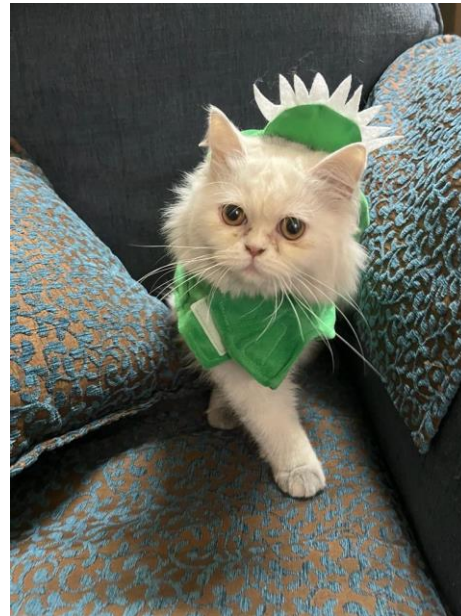# Virtual Harmony: Building Cross-Cultural Bridges in Remote Teams

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Corporate experience:
- **Training and development in aviation**
- **Quality improvement in healthcare**
- **Consultant in Strategic HRM**

Research focus: **Proactive work behaviors across cultures and professional backgrounds.**

TILBURG UNIVERSITY

- **Cross-cultural virtual teams are on the rise**.

- **Working in a multicultural, cross continental virtual team has become the new norm**.

- **members of teams are also becoming more culturally diverse**.

- **Covid19 pandemic has further increased virtual collaboration across borders**.
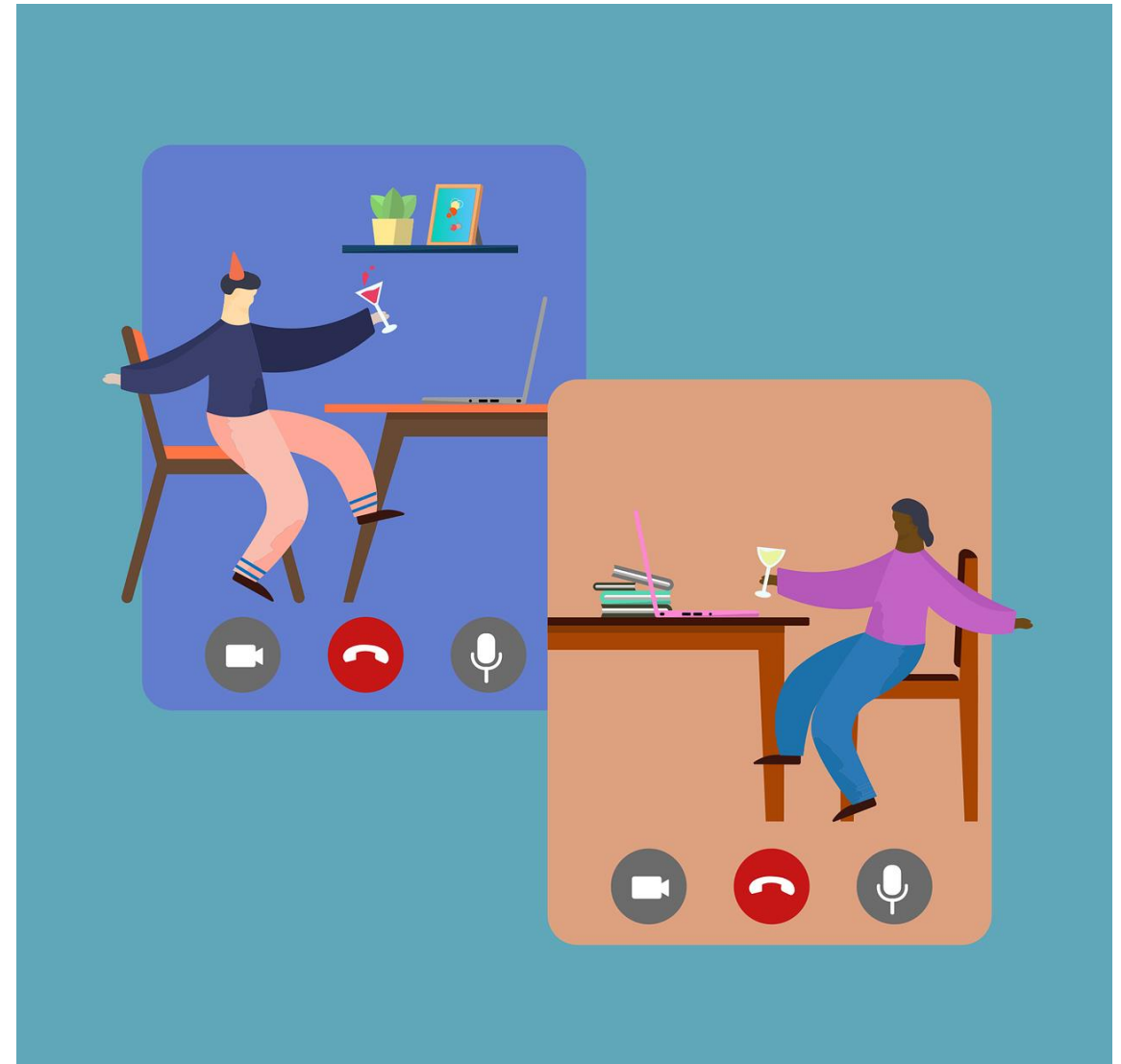
Benefits

