

ICBQ | culture

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Introduction

Internationality will play an ever more important role in our working lives in the future. In many professional teams today, people from different cultures find themselves working side-by-side, and larger companies often expect their employees to have experience of working abroad. Intercultural skills are becoming a central competence for professional success, and not only for people sent to work abroad.

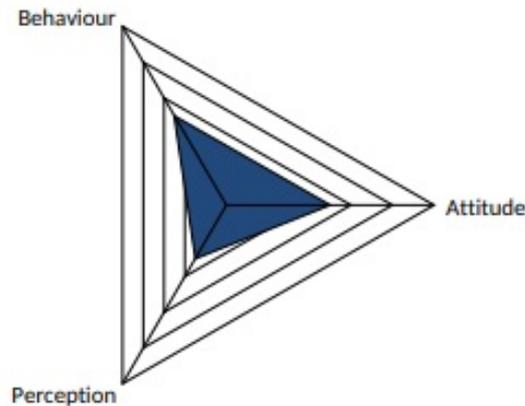
Intercultural competence is the ability to interact with people from other cultures with a view to mutual benefit. We understand intercultural competence as a fundamental personal prerequisite for dealing constructively with new, unfamiliar or unknown situations in an intercultural context. The ICBQ | culture doesn't assess whether special behaviour techniques that can be helpful in a particular culture have already been learned; rather, it measures basic intercultural skills without addressing the specific culture in detail.

In scientific surveys, three factors have emerged that are especially relevant for recording intercultural competence:

- Attitude to the unfamiliar
- Perception of the unfamiliar
- Behaviour towards the unfamiliar

These are psychological dimensions that can be changed or developed in the long term.

In order to be successful in intercultural situations, the subject doesn't need to achieve the highest possible score for all factors. Rather, it is a balance between the different kinds of individual potential and the specific requirements that is decisive. These requirements vary, for example, according to the duration and intensity of the contact with the other culture.



The individual degrees to which the dimensions are present are shown on a diagram like the one above. The dimensions stand for the following:

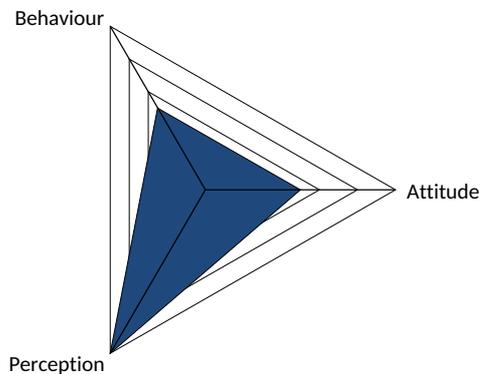
ATTITUDE (openness) stands for receptiveness, interest in and receptiveness for the new and the unknown. What is my personal attitude to things I am not familiar with?

PERCEPTION (empathy) measures the depth of interpersonal sensitivity. To what extent am I aware of the other person's sensitivities, to what extent do I want to understand him?

BEHAVIOUR (rationality) records willingness to deal reasonably with new situations. How do I cope with changes?

In the individual assessment you will find information showing to what degree each of the three factors is present in your case, what contribution you can make to intercultural cooperation, and what risks may exist for you. You will also find information about what you should pay particular attention to in the intercultural environment. If you take advantage of the chances offered to you and are aware of your weaknesses, you will be able to act more successfully in the intercultural context.

Your personal balance



The chart shows how strongly each of the individual factors is present in your case. Please bear in mind that more is not necessarily better. This analysis records your personal qualifications for dealing with the unfamiliar.

Think about what role and what responsibilities you will have to fulfil in which cultural environment. These are the general conditions that can vary from one intercultural cooperation to the next. Think about what requirements you have to fulfil in the intercultural cooperation and how you can put your abilities to best use.

Studies have shown that a higher level of openness and rationality often goes hand-in-hand more time spent abroad, be it for private or business reasons. Your empathy value tells you something about the extent to which you get personally involved.

Attitude

You are pretty open and receptive towards new things. When you come into an unfamiliar environment, you are interested in what others do and how they go about it. You are prepared to open up to strangers and to learn new things, if you think it's appropriate to you. However, you aren't actively searching for new experiences.

In unfamiliar situations you are good at combining new things with what you already know, and this enables you to mediate between the two areas. Ideally, you like to take the best of both worlds and combine it.

Perception

The interpersonal level is very important to you. It's important to you to get on well with others, strangers included. Thus you're very interested in what motivates the other person's actions. You are sensitive and try to adapt to the other person, although he is actually quite different. If you have the choice between facts and people, you prefer to focus on the human element.

You are keen to establish close personal relationships with strangers as well. You have the potential to discover and explain hidden values and patterns in other cultures. In this way, you can build a bridge between the cultures.

It may prove to be a disadvantage that you attach such importance to good relationships with others. There is a danger that you will find yourself showing too much understanding and thus tolerating too much, instead of making the necessary boundaries clear.

Behaviour

You don't mind adapting to fit in with an unfamiliar environment. You try to come up with your own ideas. If you don't make any progress on your own, you look to others for help on how to behave appropriately. Where possible, and where it makes sense, you rely on behaviour patterns that have worked for you before. Thus you generally stand for pragmatic solutions. You don't idealise your own way of doing things nor the way the other culture does them; instead, you try to steer a successful middle course. You like to make a plan in order to feel more secure in unfamiliar situations. You have some good qualifications to find your way around in unfamiliar situations and to respond fairly reasonably. But it may also happen that you without any support don't know how to behave appropriately.

Tips and Suggestions

To prepare for a stay in a foreign culture, it can be helpful to make use of the tips and suggestions below in order to confront in advance some problems that may crop up. The suggestions made are derived from your results, so that they are geared to your personal needs.

Preparation

Take a little time to prepare for and plan your stay abroad.

You'll feel more comfortable in your new environment if the most important points have been clarified.

Information

How much information do you need to give you the best support?

You benefit most from best-practice information: What has already proved useful? What experience is already documented?

What kind of information is important for you when dealing with foreigners?

In addition, background cultural information will help you gain a broader understanding of the new environment.

In what form should the information be available to you?

It should be adequate for you if you have obtained the most important information once, e.g. at an introductory talk, and if you know where to ask or look if you don't know.

Local contact person

It will help you to have a competent native of the host country available who will give you confidence when things are not clear.

Special tips

A preparatory "look & see" visit would probably be helpful for you.

Exact plans and advance structuring restrict you too much.

Basic conditions

Everyone has his own needs and inclinations that make it easier or harder for him/her to fulfil special requirements. Some basic conditions that may apply in a different culture are listed below, which may be particularly favourable or unfavourable for you personally.

Length of stay:

You can adapt to both longer and shorter stays.

Possible assignments in the host country:

Support in forming joint ventures

Your possible role:

Forging links with the local people

Intensity and type of the working relationship:

You are well-suited to assignments where you can compare notes intensively and at a personal level with people from the host country. You like to have a pleasant human atmosphere and not just a factual one.

Affiliation:

You will probably be able to get in touch with strangers on your own and establish lasting relationships with them.