

Beyond Diversity to Cultural Competency

Presented By:

Rodney L. Brown and Regina Censullo

Labor Management Project

Definitions:

Diversity: Diversity means different or varied. The mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values, and beliefs as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact is Diversity in Action.

Cultural Competency: *Recognizing, appreciating, and valuing the unique differences and talents of others and valuing their behaviors and contributions without judgment.*

Considerations for Interaction with Other Cultures

1. Social Space

Different cultures have different average distances at which people stand to talk to each other. Of course, this varies according to the circumstances and the relationships of the people.

2. Touching

Where, how and how often people touch each other while conversing are often determined by cultural norms. In many cultures, some touching is acceptable between people of the same gender, but not between males and females, even husbands and wives, if they are in public. Males holding hands has no connotation except friendship in many countries.

3. Volume of Voice

In some cultures, children are taught that a soft voice is polite, a loud voice rude. In other cultures, a loud voice indicates strength of conviction, passion in one's belief. loudly?

4. Eye Contact

In some cultures, eye contact is perceived as an integral part of human contact. In others, it is seen as disrespectful, rude, aggressive or flirtatious. Lack of eye contact, on the other hand, can be perceived as lack of attention by some, or as showing lack of interest, low self-esteem or dishonesty.

5. Gestures

Pointing with a finger is considered very rude in some cultures. Pointing with a foot is considered rude in others. In other cultures, pointing is a mainstay of everyday human interaction.

6. Timing of Verbal Exchanges and Silence

In some cultures, when conversing, normal behavior is an immediate response to every exchange. Silence is perceived as disinterest or lack of attention, and makes some people uncomfortable. However, in other cultures, people anticipate silence before a response. In this case, a response said too quickly can indicate a lack of proper thought to what the other person said. What is not said may be more important in the exchange than what is said.

7. Smiles

Smiles in some cultures are commonly used to cover anger, embarrassment or upset. Smiles in other cultures express “thank you” or “I’m sorry.” In some cultures, a smile is considered flirtatious, a “come on.”