- The incorporation of talented individuals from around the globe.

- Get ahead in the so-called "war for talent".

- Cost-effective way to exchange information.

- Cultural diversity and widespread distribution of individuals help to form heterogeneous teams with varying perspectives.

- Enable highly creative and innovative teamwork and increase the potential of the team to perform well, especially when working on complex problems.

Challenges

- **Cultural differences can create additional barriers to successful communication.**

- **cultural values influence the way how people interpret information and how they make decisions.**

- **increase the potential for misunderstandings, particularly when primarily using digital means to exchange information**

Agenda

Module 1:
Understanding your own culture

Module 2:
Building Cultural Intelligence

Module 3:
Building Team Trust

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Module 1: Understanding your own culture

What is Culture?

- **Differences in *behaviour***
- **overt behaviour (observable actions and responses) and**
- **covert behaviour (thoughts, beliefs, feelings)**
- **"national culture" at the country level,**
- **"organisational culture" for a company)**

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from around the world

IT COULD ALWAYS BE WORSE
Margot Zemach

GONE IS GONE
OR
THE STORY OF A MAN WHO
WANTED TO DO HOUSEWORK

Turtle's Race with Beaver

THE TOWN MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE
HELEN WARD

Stone Soup
Jon J Muth

THE PEOPLE COULD FLY
American Black Folktales
told by VIRGINIA HAMILTON

THE DAY IT SNOWED TORTILLAS

wåde
waohayô
kívánok
ass-iyessbhène
gauon
wharro
mbēē
hoi
chlomo
tagon
winidzéchbur
nliwalè
guete Здравствуйте
heilar
mshvidobisa
sut
an
Добрий
nza
päivää
dober
terve
kem
moiennamaskaram
karo
oulà
hallo
chào
talofa
bon aobry
azul
jutro ayubowan
lahko annyŏng
kumusta
boujou hoeien

Cultural differences within teams

Cultural differences within teams have the potential to pose barriers with respect to communication, relationship building, cooperation, and trust, influencing team members' views of the group and both their own and others' participation in it.
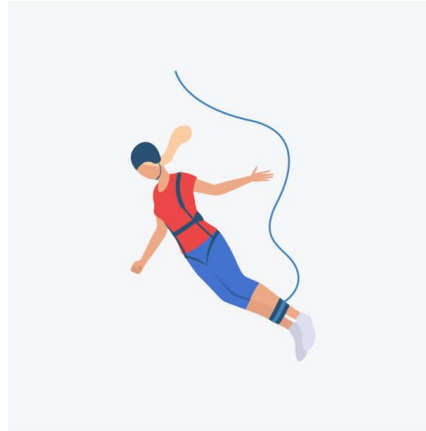
Hofstede (1980)

- **Power Distance (High/Low)**
- **Individualism (vs. Collectivism)**
- **Masculinity versus Femininity**
- **Long Term versus Short Term Orientation**
- **Indulgence versus Restraint**
- **Long Term versus Short Term Orientation**

Hofstede (1980)

Power Distance

Uncertainty Avoidance

Individualism/collectivism

Hofstede (1980)

Masculinity/Femininity

Long- versus short-term orientation

Indulgence versus restraint

Try it out!

