

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE OF SPECIALISTS
ENGAGED IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS, ECONOMIC
RELATIONSHIPS AND MANAGEMENT: CONTENT AND
STRUCTURE
(WITH A VIEW TO BUSINESS CHALLENGES)**

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The purpose of this writing is to analyze the current trends in doing business nationally and globally, understand approaches to managing cross-cultural teams and identify professional requirements for graduates seeking beneficial and successful careers in international business, economic relationships and management. Analyzing relevant articles the author points out that today's business environment is notably sustainability-driven and aimed at maintaining the conditions that allow it to flourish over time. Thus organizations' leaders and managers are and will be aimed at building enduring business institutions.

This leads us to the following assumptions: striving to improve businesses multinational companies are increasingly aimed at maintaining a competitive edge through close relationships and overwhelming collaboration with their extended networks of suppliers, customers and business partners.

Under special consideration are issues of the content and structure of cross-cultural competence, because its acquiring enables economists and managers to achieve success in managing cross-cultural teams, establishing and cementing long-lasting business and economic relationships overseas.

Current topics in pursuit are diverse and multifaceted. It is assumed that supporting discussion is involved from the works of P. Levice, G. Hofstede, F. Trompenarce, E. Holl, F. Klakhone, F. Strodeback, Michael H. Mescon, Michael Albert, Franklin Khedouri, Peter Druker, Chandra Vennaspoosa who dedicated their academic studies to understanding and evaluating practical essence and significance of cross-cultural competence for developing business globally.

Not only does the study aim at identifying the content of cross-cultural competence, but also it is supposed to discover its key components with a view to current business and management trends worldwide.

The objective here is to thoroughly look through recent publications dedicated to the development of companies and business in general and understand what a truly cross-culturally competent economist or manager is supposed to acquire in terms of knowledge and skills. This leads us to the conclusion that a culturally sensitive professional is supposed to be able to interact effectively and beneficially with those of different ethnical backgrounds and cultural orientations, or in a situation where cultural diversity exists. It incorporates the capacity to understand and recognize other cultures' languages, behaviors, values, and policies, and adapt to these variations.

Keywords: cross-cultural competence, professional (managerial culture), professional values, cross-cultural awareness, interpersonal skills, cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural teams, enduring business institutions, emotional intelligence, empathy

Introduction

Today due to rapid development of IT and accumulation of information and knowledge, business in general is facing drastic changes, which mainly relate to organizational structures, perceptions of company's goals in relationships with the society what constitutently lead to changes in requirements for employees. Nowadays local and multinational businesses are initially interested not only in technologically advanced, computer literate, IT-aware and highly qualified graduates (economists, managers, business relation specialists) and high caliber staff, but also in welcoming younger managers and other newcomers — so called “new voices” — to engage them in the strategy and change management processes. Businesses are more inclined to employ creative and innovative minds, as the ability to innovate is currently viewed as “a secret sauce of business success” [Dyer, 2009: p.62]. Innovative entrepreneurs have something called “creative intelligence” which, as Jeffrey H. Dyer, Hal B. Gregersen and Clayton M. Christesen state, goes far from mere cognitive skills of being right brained. The authors have studied and interviewed a lot of successful managers and executives and finally have come to the conclusion that innovation intelligence mainly relates to a “unique innovator's DNA” for generating breakthrough business ideas. In such companies employees are prone to be treated as self-determining professionals who coordinate and integrate activities by self-organizing and generating ideas. Furthermore, employees make their own choices about which ideas to surface, how much effort to put into them, and where they might contribute beyond their pay jobs. Moreover if we look at the environment in which the global business is functioning today we can conclude that the traditional view of business — just to earn money as “money-generating machines” focusing on maximizing short- term profits and delivering returns to shareholders — has been recently reviewed as quite a “conveniently narrow image” embedded in the world global economic system [Kanter, 2011]. No one is going to underrate the financial goals of business as a cornerstone of its success, prosperity and high performance, but still today's businesses are thinking about building enduring institutions taking care of people and the society as a whole. Organizations functioning globally are being transferred into vehicles for accomplishing societal purposes and providing meaningful livelihood for those who work in them. Consequently, with a view to such changes in perceptions of business objectives — how to sustain the conditions that allow it to flourish over time — organizations' leaders and mangers are and will be aimed at building enduring business institutions. Thus they will urgently need “new voices” able to withstand these challenges, contribute to establishing and — what is more important — sustain enduring business institutions.

