CROSS CULTURAL COACHING:
DEALING WITH CULTURAL COLLISION IN COACHING AND MANAGERIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Denise Donoghue
September 2019
AGENDA

What is culture? The multiple dimensions of cultural influence

What are your cultural influences?

Cultural stereotyping - helpful or risky?

What are the challenges involved in cross cultural coaching?

Practising cultural intelligence in your coaching practice
It is important to recognise that coaching itself is a predominantly Western concept and its methodologies may not always apply when coaching across cultures.
WHAT IS CULTURE?

Meanings, values, beliefs, expectations and behaviours shared by a particular group of people... that distinguish them from members of other groups
THREE LEVELS IN HUMAN MENTAL PROGRAMMING

HOFSTEDE 1991

PERSONALITY

CULTURE

HUMAN NATURE

Specific to individual

Inherited and learned

Specific to group category

Learned

Universal

Inherited
The Cultural Iceberg

Surface Culture
- Food
- Flags
- Festivals
- Fashion
- Holidays
- Music
- Performances
- Games
- Arts & Crafts
- Literature
- Language

Deep Culture
- Communication Styles and Rules
  - facial expressions
  - gestures
  - eye contact
  - personal space
  - touching
  - body language
  - tone of voice
  - handling and displaying of emotion
  - conversational patterns in different social situations
- Concepts of:
  - time
  - past and future
  - fairness and justice
- Roles related to age, sex, class, family, etc.
- Attitudes towards:
  - elders
  - adolescents
  - dependents
  - work
  - authority
  - cooperation vs. competition
  - relationships with animals
  - age
  - sin
  - death
- Approaches to:
  - marriage
  - raising children
  - decision-making
  - problem-solving
CULTURE IS NOT STRICTLY A NATIONAL PHENOMENON …
IDENTIFY WHICH OF THESE INFLUENCES PREVAILS

Nation  Region  City  Class  Ethnicity  Organisation  Religion  Gender  Generation

How has the internet impacted cultural differences?
THE TEN DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

- Environment
- Time
- Action
- Communication
- Space
- Power
- Individualism
- Competitiveness
- Structure
- Thinking
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linear-Active</th>
<th>Multi-Active</th>
<th>Reactive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talks half the time</td>
<td>Talks most of the time</td>
<td>Listens most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does one thing at a time</td>
<td>Does several things at once</td>
<td>Reacts to partner’s action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans ahead step by step</td>
<td>Plans grand outline only</td>
<td>Looks at general principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite but direct</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Polite, indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly conceals feelings</td>
<td>Displays feelings</td>
<td>Conceals feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronts with logic</td>
<td>Confronts emotionally</td>
<td>Never confronts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes losing face</td>
<td>Has good excuses</td>
<td>Must not lose face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely interrupts</td>
<td>Often interrupts</td>
<td>Doesn’t interrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-oriented</td>
<td>People-oriented</td>
<td>Very people-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticks to facts</td>
<td>Feelings before facts</td>
<td>Statements are promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth before diplomacy</td>
<td>Flexible truth</td>
<td>Diplomacy over truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes impatient</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited body language</td>
<td>Unlimited body language</td>
<td>Subtle body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects officialdom</td>
<td>Seeks out key person</td>
<td>Uses connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separates the social and</td>
<td>Mixes the social and</td>
<td>Connects the social and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td>professional</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MY CULTURAL BACKGROUND

- Jewish Russian Refugee Grandparents
- Baby Boomer: Born in Cape Town
- Grew Up in War Torn Cyprus
- Attended Boarding School in Rural England
- Went to University in Johannesburg during apartheid era
- Moved to London
- Married an Italian Irish Catholic from Hull
- Became a mother to three sons
YOUR CULTURAL BACKGROUND: FILL IN THE BLANKS
WHAT ARE YOUR CULTURAL INFLUENCES?

Which has influenced you most?

- Your Generation
- Religious Beliefs
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Nation/Regional Identity
- Class
- Organisation Type
CULTURAL STEREOTYPING?
USEFUL OR DANGEROUS?

‘By focusing on the cultural roots of national behaviour in society and business we can forecast with surprising accuracy how people will react to situations which enables us to interact successfully.’

‘When Cultures Collide’ Richard Lewis
CULTURAL COMPETENCE

the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures

being aware of one's own world view

developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences.

gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views.
CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCE EXPLAINED

Picture 1, based on the model of Abbe & Halpin, 2009
CAREER COACHING

• Self Promotion: Humility vs Arrogance

• Networking: Fear vs Confidence

• I vs We
Executive/Leadership Coaching Issues:

• COMMUNICATION
• MISUNDERSTANDING
• CONFLICT
• ERRORS
• UNEXPECTED BEHAVIOUR
AREAS OF CROSS CULTURAL MISCOMMUNICATION

- Assumption of similarities
- Language differences
- Non Verbal Misinterpretations
- Preconceptions and stereotypes
- Tendency to judge
- Unexpected Behaviour
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

We all have some level of cultural conditioning which affect our judgement and actions - but we may not be aware of it.

“We don’t see things as they are but as we are”

Anais Nin
APPRECIATION OF CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Understand coachee personal views/experiences and validate them
- Respect – consolidate relationship and mutual respect
- Exploration – bring insights into conscious awareness
- Adaptation – leverage differences/generate culturally appropriate solutions
Are you too influenced by stereotypical assumptions?

Constantly question your prejudices.
6 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE CROSS CULTURAL COACHING

Study the culture
Know thyself
Create rapport, trust and a safe place
Consider the context
Include cultural understanding/expectations in the contracting arrangement
Trust the process
SOURCES

- Diversity in Coaching: Working with Gender, Culture, Race and Age  Johnathan Passmore 2013
- Giving Feedback across Cultures  HBR 2013
- Cultures and Organisations Software of the Mind Geert Hofstede 1991
- Cultural Orientations Guide Joerg Schmitz 2006
- Breaking through the Culture Shock Elizabeth Marx 1999
- Cultural Intelligence HBR  P. Christopher Earley, Elaine Mosakowski 2004
- When Cultures Collide Richard Lewis 2006
- Careers Across Cultures by David C Thomas & Kerr Inkson 2008