

# Understanding work teams

[Business](#), [Work](#)



Within IBM, there is now a group called Business Partner Marketing Advisory Council (BPMAC) that was started two years ago to check on cooperation with resellers and distributors that are responsible for 50% of the Big Blue's sales. IBM made the group of chosen company executives, representatives of top resellers and distributors, consultants and ISVs. The way of functioning includes twice-a-year face-to-face meetings, a session at PartnerWorld among those, plus teleconferences.

On the agendas of these meetings are “ revision of the Partner Rewards program, simplifying the labyrinth of communications and dark corridors that have been required to do business with IBM in the past, and providing the select partners with glimpses of IBM's vision for the future in order to get feedback” (Roberts 2005). • Most participants of the group insist that the BPMAC was an extremely good idea that helps tremendously the communications between the Big Blue and its suppliers and distributors. The reasons why the group was so successful are multiple:

- A well thought-out composition of the group. The 12 or 15 companies on the council they “ constitute a good mix, reports Maggie Hayes, marketing manager for Sirius”, as they represent different regions (Roberts 2005).
- Support from IBM itself for the activities of the group. The Big Blue offers the BPMAC its vision of the future before it makes any definitive statement for the press, which really helps people to plan ahead.
- Empowerment of group members: the main reason for the BPMAC's existence is that IBM really wants feedback from its members.

IBM makes a point that of making clear to suppliers that “ their needs are being met and their voices are being heard” (Roberts 2005). • Openness in

discussions within the group. Members are encouraged to reveal their ideas about what is going on and whether they approve or want things to go any other direction. 2. Basic managerial strategies for influencing group behavior, encouraging group problem solving and mediating inter-group conflict. Problem-solving within a group has never been easy since a group always involves a few different people with differing viewpoints.

To encourage collaborative group-solving and mediate inter-group conflict, a few strategies can be used. Most of them are especially relevant to intercultural management:

- Mindful listening. It is important not only to listen physically, but also to listen in such a way that allows one to get the necessary information about the speaker's "verbal, nonverbal, and meta-nonverbal contexts that are being conveyed in the conflict negotiation process" (Ting-Toomey).
- Mindful Reframing.

One needs to adjust to the cultural background of the opponent and be able to translate the message into appropriate cultural terms.

- Face-management skills. It is necessary 'to give face', which means avoidance of public humiliation of other people. One should remember that ideas of self-esteem and dignity vary across ethnic cultures and social groups, and what one person thinks normal may be an insult in the eyes of another person.
- Trust-building skills. A person who has problems in communication may "turn off listening devices" and shrink into oneself (Ting-Toomey).

Then this person becomes unavailable for any significant influence. That is why it is important to build trust in the eyes of another person and produce the impression of 'trustworthiness'.

- Collaborative dialogue. In collaborative dialogue, individuals forming part of the group have to adapt to their cultural

values of the other members. Thus, if a person is a collectivist, this person has to learn to be more assertive in the expression of his/her values, norms and ideas. An individualist, on the contrary, has to learn to be more receptive to the views of others.

#### Works Cited

Robert, Mary Lou. "IBM's BPMAC: A Small Group With Lots of Pull". *The Four Hundred* 14. 24, June 13, 2005. 29 September 2005 . Ting-Toomey, Stella. *Communicating Across Cultures*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1999. 29 September 2005 .