Globalization as an ever-lasting tendency detaches organizations from one specific society and business culture but at the same time requires that organizations internalize the needs of many societies. This business objective can be achieved by establishing clear institutional and business values. Thus, environmental responsibility, talent retention and performance with purpose provide a strategic direction and motivation for business diversity in many cultures. Moreover, the command-and-control managerial model has been eroded leaving place for persuasion as a key managerial technique and the language of business leadership.

Consequently, meaning making is becoming a cornerstone and sine qua none of modern leadership, and the purpose gives coherence to the organization.

In the wake of globalization and international trade expansion, one can hardly encounter an organization functioning in a single business cultural environment. That is why cross-cultural factors such as society's expectations, life values and customs, principles of doing business and social conduct have a significant and overwhelming influence on an organization. What is considered to be a well-accepted practice of doing business in one country (favoritism as a key factor in promotion, bribes as facilitating payments) can be easily viewed as an offence, even abuse or misconduct in another one [Meskon, 1992: p. 127]. Under no means should the importance of intercultural factors be also underestimated in an organization's way of doing business, taking into consideration not only ethical aspects but also political ones (e.g. existing restrictions and embargos in trade relationships imposed by international organizations in one country don't allow doing business in this country). Emphasizing the significance of cross-cultural influence on an organization, Reginald Jones, CEO of "General Electric", stated that organizations functioning globally should be able to anticipate changes in society's expectations better than rivals do [Meskon, 1992:

p. 128]. In other words, organizations should consciously and deliberately transform into new institutions adjusting to the ever-changing business environment.

Hence, today multinational companies are largely run by cross-functional teams of peers showing little tolerance for unquestioned authority and rigid company hierarchy. Electronic communication, information revolution and globalization have nearly eroded the traditional company hierarchy, old-fangled working environment and fierce subordination, as ideas along with people flow more freely than ever throughout the organization and as the decision-making process is getting close to the markets. Moreover, there has been a remarkable increase of competition in different businesses, which leads to reconsideration of qualification requirements to specialists primarily engaged in international economic relationships, management and business.

At the same time, striving to improve business environment multinational companies are increasingly aimed at maintaining a competitive edge through close relationships and overwhelming collaboration with their extended networks of suppliers, customers and business partners. Thus, Burt states that "globalization of business has increased the need for managers who are culturally sensitive and able to influence, negotiate, and develop markets in any geographical and organizational setting" [Wallgren, 2011]. As a result, businesses are facing a remarkably vital necessity for the number of teams consisting of members from at least two different nations.

Over the last years, the initial lack of experience in globally distributed contexts and widely differentiated backgrounds, both personally and disciplinarily, has been erased. We are able to demonstrate that information technology can make global teams more effective and that teams can help fulfill the promise of new information technology. We suggest that, together, teams and new information technology can catalyze significant improvements in organizations. The lessons learned in this study have been put to use in business environments.

This leads us to the following assumptions: the impact of globalization has undoubtedly created a need for management and international economics graduates

with cross-cultural competence (intercultural competence, ICC). Subsequently, students as future managers are supposed to seek the required knowledge, attributes and skills as part of their educational training qualification. Thus, it is vital for programme developers at Universities to provide their students with the competences required in the cross-cultural field.

Nor Ukraine is an exception to the rule in this situation. As part of the global business landscape and striving to cement business and international relationships with the European Union's countries, Ukraine is significantly forced to reconsider its educational platform of professional preparation of future international economists and managers. Even in Ukraine, the world of work has changed dramatically over the recent years. Closely collaborating with global and multinational companies, Ukrainian employee groups are more diverse than before, organizational structures are becoming less hierarchical and more collaborative, consequently today's networked offices and peers are full of technological distractions. Hence, the national educational platform should be primarily aimed not only at providing profound theoretical (economics, business education) and practical (management) knowledge, but also at cultivating specific skills such as: cross-cultural communication, information networking, emotional intelligence, empathy and rapport.

So, academic scholars and pedagogues have never stopped their scientific searching for new approaches, developing innovative techniques, methods and designing relevant information courses in order to enable future specialists to meet and tackle the existing business and work (employment) challenges.

