seventh Day Adventists avoid alcohol.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Food

- Hindus, India's largest religious population, consider it unholy to eat beef.
- Most are also vegetarian.
- Muslims and Jews are forbidden to eat pork (and, in addition, Jews do not eat shellfish), and Roman Catholics may choose fish rather than red meat on Fridays.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Body Language and Gestures

- ▶ In India, Africa, and the Middle East, people always use their right hand for greeting, touching, and eating.
- ▶ They consider the left hand unclean, so you should never use it for anything publicly.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Body Language and Gestures

- ▶ Several cultures consider crossing your legs to be rude.
- ▶ For example, in the Middle East and South Africa, crossed legs often show the sole of the foot, a sign of an ill wish or a bad omen.
- ▶ In Japan, it's considered rude to cross your legs in the presence of someone older or more respected than you.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Body Language and Gestures

- ▶ Certain gestures considered acceptable in one country can be highly offensive in another.
- ▶ For example, a "thumbs up" gesture is seen as a sign of satisfaction in the West, but is highly offensive in some Middle Eastern countries.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Body Language and Gestures

- ▶ In the United States, a handshake demonstrates that negotiations are finished, and that everyone is leaving on good terms.
- ▶ In the Middle East, a handshake is a sign that serious negotiations are now beginning.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Body Language and Gestures

- ▶ In many cultures, pointing is impolite, so it's usually best to avoid it entirely.
- ▶ If you must gesture toward something, use your entire hand.

Tip:

- ▶ It can be challenging to know which gestures are taboo.
- ▶ A good rule of thumb is to avoid gestures until you're sure that they're acceptable.
- ▶ Watch how locals use body language, and follow their lead.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Clothing and Color

- ▶ In the South Pacific, Asia, Thailand, and Russia, it's courteous to remove your shoes before entering a home.
- ▶ This helps maintain cleanliness; but it's also a sign that you're leaving the outside world where it belongs.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Clothing and Color

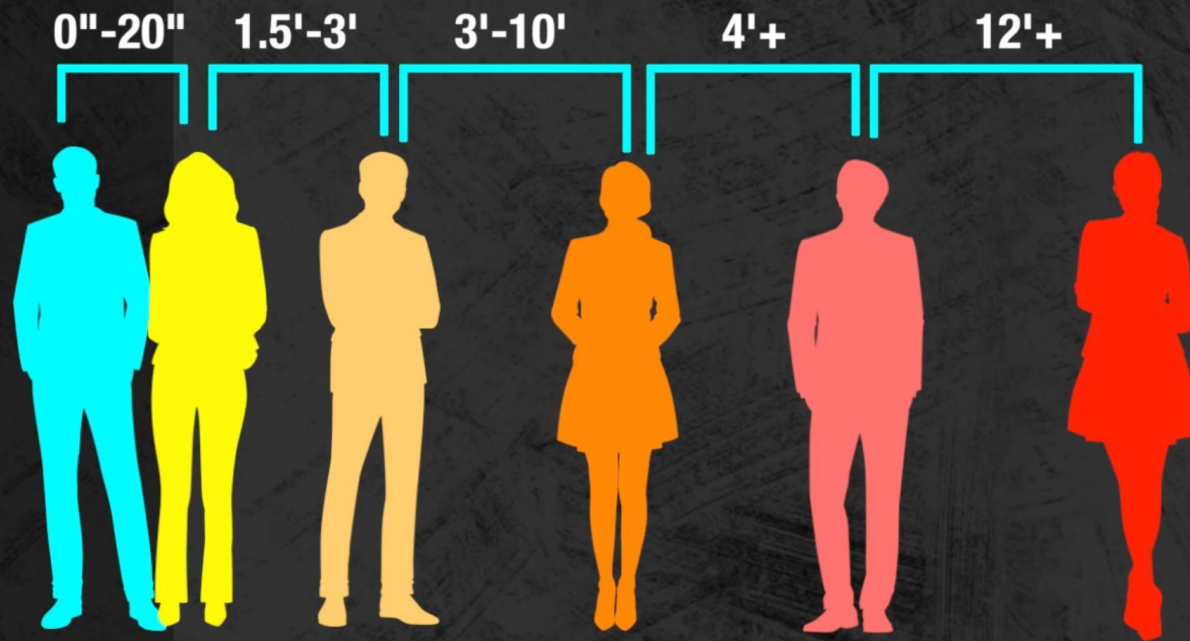
- ▶ Some cultures pay careful attention to clothing.
- ▶ For example, it's important to be well dressed in Italy and the United Arab Emirates, and sloppy or casual clothing is considered impolite.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Clothing and Color

