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Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication

Abstract

Communication makes the world to move forward intellectually and keep the society to have its power to live together. The society develop its culture in due course by having healthy interpersonal communication. The way and style of interpersonal communication bring a particular style and shape which is followed by that group and identified as a culture. As such, each society has its own culture and diverse from others with minimal differences. Attention on those slight variation in communication makes the sense of intercultural communication. A detailed study of these variation in different context provides the importance of intercultural communication. This article will bring enough knowledge about the situational changes and evolution of interpersonal communication.

Introduction

"The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood." - Ralph Nichols. Interpersonal communication is one of the basic means of communication. It takes place when two people are at the same place and aware of each other's presence, no matter how unintentional or unpremeditated it is. It may not be in the form of speech, it may be a gesture, an expression, the dress, or the body. These skills can be improved by practice, knowledge, and feedback. The essential factor is, there should be a message and it should be sent by the sender and it should be received by the receiver.

Small changes can magnify, the possibility of interpersonal communication has increased substantially with contemporary technology. But as compared with the major changes, which were long ago, these are not huge - Noam Chomsky. The character of interpersonal communication takes the shape of independent individuals with their media of commu8nication. This may seem obvious, but really what this means is that each person has their own motivations, expectations, and interpretations of communication. The other fundamental characteristic of interpersonal communication is that it is inherently rational. In short, it's meant to be understood. Whatever people communicate, however they communicate it, they do so because they are intelligent beings capable of expressing and communicating their thoughts and feelings in many forms. And when they communicate, they do so because they expect something to be communicated.

The humans communicate rationally; researchers also characterize communication as being inescapable. The people are always communicating, always presenting information about them and interpreting information from other people. By saying something, they are communicating and by refusing to say something, they also communicate something. Henceforth communication is constant, but it also involves personal choice. That's the

important characteristic of interpersonal communication. On the contrary, the interpersonal skill is limited and sometime null and void when the younger generation involved in the internet. As Rainn Wilson states Internet technology, like anything else that mankind creates is a tool and that tool can be used for good or for evil, like a lightsabre. Technology is supposed to bring people together, streamline things and make life easier and in a lot of ways, it does that. However, technology can also disconnect you from other people and break down the social network, the real social network of family and friends and interpersonal communication, and isolate people, make them feel alone, make them feel small. So it's a tool that needs to be used correctly.

Interacting with people from different cultures or ethnic groups may involve a high degree of strangeness and a low degree of familiarity. Gudykunst (1995) argues that effective intercultural communication is partly based on one's ability to manage anxiety and uncertainty. Anxiety has to do with the feeling of discomfort while uncertainty deals with an inability to predict the behaviour of others. Intercultural communication (or cross-cultural communication) is a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups, or how culture affects communication. It also involves understanding the different cultures, languages and customs of people from other countries. Its skills are those required to communicate or share information, with people from other cultures and social groups. While language skills may be an important part of intercultural communication, they are by no means the only requirement. It offers the ability to deal across cultures, which is increasingly important, as the world gets smaller. Being able to deal with this cultural difference peacefully, never mind creatively and innovatively, is becoming a survival issue to thrive in a global world as a global leader.

There are basically two types of intercultural communication

1) Verbal communication

2) Non-verbal communication.

Verbal communication consists of words used to communicate messages whereas non-verbal communication is gestures that give out messages. Actually, intercultural communication is the verbal and nonverbal interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds. Basically, 'inter-' is a prefix that means 'between' and cultural means well, from a culture, so intercultural communication is the communication between cultures.

Self Awareness

Self-awareness is the first step to effective intercultural communication. Before starting conversation/talk, one has to decide the way of communication and use accepted nonverbal gestures because rarely few of the gestures convey bad information. Knowing about the knowledge of particular countries nonverbal behavior is advisable to converse with those people. The next important message is that one has to concentrate on the accent of the people. While on the conversation, one can feel the agreement for a statement from the people who are listening to the speaker. On that gesture or agreement sign, speakers will think how to develop a particular communication style. It provides a clue to what aspects of culture shaped that have to be followed and the way of interaction.

