

**SECTOR: ALL**

**SUBSECTOR: ALL**

**RTQF LEVEL 5**

**CCMSE501**

**WORKING IN A SOCIALLY DIVERSE  
ENVIRONMENT**

## **CCMSE501 WORKING IN A SOCIALLY DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Elements of competence**

#### **LU1. Communicate with customers and colleagues from diverse backgrounds.**

1.1 Adequate Valuing customers and colleagues from different cultural groups and treating them with respect and sensitivity.

1.2 Adequate Taking into consideration cultural differences in all verbal and non-verbal communication and overcoming language barriers.

1.3 Proper obtaining assistance from colleagues, reference books or outside organizations when required.

#### **LU 2. Address cross-cultural misunderstandings**

2.1 Proper identification of issues that may cause conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace.

2.2 Adequate consideration of possible cultural differences when difficulties or misunderstandings occur.

2.3 Appropriate referring of problems and unresolved issues to the appropriate team leader or supervisor

## **INTRODUCTION**

This module describes the skills, knowledge and attitude required to be able to successfully work in a socially diverse environment. The module will allow the participant to develop ways of communicating with customers and colleagues from diverse backgrounds and accommodating cultural differences. Furthermore, this module will enable the trainee to be able to identify issues that may cause conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace because of the cultural differences, find ways of resolving them and/or referring them to appropriate individuals or bodies.

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### **L.U.1.COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS AND COLLEAGUES FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS**

1.1 Adequate Valuing customers and colleagues from different cultural groups and treating them with respect and sensitivity.

Many workplaces are staffed with people from various cultures. Also staff interacts with and serves people from different nations and cultural backgrounds. It is vital that all these people, whether staff and customers, are treated with respect and sensitivity.

#### **The diversity of customers and colleagues**

People are different. There are a number of things that make us all different, including:

- The way they live including where and how they live
- Values and principles: the importance placed on people, actions and things, and personal guidelines for living life
- Educational background: how far they got through schooling, and whether or not they did any further education
- Sporting interests: whether they play sport, or whether they are even interested in sport and which sport
- Food and beverage tastes: do they drink alcohol or prefer juice, do they eat red meat or are they vegetarian?
- Lifestyle background: what car do they drive, where have they worked?
- Place of birth: which country where they born in?

- Styles of communication: what is their preferred communication medium and method?
- Religious beliefs: who or what do they believe in? What is their preferred language?

All of these factors and a whole lot more, combine to produce a world full of different people. It is critical to remember that just because these people are different to you doesn't make them any better or worse. They are just different. In your industry workplace you must, therefore, make sure that any personal bias is not allowed to adversely influence and affect the way you interact with such individuals.

### **Valuing customers and colleagues**

An essential element of working in a socially diverse environment is to make sure that customers and colleagues feel valued. Issues value customers and colleagues

- Working abilities and skills
- Workplace and product knowledge
- Experience within the industry, customers and other relevant stakeholders including management, authorities and suppliers
- Their contribution to discussions – such as Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), general work planning, suggestions and input to daily workplace activities
- Achievement of team and workplace goals.

The key to doing this is that the value you place on these coworkers should be based on them as an individual and not influenced by any irrelevant issues such as age, gender, race or disabilities.

Make sure all customers understand you place value on their:

- Presence on the premises
- The money they spend with us
- The other customers they bring to the business.

### **Respect and sensitivity**

Respect and sensitivity are two of the characteristics we should display towards colleagues and customers when demonstrating the value, we place on them.

## Respect

Respect means:

- Holding the persons in high regard for who they are, not what they are – acknowledging them for being who they are
- Being deferential in the way the person is treated – as in the saying „treating the person with respect“
- Showing courtesy(politeness) to the person.

## Sensitivity

**In essence, being sensitive means knowing that another person merits consideration based on their cultural or social background, and accommodating that need.** Being sensitive is the exact opposite of knowing that a social or cultural need exists and ignoring it!

## Internal and external customers

Customers come from outside the business and may be referred to as „external“ customers. That is, they are external to the business.

By contrast, „internal“ customers are other staff, workers and colleagues from within the business. This allows us to regard all people with whom we interact as customers. This is useful as it underlines the need for us to treat everyone in the workplace with respect and sensitivity.

## **L.O.1.2. Take into consideration cultural differences in all verbal and non-verbal communication and overcome language barriers.**

Working in a socially diverse environment necessitates communicating with people from different cultural and social backgrounds. This must be done, as we have already seen, in a respectful and sensitive manner.

The essential **facts** (evidence, proof) to identify when communicating with people from culture differences are:

## **Race**

The first basic fact to identify when communicating with people from another culture is to identify their race. **That is, the country they come from.** This is the primary indicator of what needs that person has in terms of their workplace needs for staff or their product and service needs for customers. You can determine their race by simply and politely asking them. This shows interest and helps demonstrate a willingness to accommodate their special needs.

