

# Importance of intercultural communication



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It is worthwhile to explain the meaning of communication before explaining the topic of intercultural communication. Communication is defined as a dynamic process of sharing of ideas, opinions and thoughts with other people through the use of symbols for establishing and maintaining effective relationships. Communication is the center point of all human existence and is widely regarded as a normal human phenomenon (Sethi, 2010). The main purpose of carrying out communication is to bring about mutual understanding between two or more people through the interchange of ideas and information. It is with the help of communication that all personal and social relationships are formed and maintained; communication thus is a way of being a human. On the other hand, intercultural communication refers to creation of shared meaning by people belonging to different cultural values, norms, beliefs and perspectives (Bisen, 2009). Intercultural communication takes place when individuals' cultural membership factors for instance their cultural norms and shared cultural perspectives affect their communication process.

Intercultural communication is widely regarded as being much more challenging than the normal communication because it occurs between two or more people with extensively different world views (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2009). A group of British automotive engineers travelling to US and meeting with their American counterparts for exchanging knowledge and techniques related to automobile engineering is an effective example of intercultural communication (Sadri & Flammia, 2011). Intercultural communication is a common occurrence in everyday business dealings where people belonging to different cultural communities interact with each

other for carrying out business transactions for example a German importer carrying out business negotiations with an Indian importer. High quality intercultural communication results when communicators are aware of the behavioral tendencies of other people involved in the communication process.

It is due to the differences in cultural norms that lead to differences in communication styles of people belonging to different countries. These differences may sometimes lead to confusion and hostility (Asante & Miike, 2008). For example the American and Chinese negotiators have dissimilar communication styles; Americans belong to the low context cultures where people come straight to the point while talking whereas Chinese belong to the high context culture where people tend to be less direct whilst engaged in the communication process (Steinberg S. , 2007). These differences in cultures are the result why many American-Chinese business communications are marred by uncertainty, in order to avoid unwanted aggression during negotiations it is thus important to for both American and Chinese negotiators need to understand each other's cultures in order to effectively encode and decode messages.

### **Importance and scope of intercultural communication**

Policy makers and scholars unanimously opine that enhanced intercultural communication and augmented intercultural harmony has become all the more significant with the rapid globalization and the increasing blending of different cultures, behavioral norms and business practices. The free movement of goods, capital, services, ideas and information across national boundaries means that today a large number of people from non-English

speaking countries are part of the American workforce which signifies the importance of intercultural communication (Daft, 2009).

Intercultural communication is important for a wide variety of reasons; some of the most important reasons are underlined as below:

The role of intercultural communication in global economics if given proper attention can prove to be the single most potent force producing positive economic outcomes. From the global economic perspective Americans daily carry out trade and business transactions with nations as diverse as India, Germany and China all having different cultural identities than their own (Toomey, 1999). Such business transactions can only be carried out successfully if and when the Americans and their trading partners vice versa are aware of the cultural expectations of their trading partners in order to facilitate communication with them.

The importance of intercultural communication multiplies in enormity when it is seen from the new age employee context; with work related assignments slowly stretching onto the international terrains, the new age employee needs to possess high quality communication skills and they must learn to appreciate the multicultural differences arising from having an increasingly diverse workforce in the organization (Cleary, 2004).

The importance of intercultural communication should never be underestimated for multinational organizations such as DaimlerChrysler for example, where people from an increasingly diverse and multicultural workforce are employed (Pinto, 2000). These MNCs need to look beyond their established work grounds and focus on their international markets

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through appreciation of cross cultural differences and to understand that different patterns of cognition exist.

2. Imagine yourself as IT manager of a company and explain the various parameters which you will adopt in order to maintain a proper flow of communication in your organization.

### **Responsibilities as an IT manager for maintaining proper flow of communication in the organization**

Organizations of today face serious communication challenge due to increasing pace of globalization (Cascio, 2006). A multi-national organization faces the challenge of managing a diverse work-force who lives in different time zones and speak different languages (Cascio, 2006). While it may be morning in one office of a multinational organization, the workers in other part of the world may be packing their bags to go home. Thus, it is important for the IT manager of a multinational organization to make sure that communication across different organizational offices across the globe is managed effectively and efficiently without any hassles (Guffey & Loewy, 2010). Along with posing some challenges the rapid pace of technological globalization has also benefited organizations in a number of ways. In today's workplace the employees are connected to their co-workers living in a different country through computers and electronic networks (David, 2009). Virtual meetings are now an everyday reality. A CEO living in the U. S. can simultaneously address thousands of his employees working in different parts of the world through videoconferencing (David, 2009).

Information technology is changing the way communication is done across the organizations. Today the highly globalized nature of everyday organizational working requires IT managers to develop systems that enable their respective organizations to constantly keep in touch with their customers, take orders from them, buy components from suppliers, give orders to manufacturers and deliver the final end product to the customers (David, 2009). This means that any organization in the same industry which lags behind in introducing such innovative communication solutions will ultimately cede out of the industry in a matter of days (Hartley & Bruckmann, 2002). Thus an organization of today has to keep pace with rapid technological advances in order to protect itself from being taken over by the fast emerging technologically superior organizations; this is where the role of the IT manager of an organization emerges to develop and maintain technologically superior communication networks within the organization (Hargie & Tourish, 2012). Examples emerging from organizations across a diverse range of industries provide substantial evidence supporting the role of IT managers across the organizations.

### **Steps for maintaining proper flow of communication**

The IT manager of an organization can take several steps for maintaining proper flow of communication in an organization.

The first step IT manager can take is the introduction of a networked communication system through which different computers in the organization are linked through a networked computer system. This networked system allows members to communicate with each other and get access to important organizational information as and when required.

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Another step the IT manager of an organization can take to improve communication within the organization is to formulate an effective data collection policy. Effective data collection within an organization is not possible without introducing a database system which is the collection of related data stored in a central location. Any employee needing information can access the database for internal organizational information such as transaction records, sales records, personnel records as well as external information such as the information regarding competitors, market conditions and industry trends (Palvia, Palvia, & Zigli, 1992). The database also helps managers from different departments to obtain important information that is related to everyday organizational working but unrelated to their particular department for example the marketing manager can access the database for some insights into the financial side of the business.

The IT managers can also setup facilities for transfer of written messages on linked computers through the introduction of an intra-organizational e-mail system. E-mail is a cheap medium of communication between organizational members through which they can share important information and make queries related to day to day organizational working.

IT managers can also introduce Electronic data interchanges (EDI) for exchanging standard business transaction documents such as invoices, purchase orders all through the use of networked computer systems. EDI is a very cheap and time saving method of communication (Lussier, 2011).

Organizations can also use EDI with vendors, suppliers and customers for day to day communication by transmission of information stored on one

organization's computer system to the vendor's, supplier's or customer's computer system through a telecommunications network.

IT managers should also introduce technologies for making teleconferencing and videoconferencing a daily part of the day to day organization working.

Teleconferencing allows a group of people to simultaneously get into contact with each other using a telephone or group communications software.

Videoconferencing refers to the use of software and hardware technologies so that the participants of a meeting located at different geographical locations can communicate with each other over video screens (Berger, Roloff, & Ewoldsen, 2009). Teleconferencing and videoconferencing technologies can also be used by different organizational work groups working at different locations to collaborate and share important information.

The IT managers of organizations can also introduce Web conferencing techniques for improving communication within the organization. Web conferencing refers to holding live organizational meeting on the internet (Bidgoli, 2011).