

Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 20, 1993

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISES AND PEDAGOGY TRACK WORKSHOP: EXPERIENCING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM (AND THE HOTEL MEETING ROOM)

Virginia Arthur, Wendy Klepetar
Associate Professors of Management
College of Saint Benedict
Saint Joseph, MN 56374

ABSTRACT

How does cultural diversity effect our perceptions of others and our own interpersonal behavior? This workshop will increase our understanding of how cultural differences effect us and how, specifically, they effect business people engaged in negotiations. We will consider issues of multiculturalism in the United States as well as in the international business field.

Participants will learn more about their own cultures' values and will create a simulated culture in the workshop. They will then negotiate with members of another simulated culture, and analyze the efficacy of their results from the perspective of intercultural relations as well as profit enhancement.

INTRODUCTION

The Activity and Its Purpose

Cultural diversity is a major issue for contemporary businesses. It seems clear that managers need to learn how to deal with employees and customers from culturally diverse backgrounds, and that organizations need to develop corporate cultures flexible enough to adjust to external environments that are culturally diverse. Often, however, this issue has been treated as having two distinct components: one, addressing the cultural diversity of American society; the other, addressing the cultural issues of international businesses. This workshop will combine these perspectives, and engage the conference attendee in an experiential exercise that has been used in our classes to sensitize the student to the realities of doing business with people who differ culturally from themselves. The purpose of the activity is to:

1. Unify our understanding of the domestic and international dimensions of cultural diversity;
2. Introduce exercises that can be used to teach both how cultures differ and how to interact with people from different cultures;
3. Perhaps teach the attendees these concepts and skills themselves.

The Experiential Exercise: The Intercultural Negotiation

a. This activity will begin with a brief introduction to Kluckhohn and Strodbeck's theory that all human cultures

have had to face certain common issues, and have evolved different ways of coping with these issues (Kluckhohn and Strodbeck, 1961). These preferred solutions are referred to as "variations in value orientations," and by understanding these we begin to understand the culture. Recent management publications have adapted this material to develop guidelines for multicultural management (Adler, 1991, Harris and Moran, 1987, Lane and DiStefano, 1992). This application will be explained.

b. The attendees will be divided into groups of two. Each group will invent a culture for itself defined by its value orientations. The only constraint will be that their culture cannot mirror mainstream middle class North American values.

c. Each group of two will then receive a negotiation exercise that will require them to trade with a different cultural group. They will be given time to develop a trading strategy that is consistent with their value orientations.

d. Groups will then be combined so that two members of one created culture are trading with two members of another created culture. They will try to negotiate a trade agreement.

e. Time will be called and the trading partners will try to identify their counterparts' cultural values, based on their behavior during the negotiation.

f. The presenters, Virginia Arthur and Wendy Klepetar, both of whom are Associate Professors at the College of Saint Benedict, will lead a discussion of the experience.

ii. Time needed to perform the activities: 1.5 — 2 hours.

iii. These exercises could be used in training and development to prepare people for international contacts or to sensitize them to the issues involved in dealing with cultural diversity in the United States.

REFERENCES

- Adler, Nancy J. (1991) Inter national Dimensions of Organizational Behavior Boston, MA: PWS-Kent
- Harris, Philip R., and Moran, Robert T., (1987). Managing Cultural Differences Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing
- Kluckhohn, F., and Strodbeck, F. L. (1961) Variations in Value Orientations Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson
- Lane, H. W., and DiStefano, J.J. (1992) International Management Behavior: From Policy to Practice Scarborough, Ont: Nelson Canada