All-time learner

When people are trying to solve a problem with people from all different parts of the world, then that is the best opportunity to learn many things. Learners should try to focus less on asserting their own opinion or ideas and instead, should try to find out what other people's ideas are, how those ideas might reflect their own culture and how various points of view could create a stronger solution to the problem.

Curiosity

Curiosity is an important aspect to deal with different cultures of different people. If people aren't curious about other cultures, then they probably haven't had the chance to experience them. The challenge and the exciting thing about intercultural communication is that everyone is operating on different assumptions and values. Traveling abroad is a great way to spark curiosity about different cultures.

Listen and observe

In western culture, there is a lot of emphasis placed on the value of speaking and voicing the opinion but not as much value is placed on observing and listening. There is so much that people can gain if they are willing to listen more than a talk and watch how others communicate. While listen and observe people can know about the how the people communicate nonverbally and can know how close they stand to talk with others. People can easily observe the changes that they are making in intonation or speaking rhythm. On the whole, people can understand the message and can know the correct purpose of it only through the best listing and observing skills.

Intercultural Business Communication

Intercultural knowledge is more important to the business man who wants to extend his business overseas. Once he entered into the international world marketing the he must know about the Intercultural behaviour and beliefs.

A few best practices for working cross-culture

Successful Negotiating: When negotiating in a transactional culture, people begin discussing negotiations right away. When negotiating in a relationship culture, the pre-negotiation process is crucial. Building trust is essential to entering the actual negotiations, so take time to know the people you will be dealing with.

Decision Making: In transactional cultures, decisions are generally made to best serve the interests of the company. Personal relationships may be disregarded if other means will ensure greater efficiency. In relationship cultures, decision-making will take into consideration relationships with employees and clients even if this may affect efficiency of the task.

Business Relationships & Communications: In transactional cultures, business relationships are separate from personal relationships. Communications can go smoothly, even if no relationship is previously established. In relationship cultures, business communications are extremely important. Be careful not to neglect the building and nurturing of personal ties.

Intercultural with high and low context

Understanding the nuances of nonverbal communication across culture is as important as to know the differences between "high-context" and "low-context" cultures. Context refers to the information that surrounds an event and is tied up with that event's ultimate meaning.

"High-context" cultures rely heavily on nonverbal communication, using elements such as the closeness of their relationships, strict social hierarchies and deep cultural knowledge to convey meaning. In contrast, "low-context" cultures depend largely on words themselves. Communication tends to be more direct, relationships tend to begin and end quickly, and hierarchies are more relaxed. It is important to note that no culture is "better" than another; communication styles simply convey differences, rather than superiority.

High Context

Communication tends to be indirect, harmoniously structured and understated.
In conversation, people are expected to speak one after another in an orderly with linear fashion. Disagreements are personally threatening. It is important to solve conflict immediately or avoid it completely in order for work to continue. Physical space is considered more communal. Standing very close to others is a common practice. Verbal messages are indirect. Speakers often talk around a point (instead of directly to it) and use embellishments to convey meaning.
Accuracy is valued. How well something is learned is important. Some countries considered "high context" include Japan, Greece and various Arab nations.

Low Context

Communication tends to be linear, dramatic, precise and open. Because words are so highly valued, they are used almost constantly. Disagreements are depersonalized. Conflicts do not have to be resolved immediately for work to continue. When solutions are found, they tend to be rationally based. Privacy and personal space are highly valued. Physical space is considered privately owned. Verbal messages are explicit and direct. Words are valued above their context.
Speed is valued. How efficiently something is done is important. Some countries considered "low context" include the United States, Germany and various Scandinavian countries. While "high" and "low" context are examples of opposing cultures, it is also true that many cultures fall in between these two extremes. Called "multi-active," these cultures might include those of Spain, Italy or Latin America.

Conclusion

The use of attitude toward silence can also be considered a type of communication. The Greeks use silence as a way to refuse things, while Egyptians use it to consent. Some cultures (such as those in Asia) are generally more comfortable with long bouts of silence than others. When international business professionals take the time to learn what isn't being said, everyone benefits. Individual who seeks to work in international business or other purpose, discovering ways to effectively communicate with global clients or people is a key to their success.