The issue of cross-cultural competence has always been in the scope of scientific research of Ukrainian and foreign scholars. Its many years' history and origin have been traced in the works of P. Levice, G. Hofstede, F. Trompenarce, E. Holl, F. Klakhone and F. Strodeback. Cross-cultural management as a new science was mainly based on their findings and conclusions. The profound contribution to understanding the essence and identifying key components of cross-cultural competence was made by such Ukrainian scholars as G. Antypova, Zh. Voinova, N. Demianenko, T. Kolosovska, O. Lapshyna, H. Ferapontova. The peculiarities of developing cross-cultural competence in future specialists were analyzed by N. Almazova, R. Hryshkova, H. Kopyl, I. Pluzhnyk, V. Safonova. These researches (methodical studies) have resulted in pointing out peculiarities of developing intercultural thinking skills, cross-cultural business conduct and interaction, which were highlighted in the publications of Ukrainian scholars such as U. Petrushenko, O. Buryak and others.

Having thoroughly analyzed the recent pedagogic dissertations, works and publications we can conclude that Ukrainian scholars mainly pay attention to the development of cross-cultural competence of future teachers of foreign languages (English, German and French) in the process of learning a foreign language at a pedagogical university (T. Kolodko, M. Pysanka, S. Shekhavtsova, N. Bilotserkivska). They namely focus on designing models of developing teacher's cross-cultural competence and creating relevant methods and classroom management techniques, e.g. reading authentic information resources, using Information Technologies and the Internet (S. Daniliuk).

Clearly understanding the importance of cultivating intercultural communication skills in pupils at a secondary school, Ukrainianscientists Yu. Kuzmenko, O. Kolminova,

I. Vorobiova, N. Moroz, S. Shuklina have worked out corresponding methods and approaches to teaching a foreign language. Methodological approaches and principles of developing cross-cultural competence of foreign students and tourism specialists are analyzed in works of I. Kushnir, O. Ohienko and S. Valevska.

Due to current changes the world of business is facing today Ukrainian academics are reconsidering the professional preparation of future managers shifting its focus to developing their cross-cultural competence (O. Smorochynska, N. Bilotserkivska). Analyzing the content of cross-cultural competence Ukrainian scholars have identified stereotypes (I. Holub) and cultural misunderstandings (V. Lokshyn, Zh. Laktionova) contributing to the development of cross-cultural competence of future managers. The authors have come to the conclusion that cross-cultural competence of managers and economists can significantly influence the development of their professional (managerial) culture (V. Lokshyn, O. Kvasnyk).

Supporting discussion has evolved from the works of Michael H. Mescon, Michael Albert, Franklin Khedouri, Peter Druker, and Chandra Vennaspoosa whose ideas, findings and conclusions are the cornerstone of intercultural management. In this research, our conclusions are basically founded on these ideas.

Despite the fact that the scholars have thoroughly analyzed the issue mentioned above, the content, essence and structure of cross-cultural competence has not been defined. Thus, the purpose of the article is to sum up the content and key components of cross-cultural competence with a view to the current requirements of international business interaction and introduce our own perception of this phenomenon.

Analyzing the content

In order to define the content, structure (key components) and essence of cross-cultural competence we should analyze the key compounds of this concept: “culture” and “competence”.

Nowadays in the scientific sources we can encounter more than 200 definitions of “culture” as it is extremely diverse and multifaceted. Culture is reflected in all spheres of human life, rights and responsibilities, requirements and norms of social behavior, politics, economy and education, relating to the categories of good and evil. The complexity of studying this phenomenon is that the concept of “culture” is quite ambiguous and it has different meanings and implications, not only in everyday language, but also in various sciences – economics, philosophy, pedagogy, political sciences. In the Ukrainian science “culture” is generally defined as: a personality attribute (qualitative characteristics); a level of mastering a particular human expertise or activity; a form of social behavior determined by the level of education and history; a fundamental factor and prerequisite of progressive social and economic development; existing values, beliefs and valuable spiritual heritage.

We hold the opinion that culture is a multidimensional holistic characteristic (notion), which has its own structure (personality, motivation, values and activity components), the characteristic features (type of personality, values, way of organizing activities) and performance (the system of regulation, incentives, stabilization, display, heritage in art, science, spiritual and material spheres of life, ethical norms and rules, creativity and activity). Today scholars and academics view culture as a “tool of knowledge” that allows a person to consciously and respectfully treat the achievements

of generations and deeply understand the value of heritage. Culture enables a person to creatively perceive the surrounding world, understand and transform reality in all areas of life and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, culture is the highest manifestation of human education and professional competence.

