

5 Tips to Help Develop your Cultural Intelligence

Forbes Magazine states that cultural intelligence (CQ) is one of the top 10 vital skills needed to succeed in the workplace in today's global environment. According to a recent article at the World Economic Forum "The path to inclusive workplaces is built on diversity and inclusion". Globalization and immigration are here to stay, meaning we will have to become more multiculturally competent in order to succeed not only in our workplace but also in life generally.

Here are the 5 tips to help you develop your cultural intelligence:

1. Look in the mirror:

You can start by reflecting on your own preferences and cultural identity. For example, do you prefer direct or indirect communication? Are you the type of person who prefers a linear, structured working schedule? Why do people trust you? How large or small is your own personal space? What would mean crossing the boundaries?.

What makes it difficult is that we are all seeing the world through our own culture. Our own cultural norms seem so normal and natural to us, as a result we may see other ways of thinking and being as abnormal. What are your unconscious biases? The internet is the perfect way to find resources that will help you explore unconscious biases. Find out and educate yourself about yourself; find out what are your unconscious biases. you may be surprised with what you find out about yourself.

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RAISE YOUR
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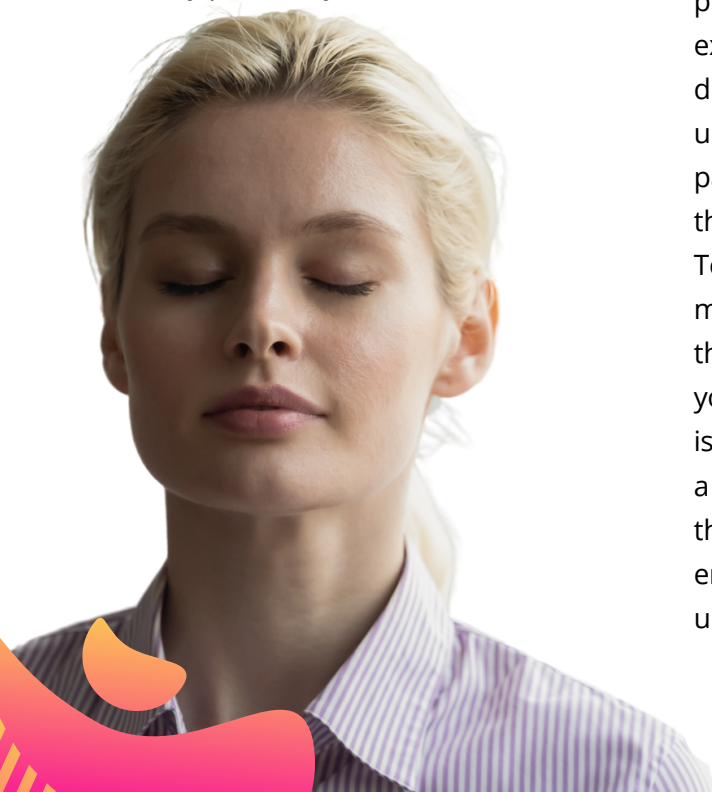


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2. Raise your awareness:

Find different perspectives. Get a better understanding of other cultures, their values and customs by learning about them. The best way is to approach someone from a different culture/gender/age group and try to engage. If you want to understand other cultures better, then you need to travel and experience the culture for yourself. Push yourself and be curious. You'll learn about perspectives and experiences from a first person point of view

Shift your focus from only seeing things through one's own perspective to using different lenses and thus taking on a broader worldview. Practice empathy to help put yourself in the shoes of other people. Extend this by imagining how it might feel if it were your own shoes, not just someone else's. When you put yourself in someone else's shoes, you might be able to see the situation from their perspective and come away with a better understanding of it. Make sure to also consider how others may perceive you.



3. Be Mindful:

It is true that when you meet people from different cultures there will be plenty of awkward moments. You're bound to experience cognitive dissonance in these situations, where you don't quite know how to react or what to say. Recent neurological research has shown that our brain, even when there is no threat present, defaults to limbic function or even more basic instincts. It could range from an intense burst of emotion to a prehistoric fight-flight-freeze response. For examples; gestures; the same gesture can have a different meaning in a different country. If we are unaware of what the gestures means in that particular country then we may take offence to it if the gesture is offensive in our culture.

To become more culturally intelligent, stop for a moment and observe what is taking place and think rationally. Your prefrontal cortex (the part of your brain in charge of higher cognitive processes) is what you should use to figure out how to handle a situation - so leave those thoughts and behaviors that you know but don't apply here. Ask open-ended questions if you are unsure if you understood the person or situation accurately.

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4. Take action:

Put your insights and skills into practice. Take responsibility and be proactive, rather than waiting for the other side to make a move. One way to build bridges is to think creatively. Try brainstorming with people from different cultures to see if you can reach any common ground. Develop your strategies for managing cultural differences and be mindful of how you communicate and work effectively across cultures. Reflect on both your values and those of the other person before taking any action. After some time and hard work, you'll soon reach a point where your effort will bear fruit and it will feel more meaningful, inspiring and enriching.



5. Learning is continuous:

Developing cultural intelligence is a lifelong journey. The world we live in is vast and diverse and will take a lot of effort and dedication towards enhancing your CQ to learn about different cultures. I have found career development through training to be the most valuable experience of all. Think about cultural intelligence as a muscle that can be trained, just like your comfort zone can be stretched. We need to approach the development of our CQ as a journey which never ends; we will keep learning about different cultures throughout our lives and this will enrich our overall outlook on life as well. Be open and read to learn from the most unexpected situations and people; these will be the most enriching lessons we learn and remember.

These 5 steps are basically the essence of everything I have learned in my life so far. I was fortunate to leave my own country and work in a organization which consisted of 132 nationalities, yes; that's right 132. So I was exposed to a number of cultures very early in my career; however I didn't realize the opportunity that I had. In fact most of own learning was unplanned. However this was one of the greatest skills I believe I have gained which is really difficult learn in any classroom.

that I have learned about cultural intelligence throughout my life so far. I have gained great insights from brilliant researchers, authors and interculturalists. But most of all, I have learned from my encounters with people who are completely different than me. By talking, being curious, reflecting, wondering, laughing, crying together and never ceasing to be amazed by the great diversity on this planet.