

Bridging The Cultural Gap

Katherine Alexander
Vertex Business Services



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Globalization

- Not just outsourcing
- International presence for companies
- Benefits
- Challenges
- What does it mean for testing?

"We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."
- Martin Luther King Jr.



What is Culture?

- Body of cultural traditions: those that distinguish a specific society.
- Subculture: common identity.
- Cultural universals: learned behavior patterns shared by all of humanity.

Deaf subcultures – sign language.

"The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit."

- Wade Davis



Western Culture Differences

- The definition of a handshake.
- Informal Americans.
- Dining no-nos.

"I love the Olympics, because they enable people from all over the world to come together and--regardless of their political or cultural differences--accuse each other of cheating."

- Dave Barry



Cultural Dimensions

- Dr. Geert Hofstede's study of culture in the workplace.
- 1970's IBM study.
- 100,000 individuals in over 40 countries.

" Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster."

- Prof. Geert Hofstede, Emeritus Professor, Maastricht University.



Power Distance

- PDI
- Degree of equality that exists and is accepted between people in a country's society.
- High PDI – centralized companies, strong hierarchies.
- Low PDI – flatter organizations, supervisors and employees equal, use of teamwork.



Individualism

- IDV
- Degree the society reinforces individual achievement and interpersonal relationships.
- High IDV – high value on people’s time, need for freedom, expectation of rewards for hard work.
- Low IDV – emphasis on building skills, harmony more important than honesty, respect for age, change introduced slowly.



Masculinity

- MAS
- Degree the society reinforces traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control and power.
- High MAS – men are masculine, women are feminine, well-defined distinction between men's work and women's work.
- Low MAS – powerful women are admired and respected, effort to ensure job design and practices are not discriminatory.



Uncertainty Avoidance Index

- UAI
- Focus on level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, level of anxiety members feel when in uncertain or unknown situations.
- High UAI – low tolerance, rule-oriented society to reduce the amount of uncertainty.
- Low UAI – has more tolerance for a variety of opinions, more readily accepts change, takes more risks.



Long Term Orientation

- LTO
- Degree to which society embraces long-term devotion to traditional, forward-thinking values.
- High LTO – values long-term commitments and respect for tradition. Delivering on social obligations and “saving face” considered very important.
- Low LTO – change occurs more rapidly, long-term traditions are not impediments to change.



Benefits of Hofstede's Work

- Removes roadblocks of preconceived notions.
- Starting point for conversation between different groups.
- Provides a guide for how to approach a different culture.



Criticisms

- The averages of a country do not equal the individuals of that country.
- Data was collected through questionnaires.
- Research conducted in the 1970's – how much has changed?



Additional Steps

- Be aware of language, avoid the use of slang words.
- Use email when appropriate.
- Take the time needed to communicate.
- Send team leaders to visit corresponding locations

“No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive.”

- Mahatma Gandhi



Closing the Gap

- Software testing requires increasing levels of interpersonal skills and cultural savvy.
- Individuals bring unique experiences and knowledge.
- Be aware of cultural gaps to achieve success.

“When you learn something from people, or from a culture, you accept it as a gift, and it is your lifelong commitment to preserve it and build on it.”

- Yo-Yo Ma



Questions?

“A culture is made – or destroyed – by its articulate voices.”

- Ayn Rand