Analyzing foreign authors we can conclude that one of the most established and shared definitions was given by Gerard Hendrik Hofstede, who defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group or category of people from another” [Hofstede, 1984]. According to Lisa Hoecklin, culture and the concept behind it is constructed by the society and it offers an agreement of how people should behave and interact with each other [Hoecklin, 1995]. Hence, culture explains other people’s behavior by providing insights as well as valuations about their actions and the way they interact. Therefore, according to Gerard Hendrik Hofstede the collective perception and assessment of the actions in the environment is not inherited [Hofstede, 1997]. Culture is learned and can only be built through interaction with other members of the same cultural background.

We share the definition given by David W. De Long and Liam Fahey, stating that culture is viewed as a system of values, norms, and practices shared among a group of people, which constitute a design for living. Moreover, according to the authors norms are derived from values and can therefore be described as social rules and guidelines in order to accomplish appropriate behavior in social situations. Therefore, the authors explain that values, norms, and practices are interrelated, since values are manifested in norms which in turn shape specific practices [De Long and Fahey, 2000]. We agree with the authors that these shared meanings and values define the national identity. That is why what is typical for one culture is not necessarily relevant and understood in another one and this idea should be a cornerstone of understanding cross-cultural issues.

If we take a look at the content of “competence” we can state that it has also different implications.

The EU’s educational experts define competence as “the ability to apply knowledge and skills” (Eurydice, 2002), which provides the active use of educational achievement in new situations. In recent publications of UNESCO competence is viewed as a combination of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes applied in everyday life (Rychen & Niana, 2004). At the last international educational conference, which was held by UNESCO and Ministry of Education of Norway (Department of Technical Education and Training) in 2004, participants agreed to interpret competence as the ability to effectively and creatively apply knowledge and skills in interpersonal relationships, situations involving social and professional interaction with other partners [Spector, 2004: p.6].

According to the definition of the International Education Standards Department (International Board of Standards for training, Performance and Instruction (IBSTPI)), competence is defined as the ability to efficiently carry out professional activities, perform tasks or work. It contains a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow the individual to act effectively or perform certain functions to achieve certain standards in a particular industry or professional activity [Quality education, 2004: p.1]. Moreover, competence has its own internal structure, which consists of knowledge, practical skills, attitudes, emotions, values and motivation.

Any kind of human activity includes accumulation of knowledge and skills and consists of specific actions and operations. Carrying out these actions, reflecting on their performance, realizing their necessity and appreciating their importance to themselves or to the society, a person thus develops expertise in a particular field of life.

Hence, we can conclude that competence implies the specialists' ability to effectively and creatively apply knowledge and skills in relationships and situations that involve interaction with other people in social and professional environments. Competence and expertise can correlate personal and professional qualities with the expectations and requirements of the social and cultural environment and ensure the process of joining the society (socialization).

Thus, we view culture as a set of values and norms of conduct and competence as the ability to efficiently perform professional functions. Consequently in academic resources cross-cultural competence can be referred to as:

- a personality's qualitative characteristic (attribute) comprising knowledge of acquired social and cultural spheres of life and values;
- an ability and willingness to interculturally communicate with partners of other languages and cultures and participate in the dialogue of cultures;
- an important factor in people's development, their socialization in the modern society and cultural self-determination.

Cross-cultural competence provides the ability to function efficiently in the authentic language environment, predict possible cross-cultural barriers and hurdles in terms of intercultural communication and how to resolve them and adapt to a foreign language environment.

One of the modern academics studying the essence and context of cross-cultural competence, Chandra Vennapoosa, defines ICC as a set of behaviors, values, and policies that may be developed at an individual level, in a system, or organizational level with the ability to constructively interact and work effectively across cultures and in diverse cultural situations [Vennapoosa, 2012]. According to the author, there are two levels of reflecting cross-cultural competence: individual and organizational. It takes more than knowing and being aware of the cultural diversities and possessing the necessary skills. When one is culturally competent, the author states, there is a deeper level of assessing one's cultural assumptions, prejudices, values, and beliefs. It takes on an affective level where the individual is able to view the world through another person's eyes or understands that other people may perceive the world through different perspectives (in other words having empathy as a component of cross-cultural competence). A culturally competent professional veers away from ethnocentric attitude, shows increased flexibility and openness, and exercises non-judgmental viewpoints.

