

IAC2301

INTRODUCTION TO AIRLINE CUSTOMER SERVICE

UNIT 5 CROSS CULTURAL
AWARENESS

Delicious or Disgusting?



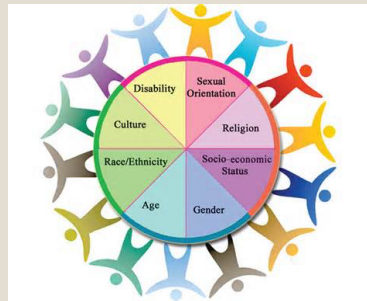
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Culture is all socially transmitted and shared behaviors, manners, customs, rituals, beliefs, ideas, arts, knowledge, values, morals and ideals that are learned in a group of the same nationality, religion or ethnicity.

The Impact of Diversity You will encounter different languages, cultural backgrounds, age groups, genders, and communication styles.

Almost everyone you interact with will have a different preference for interpersonal modes and customs.

As a skilled customer service worker, it will be your duty to connect with them in the way that best serves their needs, and your company's interests, while making your job performance as effective as possible.



The Impact of Cultural Values

- Concept: Values often dictate which behaviors and practices are acceptable or unacceptable.
- To be effective in dealing with others, service provider should not ignore the power of values and beliefs.
- The key to success is to be **open-minded** and **accept** that someone else has a different belief system that determines his or her needs.

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness becomes central when we have to interact with people from other cultures.

People see, interpret and evaluate things in a different ways.

What is considered an appropriate behavior in one culture is frequently inappropriate in another one.

Misunderstandings arise when I use my meanings to make sense of your reality.

Five causes of cultural barriers

1. Language

- Not speaking the same language (well) can cause a misunderstandings and is considered the most crucial barrier in cross-cultural communication.
- If one person isn't aware of the exact meaning of a word, it may be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the other person and lead to a conflict of ideas.

2. Stereotypes and prejudices

- The basis of stereotyping are nationality, gender, race, religion or age.
- for example, are that all Germans are punctual and very direct, or that all Asians are good at math.
- This creates prejudice among people of different cultures and causes judgmental attitudes towards one another. People look at other cultures with certain stereotypes as “bad” or “difficult to work with and treat them with contempt and disrespect.

3. Signs and symbols

- Non-verbal communication like signs and symbols differ from culture to culture and can therefore not be relied upon in communication.
- For example, the “thumbs up”, known in the Western world as a sign of approval, is seen as an insult in Bangladesh.

4. Behaviors and belief

- Behavioral and personality differences like body language, gestures, mindsets, communication, manners, and norms, may lead to miscommunication.
- Eye contact, for example, is very important in some cultures, but rude and disrespectful in others.
- People's varied religious or spiritual beliefs can also lead to conflict and cross-cultural barriers.

- Some countries like Germany, Netherlands, Scandinavia, Switzerland tend to view time as linear. Time is money, and punctuality is a great value. Things tend to be done one at a time, to be able to focus on it and finish the task within a fixed time frame.
- Other countries, for example Spain or Italy, see time as multi-active; this means that the more things they do at the same time, the happier and more fulfilled they feel. Personal relationships are more important and valued than schedules or punctuality.

5. “Us” versus “them” (ethnocentrism)

- This us- versus them-thinking is ingrained in our subconscious and can lead to a sense of alienation if someone behaves in a way we don't understand or aren't expecting — if they don't fit in.
- A person's standard is his or her own culture; the more another person's culture, behavior, language, and beliefs deviate from it, the more “other” they are labeled.

Level of cultural awareness

Reflect how people grow to perceive cultural differences.