- https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool

High- Versus Low- context Cultures

High-Context Cultures:

1. **High-context cultures place a strong emphasis on implicit communication, non-verbal cues, and shared understanding within a group.**

2. **Communication is often indirect, relying on context, relationships, and social cues to convey meaning.**

Low-Context Cultures:

1. **Low-context cultures rely more on explicit communication, precise language, and direct expression of thoughts and feelings.**

2. **Communication tends to be more straightforward and relies less on shared context or pre-existing relationships.**
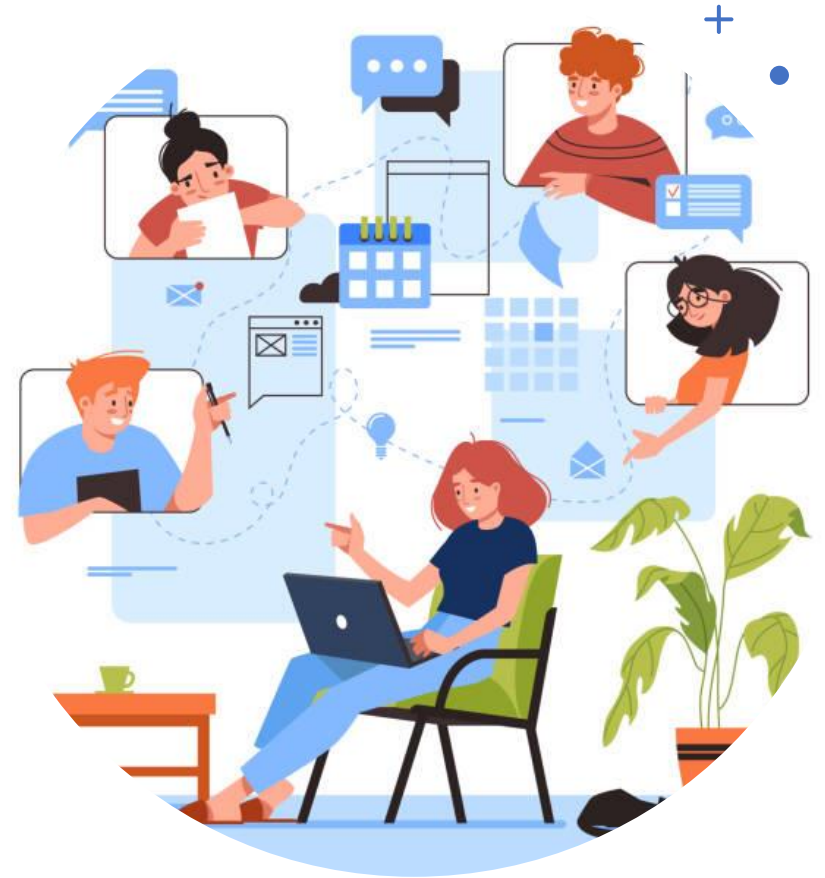
- **Communication Style:**
  - **High-context:** Indirect, implicit, relies on context and non-verbal cues.
  - **Low-context:** Direct, explicit, emphasizes clarity and precision in language.
- **Relationships and Trust:**
  - **High-context:** Relationships are crucial, and trust is built over time through shared experiences and mutual understanding.
  - **Low-context:** Trust can be established more quickly through transparent communication and adherence to agreements.

Introduce Yourself

In teams of 3 share the following information about your country of origin to present to the group:

- General information about the country

- Traditional food

- Business culture

- Dos and don'ts of communicating internationally

- Stereotypes

Time: 20 minutes

Adapting Written Communication

- Limit the use of slang and jargon
- Use simple English words
- Confirm understanding
- Avoid long emails
- Avoid humor
- Formulate criticism carefully