At an organizational level, cross-cultural competence is observed in every team or group and seen in all levels of the hierarchy. Cross-cultural competence must be revealed or reflected in an organization's mission, policies, practices, advocacy and philosophy. Moreover, it must also be shown through active involvement in the larger community and partnerships with other organizations.

The author sums up that the increasing importance of acquiring cross-cultural competence for economists both at individual and organizational levels is now evident throughout many fields, industries and businesses.

We share the scholar's point of view that cross-cultural competence as a key attribute of economist's professional competence reflects the ability of individuals or groups to interact effectively with those of different ethnical backgrounds and cultural orientations, or in a situation where cultural diversity exists. It incorporates the capacity to understand and recognize another culture's language, behaviors, values, policies and adapt to these variations.

Structure of cross-cultural competence

According to the suggested definition of cross-cultural competence and generally accepted reference to the competence's structure we can point out the following key components of cross-cultural competence: motivation, cultural awareness (a set of relevant knowledge, cognitive aspect), values, skills (activity aspect). Now let us analyze these components.

So, motivation constitutes a particular set of personal and professional reasons, aspirations and norms that serve some kind of guidance determining the way a personality behaves in different social, individual and professional environments. This component includes motives that encourage people to organize activities and cooperate; tolerance, beliefs and principles driving a personality in the process of communication and behavior; emotional attitude to ethnic groups. We hold the opinion that motive should be conscious and truly efficient, not just at the level of knowledge. Moreover we are deeply convinced that motivation should also embrace and cultivate the ability to self-development, cultural self-determination (a manifestation of autonomy in search of information about the culture of other countries); a personality's willingness to exercise and express one's cultural identity.

Cultural awareness as a cornerstone of any culture comprises a knowledge of cultural and business peculiarities, history and religion; knowledge of traditions, norms and rules of communication, interaction, etiquette; means of verbal and non verbal communication (facial expressions and gestures are important in the communication process, because ignorance of these features can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts). So let us identify this set of knowledge that constitutes cultural awareness. Nowadays in the wake of corporate scandals, many businesses are looking more closely at how to manage business conduct worldwide. Consequently, we do believe that a cross-culturally competent economist or manager is supposed to fully realize and be aware of the complexity of the issue of ethical business behavior. Graduates of international economics, management and business are required to know the actions and behaviors that constitute an appropriate corporate behavior in general, the standards of conduct followed by big business and realize the complexity of managing corporate behavior in a global context (so called "Generally Accepted Conduct Principles"). These principles comprise specific mandates such as obeying the law, protecting the environment, avoiding cooking books, keeping promises, respecting and protecting human rights, and refraining from bribery.

Moreover, as CEOs of international companies appreciate diversity and welcome international work experience economists and managers, willing to become savvy business professionals, are supposed to develop a "global mind-set" that allows them to work in cross-cultural contexts. It notably relates to cultural intelligence — knowing business culture peculiarities and respecting it in interpersonal interaction.

Cross-cultural values embrace a hierarchy of professional and personal value orientations (family, financial, spiritual, professional): the value of freedom and independence of professional decision-making; the value of trust in others; the value of developing positive personality traits; values which reflect generally accepted norms and rules of professional conduct; life position as category values; the value of professional activity and competence as a professional characteristic and prerequisite; educational and professional experience as a value. Recognition of the importance of values, their assessment and personal dedication to them enable a manager to successfully organize and manage the working process to achieve organizational goals. Professional values are supported by basic needs of the individual to self-actualization. Professionally meaningful values not only determine the valuable attitude to one's work, but also a source of motivation and behavior of the individual. Judgements must be guided by individual's values and ethics. As Ikujiro Nonaka, a professor emeritus at Hitotsubashi University at Tokyo, and Hirotaka Takeuchi, a professor at Harvard Business School, the authors of "The Knowledge-Creating Company", put it without a foundation of values, executives along with managers can't decide what is good and what is bad in doing business. Values should be one's own but not borrowed, they should be cultivated within a particular organization with a view to a business culture [Nonaka, 2012]. Such an approach encourages employees to reflect deeply about their own values in relation to those of an organization and society.

Cross-cultural skills include volitional regulation; specific speech acts; experience of communication in a multicultural society, the dialogue of cultures, adequate behavior in intercultural situations.