- ▶ The color of your clothing could also cause offense.
- ▶ For example, never wear yellow in Malaysia; this color is reserved for royalty.
- ▶ In China, you'll make a better impression by wearing red, which is considered lucky, than by wearing white, which is associated with death.

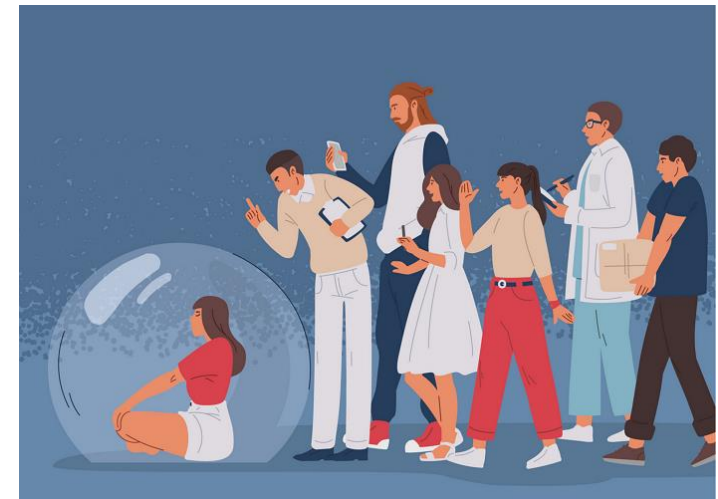
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Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Personal Space

- ▶ Personal space is the distance that you keep between yourself and another person.
- ▶ It varies widely between cultures.



Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Personal Space

- ▶ In the United States, many people prefer to keep one to two meters' space between friends and family members, and up to three meters between strangers and business associates.
- ▶ These preferences are similar in the United Kingdom, Norway, Germany, and other European countries.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Personal Space

- ▶ The personal space requirements of Saudi Arabians are much lower:
- ▶ they often stand very close to one another, even those they don't know well.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

Personal Space

- ▶ Chinese people and people from other Asian cultures are also typically used to less personal space than Westerners.

Common Cross-Cultural Mistakes

- ▶ It's important to understand the personal space requirements of a different culture, so that you're not perceived as rude (by standing too far away) or pushy (by standing too close).






- ▶ Personal space also includes touching.
- ▶ In Mediterranean and South American cultures, touching is an important part of conversation and connecting.
- ▶ If you don't touch others, you'll be considered cold.
- ▶ However, in Eastern countries, touching is often considered taboo, and you'll offend your colleagues if you pat them on the back or touch their arm.

Key Points

- ▶ Cross-cultural awareness is an essential skill, regardless of whether you're working overseas, leading a cross-cultural or virtual team, or dealing with a global customer base.
- ▶ Learn about the culture of the country where you're doing business to avoid cultural mistakes, and to demonstrate respect and understanding.

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- ▶ Research key differences in decision making, relationships, dress, food, dining, and social etiquette before working with or traveling to a different culture.
 - ▶ Your hosts will notice your efforts, and appreciate that you took the time to learn about their culture.

Ref: <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/articlecross-cultural-mistakes.htm>