- **My way is the only way** – At the first level, people are aware of their way of doing things, and their way is the only way. At this stage, **they ignore the impact of cultural differences.** (Parochial stage)

- **I know their way, but my way is better** :people are aware of other ways of doing things, but still consider their way as the best one.
- In this stage, **cultural differences are perceived as source of problems and people tend to ignore them or reduce their significance.** (Ethnocentric stage)

- **My Way and Their Way** –This level people are aware of their own way and others' ways of doing things, and they chose the best way according to the situation.
- At this stage people realize that cultural differences can lead both to problems and benefits and are **willing to use cultural diversity to create new solutions and alternatives.** (Synergistic stage)

- **Our Way** – This stage brings people from different cultural background together for the creation of a culture of shared meanings.
- People dialogue repeatedly with others, **create new meanings, new rules to meet the needs of a particular situation.** (Participatory Third culture stage)

Cross cultural training can equip your customer service staff with the special knowledge and skills which can play a significant role in satisfying and strengthening your brand's relationship with customers from across the world.

How to deal with diversity

1. Reinforce importance of recognizing customer diversity

Employee should show sense of fairness and goodwill, and take customer requests seriously, no matter what their race, religion, social status, or other characteristics are.

2. Know your customers and seek out culture-specific knowledge

- To learn about where your customers are from, and get a basic knowledge of relevant world views, values and beliefs.
- Customer service try to make the most of every piece of information you might have at hand. For example, in [Live Chat](#) you can easily find out [geographical location](#) of visitors calling you for help and better understand their individual needs based on their browsing history.

3. Listen actively and recognize patterns for communicating

- Good listening skills can quickly build rapport, effectively address the issue and suggest a timely solution.
- A good practice here would be to pay attention to customer communication traits and mirror them to increase the effectiveness of interaction, for example, slow down or speed up their speech rate, use the same terminology, and paraphrase what is said by the customer to show that their needs are being heard.

4. Create a welcoming environment by having a diverse workforce

- Hiring bilingual employees who not only speak some other language but also have unique insights into different cultures would help create a fantastic customer experience.

5. Share your experiences with colleagues to work out consistent approaches

- You can learn from your customers, and you certainly can learn from your colleagues. Every time you have something to share about your interaction with a customer representing a different culture, let your colleagues know.
- brainstorm and share our experiences and knowledge with each other to better understand people from different cultures, come up with creative ideas and new.

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Customer With Language Differences

If a customer speaks a little English or has a heavy accent, try the strategies described in the following sections.

1. Let Your Customer Guide the Conversation;

let them take the lead in guiding the service interaction.

2. Listen Patiently; Focus on what he or she is saying and try to understand the meaning of the message and the needs being communicated by your customer.

3. Speak Clearly and Slowly

Speak at a rate slow enough that allows understanding without being insulting.

4. Use Globally Understood References

To reduce the risk of misunderstandings by people who speak English as a second language such as writing

Reference

https://api.macmillanenglish.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Blog_and_Resources/Resources/Files/open-mind-anticipating-cultural-differences.pdf

<https://eurac.com/cultural-barriers-and-how-to-overcome-them-in-your-global-company-as-a-global-leader/>

<https://www.providesupport.com/blog/customer-diversity/>

- How do you feel about customers from different cultures? Have you ever encountered any cross-cultural conflict in customer service? Do you have any other interesting examples to share? Tell us your story

Assignment

- The Centre here offers a range of trips, so I decided to climb Mt Cameroon with some of the other interns. We had a three-day weekend recently, and I wasn't sure I'd get another chance. But I almost thought we wouldn't make it! We set a time with the bus driver the day before – 8.00am. At 9.15, I went to the driver's house to get him. Finally, we were all on the bus, but we still faced more delays. First, the driver needed to buy petrol. Why didn't he do that yesterday?

Then at the petrol station he started talking to some friends. Come on! If he stopped to chat with whoever he met, we'd never get there. One of the other interns helped me relax, though. She reminded me that socialising is an essential part of Cameroon's culture. Friends and relationships are so important here. It stands to reason that if you run into someone you know, you'll spend time talking to him. I value my friends too, but sometimes when faced with work or school, I ignore them. And you know what? We got there in plenty of time, and Mt Cameroon was outstanding.

Answer the question

- **1** What difficulty did the intern have?
- **2** What caused this difficulty?
- **3** What values do you imagine are common in the intern's home country that are different in Cameroon?
- **4** What information could the intern have researched before his internship that would have prepared him for this situation?