SUCCESSFUL MANTRA FOR MANAGEMENT OF CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

It is an era of globalization. In terms of business, globalization means that, for a business organization to survive and progress, it must establish markets not only in its own country but also in other countries. It has not only led to the expansion of markets but also to the growth of multicultural workforce in business organizations all over the world. The growing multicultural workforce has increased the significance of cross cultural communication. In this kind of business environment, it is important that the employees of an organization understand each other’s cultures and variables. Learning about the impact culture has on behavior helps to reduce friction and misunderstanding while dealing with people from other cultures. Hence an MNC will have to ensure that steps are taken to overcome the barriers to cross cultural communication in order to attaining organizational objectives effectively & efficiently. This paper dwells on understanding the importance of culture in international and national business, barriers related to cross cultural communication and success mantra for improving communication across cultures.

Keywords: Globalization, Culture; Cross cultural communication, multicultural workforce.

INTRODUCTION

In this Paper we will address the question of how culture is conceptualized and apparent itself in the application of changing business environment. With this idea we tried to abstract down the contributions from the field of intercultural and cross-cultural communication which we feel may be of help in moving towards the necessary conceptualization. According to Hofstede, G. (1984). National cultures and corporate cultures. “Culture can be defined as “Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.”

Culture is the "lens" through which one views the people and world. It helps us to sense the extract, the central part, and theme of any community and aids to express oneself. This phenomenon would assist for redesigning, reorganizing, or innovating the existing work activities and building strategies to improve current competitive position, customer niche and stakeholders satisfactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A.V. Lal, In the paper Perspective of Communication Therapy in Cross Culture, 2014, says that the cost of poor communication in cross-cultural context is insurmountably high.
Being able to communicate effectively across cultures increases the success in global market place, enables productive interpersonal relationships and decreases mutual misunderstandings. So, for today’s business leaders, it is paramount to understand the various issues challenges in cross-cultural communication and adequate training on the subject is advisable.

Prof. Sonal Shree in her paper Management of Cross Cultural Integration through Communication, Sep 2012, says a diverse workforce faces challenges considering the mixed bag of different nationalities, languages, values, belief systems, ethics and practices, gender, etiquette, language, behavioral expectations and cultural outlook. Cross cultural disparity can impact a business negatively, thus affecting the cohesiveness of the unit as well as employee productivity level. The key to handling the dynamics of changing workforce and environment is cultural awareness and sensitization that is not only country specific but has local flavor to it as well in view of the fact that even two companies within the same country might not necessarily share the same cultural milieu.

Tian Guang and Dan Trotter in their paper Key issues in cross-cultural business communication, 2012, opine that cultural factors have long been known to influence the communication and success potential of competition. Cultural awareness shapes how business firms behave in cross-culturally reflected international markets. It is broadly recognized that cultural factors act as invisible barriers in international business communications. Understanding cultural differences is one of the most significant skills for firms to develop in order to have a competitive advantage in international business.

NEED FOR CROSS CULTURE COMMUNICATION

National culture has been very crucial, complex and difficult part to define and understand in today’s business world. In competitive globalizing era world is connected and collided with each other in more touched way than ever imagined by anyone which makes a mandate provisions to understand worlds culture and its unique characteristics of any national culture. Many theorists has stated that Management is an Art, science and profession, hence using artistic vision to understand, handling with all facts and figures in more professional and scientific way is management of cross cultural communication. Cultural diversity is observed quite frequently around the world with the change in topography, climate, countries, states, religion, language, race and gender. To be very successful enterprise and to grow in technically competent and advanced global townships, proper communication, and demography knowledge is must also one has to understand cultural diversity of vivid villages.

PRE REQUISITES FOR CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
**Listening and speaking skills:** For efficient and productive result, in the cross cultural communication attentive listening and speaking skills is required to comprehend the exact meanings. Also one should be able to read between the lines and should be enabling to empathize with the speaker. In today’s time intercultural communication is vital hence, speaker shall not be just accurate in using accent but also to use grammar and vocabulary. This would help to accept the facts, expressions and opinions

**Observation:** In order to have strong grab on the cultural awareness the best skill needed is the observation. One has to see the amount of information he can perceive regarding habits, people dress, body language and their social habits and behavior as these are requires dealing with root of differences.

**Flexibility:** Flexibility, adaptability and open-mindedness are the route to successful cross cultural communication. Here the major responsibility is taken by top management as they should be adjustable, versatile and open to thoughts and ideas at the same time pervasive in nature.

**Patience:** Understanding a new concept, phenomenon or a language is not a cake walk. Sometimes it became very irritating, frustrating and person may get annoyed. The differences across regions may lead to differences in opinion and observation. In this situation Patience is the only key to deal with such situations. Tolerance and persistence may differ from person to person, hence serenity is required.

**Barriers in cross culture communication**

Effectual communication with people of unlike cultures is very challenging. Cultures endow with people with ways of thinking, seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. Same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they talk the "same" language. With the difference in the languages, translation also changes and mode of communication too, hence risk of misunderstanding increases.