Teaming up with peers from different cultures a cross-culturally competent and savvy professional is supposed to be adherent to so called "electing behavior" that blends elements of different cultures. He is able to find a middle ground between different management styles, e.g. a participative European management style and a more authoritarian kind. We can also point out a specific cultural skill determining professional's behavior so called "cultural code-switching" – the ability to modify behavior in specific situations to accommodate varying cultural norms [Molinsky, 2012]. As Andy Molinsky, Thomas H. Davenport, Bala Iyer and Cathy N. Davidson put it, the authors of the article "Three Skills Every 21st-Century Manager Needs", these skills require not only the right mind-set, information and motivation, but also a capacity to manage the psychological challenges arising from converting cultural knowledge into actions. In other words it implies professional and everyday situations when someone chooses an appropriate pattern of behavior in professional interaction taking into account cultural differences. In this case it is important to bear in one's mind that desired communication and behavior outcomes should align with personal goals and values when adapting one's style in a particularly new business culture. Hence, leaning to be effective at cultural code-switching is a key to becoming a truly global and culturally competent manager.

In today's information bombarded and technologically advanced business environment arises a necessity to possess skills of how to use online tools to build and expand peers' network. It goes without saying that it is easy to reach out to industry contacts and colleagues through LinkedIn and Facebook, to follow and be followed on Twitter and to actively participate in corporate social media initiatives.

So managers should attain a better understanding how these networks can be used to elicit information and wield influence in an increasingly interconnected, collaborative and less-hierarchical workplace. The authors (Andy Molinsky, Thomas H. Davenport, Bala Iyer and Cathy N. Davidson) persuade us that in order to build an effective online networking, managers are supposed to acquire reputation, specialization and network position. As in the real world, reputation is currency, in other words how they deal with unknown people, give information and collaborate with them. In the virtual world you build your reputation by offering interesting content, drawing attention to your web presence and motivating others to circulate and act on your ideas.

Networking as an efficient communication tool enables managers to test their proposals and strategies inside and outside an organization. They float an idea and see how many “likes” it gets. The feedback might help a manager persuade a reluctant boss or client to come around to your point of view. These methods of exploiting strong virtual networks are only the beginning. “Newer techniques, such as engaging your online contacts in work “games” so that they happily take action in your or your company’s behalf, are now coming to the fore” [Molinsky, 2012].

Andy Molinsky, a Professor of International Management and Organizational Behavior at the Brandeis International Business School and the author of the book “Global Dexterity: How to Adapt Your Behavior across Cultures without Losing Yourself in the Process” emphasizes the importance of acquiring cross-cultural skills for truly global managers, because he believes that managing and communicating with people from other cultures is an essential skill today. Most of us collaborate with teams across borders and cultures on a regular basis, whether we spend our time in the office or out on the road. What’s needed now is a critical new skill, something the author Andy Molinsky calls “global dexterity”.

The author offers the tools needed to simultaneously adapt behavior to new cultural contexts while staying authentic and grounded in your own natural style. Based on more than a decade of research, teaching and consulting with managers and executives around the world, this book reveals an approach to adapting while feeling comfortable — an essential skill that enables you to switch behaviors and overcome the emotional and psychological challenges of doing so.

Looking through academic resources we can sum up that organizations are likely to seek out employees with demonstrably strong online connections and a track record of wielding influence through them. The best networkers will become even more highly valued.

The core pillar of cross-cultural skills is introduced by communicative ones. Cross- culturally competent managers should know how to use language to motivate their multi-culture teams of employees, articulate vision and strategy and mobilize their organizations to adapt to challenging business environments, in other words, develop their interpersonal skills.

Jay A. Conger, a Professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California’s Marshall School of business, published his remarkably interesting article “The necessary art of persuasion” in 1998 and its current concern is still relevant today. The author is deeply concerned that the similarities in the persuasion skills possessed by both the change-agent leaders and effective team leaders to some extent coincide with so called “the art of gospel preaching” [Conger, 1998]. The author explains that

many businesspeople misunderstand persuasion and more still underutilize what is one of the reasons of management failures in cross-cultural communication as well.

He draws our attention to the fact that persuasion is widely perceived as a skill reserved for selling products and closing deals. It is also commonly seen as just another form of manipulation — devious and to be avoided. Certainly, persuasion can be used in selling and deal-clinching situations, and it can be misused to manipulate people. The author concludes that effective persuasion becomes “a negotiating and learning process through which a persuader leads colleagues to a problem’s and shared solutions” [Conger, 1998]. Persuasion does indeed involve moving people to a position they don’t currently hold, but not by begging or cajoling. Instead, it involves careful preparation, the proper framing of arguments, the presentation of vivid supporting evidence and the effort to find the correct emotional match with your audience.