Spoken Communication

- **Speak Slowly/clearly**

- **Keep words and sentences short**

- **Avoid jargon and acronyms**

- **Invite each individual to speak**

- **Allow for thinking time after responses**

- **Avoid metaphors**

- **Avoid humor**

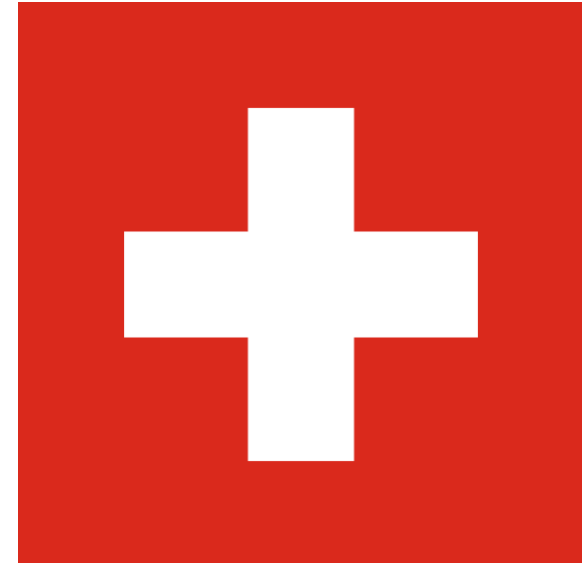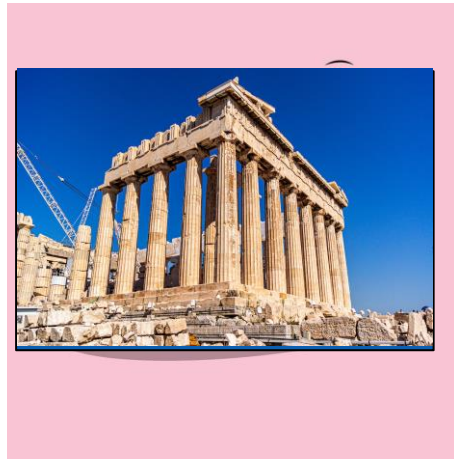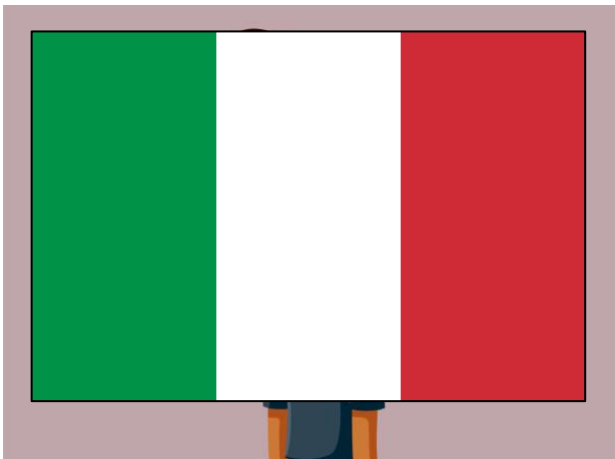# Module 2: Building Cultural Intelligence