**Body language:** In oral communication, the improper gesture, posture facial expression of the receiver or the sender may leads to barrier in the communication. They may distort the message if the conversation does not meet with the intended meaning. There is always a chance of misunderstanding of the feelings of the message or getting the wrong meaning of it.

**Faulty translation:** as principle of sclera chain is followed in the organization, a manager receives most of the information / message from his superiors and he translates it for all his subordinates as per his level of understanding. Hence, molding of information can be there according to the understanding or environment of the receiver. If there is a little negligence in this process, the flawed translation can be a barrier in the communication.

**Technical Jargon:** In general, people working in an enterprise collectively connected with technical group use special technical language. There communication in not that simple to be understood by the common man or for the non technical man. Hence while communicating with the mass technical terms to be avoided as it may lead to misunderstandings as well as confusion. At the same time limited or clear use of homophonic words should be there.
Psychological or Emotional Barriers: a communication is only effective if the receiver decodes the message in the proper emotional and mental condition. Conversation with Emotionally distorted person will leads to hindrance in the process.

Prejudice: Prejudice arises from being judgmental on someone’s attributes simply because they fall into particular group. This pre assumptions leads to negative attitude for the group. It has been observed that prejudicial mind leads to racial or religious tones. This pre assumptions pilots constraints and leads to ineffective flow of information.

Ethnocentrism: Ethnocentrism is the assumption where one feels that his culture is morally right and rational than other cultures. If confronted with other religion and culture they try to keep their religion as reference to understand, evaluate others perspective. Mainer times it is been observed that ethnocentrism leads to racism too.

MANAGEMENT OF CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Following are the important points to be kept in mind while handling problems related to cross cultural communication:

1. Active listening: Misinterpretation is often the source of problem. Active listening can avoid this. One should listen carefully and repeat what the other has said to confirm that communication has been understood accurately. If one does not listen properly there can be an ambiguity in communication. Even while conveying a message one should be clear and complete.

2. Not being judgmental: One should not be judgmental about other cultures. If a person is judged by his dress, appearance and other aspects it may lead to miscommunication.. it is important to look beyond the superficial features of a person as the message or content is of utmost importance. So it is better to understand rather than become judgmental.

3. Learn about other cultures: One must study other cultures in respect to prepare and understand their customs and practices. In this way one is more aware of the potential areas of misunderstanding or miscommunication. The knowledge will help in being non judgmental, empathetic and flexible in dealing.

4. Be empathetic: Due to globalization our society is becoming multiethnic. It is important to accept the differences in others, which is best done in empathizing with people and being tolerant.

5. Cross cultural training: Workshops and training programs can be conducted wherein people can share information about different cultures. Sharing information about beliefs, values and norms of other cultures will help one better communicate with people from different backgrounds. Many employees are involved in international ventures and have an experience of communicating globally. They can share their experiences and intercultural knowledge with other employees which will help them in communicating their goals globally.

6. Avoid stereotyping: Everyone makes generalizations of other cultures. It is important to know that when one meets other people at work from different cultural backgrounds they do
not like being stereotyped. Therefore, one should discover the individual qualities of an individual rather than the cultural bias.

7. **Ask for feedback:** While communicating with people with different cultural backgrounds, it is important that what one is saying is clearly understood by the other person/people. Therefore, continuously asking for feedback while communicating will avoid scope for misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

8. **Check your non verbal communication:** Actions speak louder than words. Therefore, watching your words and actions during interpersonal communication is very essential. Non verbal communication is very problematic between cultures. For example the thumbs up sign is used to indicate approval in America and to wish good luck in India, but in Iran and Ghana, it is a vulgar gesture. Similarly, other attributes such as greeting, time concept, work culture, food and clothing, facial expressions and eye contact of other cultures should be understood.

9. **Maintain respect and courtesy for other cultures:** Respecting the cultural norms, ethos and values of others is important for good intercultural communication. When respect is shown towards other’s cultural diversity it reduces the stress while communicating. Therefore, one should do a basic research on how to interact with people from other cultures that one might come in contact with. It is a great way to show respect to the multicultural team.

10. **Make use of the 7 C’s of communication:** During interpersonal communication one should bear in mind the 7 Cs of communication i.e. correctness, completeness, conciseness, clarity, creativeness, courtesy and consideration. These golden C’s of communication will help in effectively communicating with people across different cultures.

**CONCLUSION**

In this era of globalization with people from different cultures, beliefs and faiths, intercultural communication is vital for success. Effective communication between colleagues and businesses from different cultural backgrounds ensures people working harmoniously towards the goals of the organization. By acknowledging the potential problems that can occur and taking proactive steps to minimize conflict, one can help employees work together better. Acquiring skill to work in both domestic and international cultural backgrounds is not longer an option but a necessity.

Cross cultural differences from time to time have been a hindrance to successful international ventures and projects. These barriers can be transformed into opportunities if they are tackled carefully and wisely.

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