Thus, we hold the author’s opinion that effective persuasion is a difficult and time-consuming proposition, but it may also be more powerful than the command- and-control managerial model. “The day when you could yell and scream and beat people into good performance is over. Today you have to appeal to them by helping them see how they can get from here to there, by establishing some credibility, and by giving them some reason and help to get there. Do all those things, and they’ll knock down doors” [Conger, 1998]. Hence, in essence, persuasion becomes the language of business leadership.

Acquiring persuasion skills is a relatively straightforward process. The author suggests some crucial steps to follow. First, you should strongly state your position. Second, you outline the supporting arguments, followed by a highly assertive, data- based exposition. Finally, you enter the deal-making stage and work toward a “close”. In other words, you use logic, persistence and personal enthusiasm to get others to buy a good idea. The reality is that following this process is one surefire way to fail at persuasion.

When we speak about cross-culturally competent managers and specialists in international economic and business relationships we shouldn’t forget and underestimate such a qualitative characteristic as Emotional intelligence and emotional skills. This idea was developed by Daniel Goleman in his book “Working with Emotional Intelligence”. Later his ideas were extended by Randall Grayson, Ph. D who holds the opinion that they develop over time, change throughout life, and can be improved through training and remedial programs as well as therapeutic techniques [Grayson, 2009].

According to the author Emotional Intelligence can be viewed from intrapersonal and interpersonal perspectives. As an intrapersonal characteristic emotional intelligence comprises such elements as: emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization and independence.

According to the author emotional self-awareness is the ability to recognize one’s feelings, mood and emotions and differentiate between them, understanding what one is feeling and why, and to know what caused the feelings. Individuals may do the right thing in a normal situation and behave differently under stress, but being able to control emotions he prevents strains and collapse.

Assertiveness is the ability to express feelings, beliefs and thoughts and defend one’s rights in a nondestructive manner. Assertiveness embraces three abilities: the

ability to express feelings (e.g., to accept and express anger, warmth and satisfaction or dissatisfaction), the ability to express beliefs and thoughts openly (i.e., being able to voice opinions, disagree, and take a definite stand, even if it is emotionally difficult to do and even if one has something to lose by doing so, even abstain from expressing thoughts), and finally the ability to stand up for personal rights (i.e., not allowing others to bother you or take advantage of you). Assertive people are not over controlled or shy – they are able to outwardly express their feelings (often directly), without being aggressive or abusive.

Self-regard, as the author puts it, is the ability to respect and accept oneself as basically good. Self-acceptance is the ability to accept one's perceived positive and negative aspects as well as one's limitations and possibilities. This conceptual component of emotional intelligence is associated with "general feelings of security, inner strength, self-assuredness, self-confidence and feelings of self-adequacy" [Grayson, 2009].

According to the author self-actualization pertains to the ability to realize one's potential capacities. This component of emotional intelligence is manifested by becoming involved in pursuits that lead to a meaningful, rich and full life. Striving to actualize one's potential involves developing enjoyable and meaningful activities and can mean a lifelong effort and an enthusiastic commitment to long-term goals. Self-actualization is an ongoing, dynamic process of striving toward maximum development of one's abilities, capacities and talents. This factor is associated with persistently trying to do one's best and trying to improve oneself in general.

Independence is the ability to be self-directed and self-controlled in one's thinking and actions and to be free of emotional dependency. Independent people are self-reliant in planning and making important decisions. They may, however, seek and consider other people's opinions before making the right decision for themselves in the end; consulting others is not necessarily a sign of dependency. Independence is essentially the ability to function autonomously versus needing protection and support – independent people avoid clinging to others in order to satisfy their emotional needs.

From interpersonal perspective emotional intelligence involves empathy, interpersonal relationships and social responsibility.

Thus, empathy is the ability to be aware of, understand and appreciate the feelings of others. It is, to a certain extent, "tuning in" (being sensitive) to what, how and why people feel the way they do. Being empathetic means being able to "emotionally read" other people [Grayson, 2009]. Empathetic people care about others and show interest in and concern for others. They also show a keen ability to understand and respond to the issues and concerns behind another's feelings. Empathy helps people recognize others' achievements and appreciate them.

