

Cultivating Cultural Intelligence

The better a training department can capture, retain, and disseminate its acquired cultural intelligence throughout the organization, the greater the strategic value it will bring. **BY NEAL GOODMAN, PH.D.**



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If you open to the business section of any newspaper, you'll see that regardless of where a company is headquartered, it likely is struggling with development and movement of talent to deal with the global, culturally diverse workplace and marketplace.

To a large degree, the success or failure of global business lies in the hands of the training department. *Harvard Business Review* reported that CQ (cultural intelligence) is the most important competence for successful global business. In essence, *HBR* says, CQ takes over where EQ (emotional intelligence) leaves off.

So, where do we begin?

1. Everyone in the corporation needs a core understanding of how to work effectively with associates, clients, and suppliers from various cultural backgrounds and how to develop a global mind-set. A core course to meet this requirement should cover cultural awareness of self and others, ethnocentrism, the consequences of cultural assumptions, ways to promote effective working relations, styles of doing business around the world, cultural differences in communication styles, the impact of virtual communications on intercultural understanding, an overview for each major region, and a review of available resources for more in-depth information.
2. Those who work on global teams need to go through a cross-cultural teambuilding program in the formative stages of team development to avoid misunderstandings and to establish team trust. It is critical that team members explore the cultural nuances that often undermine global team effectiveness. This includes: team members' mutual perceptions, setting global standards of roles, responsibility and accountability, leadership and management styles, discussion of virtual and face-to-face communication styles and the development of a communication plan. Other relevant topics to be covered should include the cultural tendencies of all relevant countries and how these impact teamwork.
3. Employees working with specific countries need in-depth cross-cultural training on the nuances of these cultures, including: communication style; approaches to risk taking; negotiation style; ways to promote effective working relations with representatives of the country; contrasting styles of doing business between each of the relevant countries; an in-depth regional and historical overview of the country and its relationship to its neighbors; and an as-needed review of available resources and other functional topics such as labor unions, quality/standards, work habits, intellectual property, holidays, etc.
4. All training and development departments by now should have a global leadership curriculum. In addition to other skills, global leaders need to be able to create personal and organizational action plans for effective intercultural leadership in the multicultural/global/virtual workplace. This includes not only an understanding of globalization, diversity, and cross-cultural differences, but also an intuitive grasp of the areas in which misunderstandings are likely to occur, so they can proactively forecast and develop appropriate strategies in advance.
5. All expatriates (and their family members) will need in-depth cross-cultural training on both working in and living in their respective host countries. They will need to learn the cultural nuances of their host country, ways to promote effective relations, an in-depth understanding of the country and region, an understanding of how to balance local vs. headquarters requirements, strategies for dealing with culture shock, and a review of available resources and other functional topics as needed.

Finally, to protect and leverage the investment of all these learnings, training departments should capture and retain in a central database all of the global information obtained through every training program that has a global and cross-cultural component. The deployment of this information across all groups within the corporation is essential. **i**