



Michigan Business Travel Association

Mary Beth Lamb
Prouty Project
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Michigan's Global Workforce Says...

- *“How do we build trust and get things done on time and with the best results with people we may never see?”*
- *“It's tough to feel like a real team when we're thousands of miles apart. We have to take time to get to know each other and build trust virtually.”*
- *“It's hard for us to be successful if we don't understand cultural differences that impact how our virtual team members work best around the world.”*



***Bridging the Culture Gap:
Working Remotely and Staying Connected
Across Virtual Teams and Cultures
An MBTA Workshop***

How Can Cultural Competency Help Us Stay Connected Virtually and Achieve Better Results?

- Michigan's workforce is more diverse and global than ever before
- Cultural competency helps make working remotely more effective and fulfilling

What is Cultural Competency?



The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to work effectively across cultural, organizational, geographic, and language differences.



Cultural Competency is the Top Challenge Facing Virtual Teams Today

- Almost 90 percent of top executives from 68 countries named *cultural competency* as their top management challenge for this *century*.
- Executives surveyed cited *understanding customers across cultures* as the greatest of all global leadership challenges.

Source: "The Economist"
Economist Intelligence Unit
2012



Virtual Team Acumen

+

Cultural Competence

= Peak Performing Virtual Teams

3 Ways to Build Virtual Team Success Now

1. Hold people in unconditional positive regard; assume your counterparts' actions are done with good intent.
2. Make a lot of deposits in the relationship bank before you ask for a single withdrawal.
3. Remember some cultures (*monochronic*) build trust by starting with the task. Others (*polychronic*) build trust by building a relationship first.

Virtual/Global Team Meeting Tips

- Clarify the meeting purpose and agenda ahead of time.
- Plan ahead for disconnects. What key questions and concerns might team members have? Try using: “If I was you, I might be thinking...”
- Map your team members preferences of the 5 key cultural differences to plan and lead a more effective meeting.
- Balance time devoted to the task and the time devoted to relationship building.
- Encourage dialogue. Rotate meeting leadership and scribing. Use whiteboards to flatten the hierarchy.
- Send a written summary of key agreements, next steps, timelines, and how results will be measured.
- Develop a rhythm. Once a week works best.
- Be prepared to conduct regular follow-up and one on one meetings.

Key Cross-Cultural Dimensions That Impact Virtual Team Success

1. Task and Relationship

Task

Relationship

2. Power Distance Indicator

Egalitarian

Hierarchical

3. **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Low Uncertainty Avoidance

High Uncertainty Avoidance

Risk Oriented

Risk Averse

4. Individualism/Collectivism

'I' Culture

'We' Culture

5. Context

Low

High

Effective Virtual Communication

- 1. Listen and, when possible, observe all cues. Use webcasting and other visual communication media.**
2. Avoid slang, acronyms, business jargon, contractions, and references to pop culture and local events. They don't translate.
- 3. Follow your counterpart's lead. Silence may be comfortable or respectful. Take a deep breath and wait!**
4. Ask: "What would make this work best for you?" Build agendas, timelines and processes together; don't dictate the "PPP".
5. Expect a multicultural call to take three times as long so limit your objectives and keep it simple. Plan breaks every 15 minutes, if there are multilingual participants.
- 6. Limit e-mail communication. It's good for data and confirming details. It's terrible for trust building and resolving conflict.**

An example: No multitasking on virtual calls; all devices are off.

I Can See Clearly Now

- Observe/Listen
- Reflect (Using the Global Skills Toolkit TM)
- Adapt

It's that easy!



Intercultural Leadership

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Thank You!

Mary Beth Lamb

Prouty Project Senior Consultant

mblamb1@icloud.com

Mobile: 952.240.5592

LinkedIn

Twitter

Prouty Project

www.proutyproject.com