Interpersonal relationship skills involve the ability to establish and maintain mutually satisfying business relationships within a team that are characterized by intimacy and by giving and receiving affection. Mutual satisfaction includes meaningful social interchanges that are potentially rewarding and enjoyable [Grayson, 2009].

Social responsibility is the ability to demonstrate oneself as a cooperative, contributing and constructive member of a professional team. This ability involves acting in a responsible manner, even though one may not benefit personally. Socially responsible team members have "social consciousness and a basic concern

for other peers, which is manifested by being able to take on community-oriented responsibilities” [Grayson, 2009]. This component relates to the ability to do things for and with others, accepting others, acting in accordance with one’s conscience, and upholding social rules. We share the scholar’s opinion that this personality’s characteristic is the sine quo none of successful team work and interaction within an organization. In our view being aware of your social responsibility as a part of an organization significantly contributes to the right understanding of corporate values and ethics making the staff adhere to these values and business culture.

Thus, in conclusion we can state that these aspects mentioned above are relevant not only in everyday life but also in the working environment where feelings and emotions penetrate business interaction and increasingly influence interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural teams of peers.

So now let us turn our eye to the process of acquiring cross-cultural competence and identify and analyze its key stages. Chandra Vennapoosa in her work “Examples of Cross-Cultural Competence” identifies three crucial phases: developing cross- cultural awareness, acquiring cross-cultural knowledge and enhancing cross-cultural skills [Vennapoosa , 2012].

According to the author’s view developing cultural awareness is the initial stage of becoming culturally competent. It basically acknowledges the fact that cultures are diverse and dynamic. She states that it also involves the ability to conduct a cultural self-assessment where individual cultural beliefs, values and perceptions are evaluated. You can reflect on your own cultural traits and ask yourself self-reflection questions. You might want to reflect on how you see the world, why and how you react to something, and how different your thoughts and actions are from others.

We hold the scholar’s opinion that Cultural Awareness becomes essential during interaction and socializing with people across cultures. All individuals interpret and perceive things differently. For example, shaking hands may be the tradition in your culture but may not be the same for another culture.

The author points out some steps for developing cross-cultural awareness. First is to admit or acknowledge personal prejudices, biases, and stereotypes. Next is to become aware of the cultural standards, beliefs, and attitudes. Third is to learn how to value cultural diversity. The fourth step is to willingly reach out to the community or the society. And lastly, one must learn how to recognize comfort level in varied situations [Vennapoosa , 2012].

Acquiring cultural knowledge about other cultures is one of the foundations of cultural competence as the author puts it. Apart from recognizing other cultures, their values and superstitions understanding how cultural groups view other cultures is also important. After learning how to conduct a cultural self-assessment, people start evaluating other cultures and make a cultural comparison to figure out similarities and differences.

Just as these steps in becoming culturally aware, there are also tips in acquiring cultural knowledge. Initially, you must know how others view or perceive your culture. Since part of knowledge is gained in institutions, it is a good thing to attend seminars, workshops and classes about other cultures the author suggests.

The author also gives some tips how to succeed in acquiring cultural awareness: self-learning is very helpful so read about other cultures if you may; watch movies and

documentaries regarding other cultures; join cultural events and programs. Taking a trip to other countries is also a good learning experience, in other words we should culturally extend our scope.

One of the most significant phases of cultivating your cross-cultural competence is enhancing cross-cultural skills the scholar points out. This last stage in the developmental process of being culturally competent is augmenting and maintaining cross-cultural skills, which can be achieved in various ways. One way to do it is through interpersonal interaction with people of other cultures. People engaged in business relationships should be aware how to learn to make friends, contact with those coming from other cultures. If you are in an organization, you are supposed to establish good working relationships and networking with others and if possible, learn their language and the way they communicate, both in verbal and nonverbal aspects.

As you immerse and explore your culturally-diverse environment, you should start to become comfortable in such situations and atmosphere. The author also stresses the importance of being flexible. If you still have existing fears and prejudices, start overcoming them.

Continue to assess your values and beliefs and compare it with others. Learn to develop and evaluate culturally relevant programs and interventions. These skills are acquired over time and achieving these three stages in the process will definitely bring out cross-cultural competence.

So, in conclusion we can state that today's business challenges create a lot of new opportunities for graduates to become a high caliber professional. Cross-cultural competence rules the roost in today's business and economic interaction and relationships, because its relevance is dictated by deep and profound interdependence and interaction of businesses, countries and grassroots as well.



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