Building Cultural Intelligence

- **cognitions or knowledge about other cultures**

- **Motivation to interact within other cultures**

- **communication behavior that adapts to different cultures**

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Legal Systems

Marriage Systems

Civil, Religious, and Customary Marriages

Same-Sex Marriage

Age of Marriage

Marriage as a Legal Contract vs. Religious Sacrament

Arranged Marriages vs. Love Marriages

Monogamy vs. Polygamy

Role of Families

Dowry vs. Bride Price

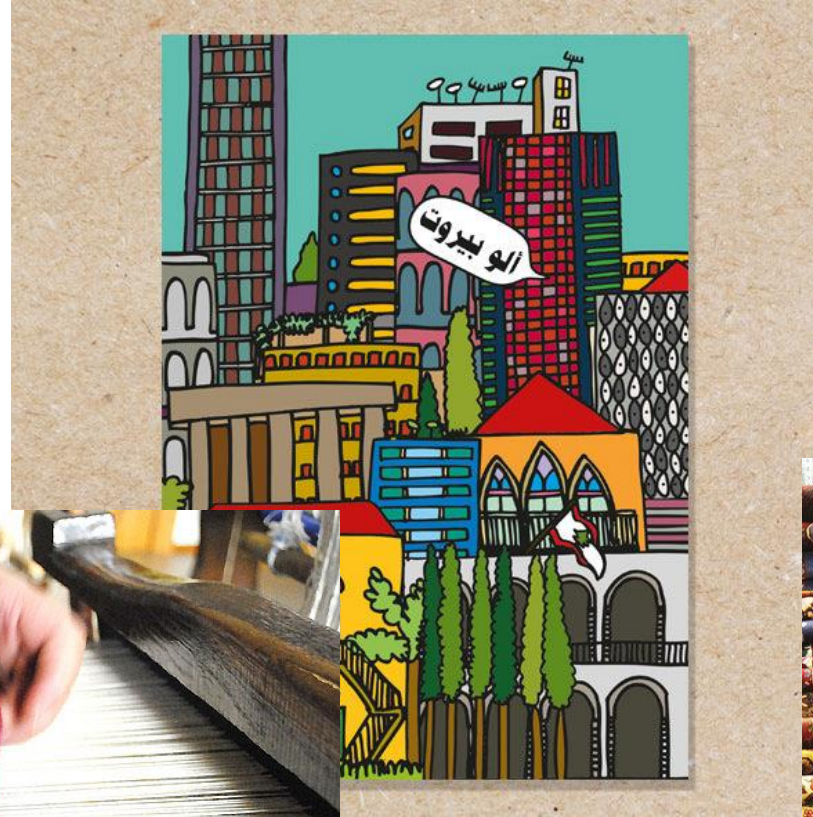Divorce Laws

Marriage and Nationality

Language

Arts and Crafts

Team Mission

- **This is Tim.**
- **Tim is a member of a virtual team.** His team members are mostly from [country of your choice], which is not his country of origin nor residence. He wants to become more culturally intelligent.

- **What are the things he needs to know about this country?**

Team Mission

- In the same team, pick a country and start familiarizing yourself with it so that you can create a fact sheet that can help Tim become more culturally Intelligent.

Important Checklist

☑ Does Tim check the accuracy of his cultural knowledge as he interacts with people from different cultures?

☑ Does Tim adjust his cultural knowledge as he interacts with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to him?

☑ Can Tim deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to him?

☑ Is Tim confident that he can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to him?

☑ Does Tim enjoy interacting with people from different cultures?

Module 3: Building Trust

The Importance of Trust

- **Virtual teams work more effectively when given time to build trust and connections among participants.**

- **Trust has both a direct and a mediating effect on team effectiveness.**

Your Home Office

Take a picture of your home office and share it with the team.

You can take some time to make whatever arrangements you want before taking the picture ☺

Recommendations for Building Trust

Develop norms and expectations for virtual work.

Provide information on individual and organizational results

Set meeting and communication standards

Ask for feedback and suggestions for improvements

Ensure appropriate skills for using technology

Deal directly and swiftly with trust breaches

Use multiple methods of communicating

Reward and recognize contributions

Make personal contacts with virtual workers

EVIDENCE-BASED HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

ARE YOU AN HR PROFESSIONAL LOOKING TO ADDRESS A CHALLENGE IN YOUR ORGNZATION OR DO YOU KNOW ONE?

THEN THIS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM IS FOR YOU!

WHAT?

A MANAGEMENT MENTORHSIP PROGRAM AIMED AT HR PROFESSIONALS TO HELP THEM ADDRESS THEIR CURRRENT/FUTURE CHALLENGES IN AN EVIDENCE-DRIVEN MANNER

WHO?

THIS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM IS AIMED AT HR PROFESSIONALS ABLE TO MAKE CHANGES WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS.

THEY WILL BE MENTORED BY HR ACADEMICS, EXPERTS IN DIFFERENT HR FIELDS.

HOW?

THIS WOSKHOP WILL TAKE PLACE OVER THREE FULL DAYS:

- TWO THAT INCLUDE HANDS-ON MENTORSHIP ON A CERTIAN CURRENT/FUTURE CHALLENGES.

- ONE WHERE YOU SHARE AND PRESENT YOUR FINDINGS.

WHY?

TO CREATE IMPACT, TRANSLATE OUR RESERACH, AND HELP PRACTITIONERS ADDRESS THEIR CHALLENGES.

WHEN?

THERE IS NO SPECIFIC DATE SCHEUDLED YET, BUT WE WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED ONCE YOU REACH OUT!

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TILBURG UNIVERSITY

Understanding Society

Thank you!

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