## **Language**

People from different countries may have trouble with your language. There is sometimes an expectation on our part that people from another country should speak your language but this is a false and dangerous assumption and one that is without basis. In addition, those who have knowledge of your language can have trouble understanding you because of **accents** (pronunciation) and local expressions. It is generally accepted that we should:

- Speak slower to foreign people
- Avoid the use of industry jargon(slang), local terms and expressions
- Try to learn some basic phrases in other languages
- Provide written information in a variety of languages. Where deemed necessary, many establishments provide a range of service information including maps, price lists, accommodations and menus (tariff) etc. in different languages to assist in this regard.

Many places also employ multi- or bi-lingual staff to help.

## **Special needs**

Special needs commonly occur in relation to:

- Food
- Privacy (isolation)
- Religious devotion (care, attentiveness)
- Beverages (drinks)
- Sleeping requirements (wants, desire)
- Business protocol (conventions)

Where a workplace regularly receives guests from certain countries, there will usually be some form of in-house training and resources that assist you in offering services that are appropriate to

meet these special needs. Where these supports are not available, it is acceptable to ask the person what special needs they have and how you can assist them in meeting those needs.

The more you make the effort to meet these needs for customers, the better you and the establishment will be regarded and the greater will be the likelihood of repeat business from those people and referral business from those whom they recommend to us. The more you meet these needs for colleagues, the greater will be the level of cooperation you receive from such people, and the more respect they will in turn have for you.

### **Family structure**

Family structure refers to the relationships that exist within families for the members of that family. It covers how family members treat each other, how they speak to each other, the freedom that family members are given, the roles of members of the family and the responsibilities that members are allocated or assumed to discharge.

Your perspective on family structure may not be the same as those from other cultures. For example, different countries will have a different awareness and acceptance of: The nuclear family – where two generations of a family live together either by design or as a result of externally imposed need Step-families – where family units combine after divorce and there are children in the family from spouses who may not be in that family Single-parent families – where the family unit comprises only one parent plus a child or children. This highlights the differences that can exist between cultures and again underlines that we must take care not to assume that our orientation to something will automatically be the same position taken by others. This does n't make them wrong and us right, it just makes them different.

### **Disabilities**

Many of us encounter problems communicating with people suffering from certain disabilities, this problem is hugely compounded when the individual concerned is from another culture. The keys to treat people with disability are to:

- Identify the disabilities that colleagues and customers commonly present with

- Plan how to accommodate these needs – by talking to support groups and talking to disabled people to learn about their needs, expectations and how they prefer to be treated
- Implement the pre-planned strategies sensitively – meaning there is always a need to fine-tune service to meet specific individual need.

### **Gender**

The equality experienced in your country may not be as strongly shared by people from other nations. While many countries will have some form of equal opportunity legislation which purports to treat males and females equally, this arrangement does not exist within all cultures. It is our role when dealing with people from another culture is to recognize this difference and accommodate it. It is not our role to try to force those people to align with your view in this regard. While we may see it as acceptable to talk directly to a female customer, making direct eye contact and smiling to them, other countries may find this approach rude, offensive and indicative of sexual overtones.

### **Age**

In some countries it may be the case that old age confers respect and prestige while in other countries it may be the young people who are regarded with respect and prestige. In each country laws govern the treatment of people on the basis of age but these laws may not apply elsewhere. We must be sensitive to these age-related considerations and treat each culture appropriately based on their traditional approach to age. We need to sensitively apply any legal requirements that apply to age-related issues, such as the service of alcohol, which may be different in different countries.

### **Sexual preference**

Sexual preference is not the taboo it once was in some countries; however, we need to be mindful of not giving offence to people who are different in this way. We also need to be mindful of not imposing our liberal approach in this regard onto others.



## **Law and Culture**

All people should be valued and treated with respect when it comes to their individual differences.

Equal Opportunity (EO) legislation has been devised in some countries to be enforced in society in general with specific emphasis on activities in all workplaces. These laws which may not exist in all countries can vary between different countries but remain essentially the same, identifying features that may cause prejudices among groups of people. Discrimination means unfair treatment of a person based on prejudices. In many countries it is against the law to treat anyone unfairly or harass them. Whether or not you agree with this legislation if it exists in your country you need to know what it covers and abide by it.

### **Objectives of Equal Opportunity legislation**

In part, the objectives of EO legislation are to:

- To promote recognition and acceptance of everyone's right to equality of opportunity
- To eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of various „listed attributes“ (see immediately below)
- To eliminate, as far as possible, sexual harassment.

### **The 'listed attributes' (qualities, characteristics)**

The seventeen listed attributes are:

- Age
- Breastfeeding
- Career status
- Disability/impairment
- Gender identity Industrial activity
- Lawful sexual activity
- Marital status
- Parental status
- Physical features – covering height, weight, size, shape or any other physical characteristics: safety-based discrimination may be okay to protect health, safety or property

- Political belief or activity
- Pregnancy
- Race
- Religious belief or activity
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation
- Personal association (assumed or actual) with anyone who has one or more of the above characteristics.

### **Areas of public life**

In addition to the above identified listed personal characteristics, a breach of the EO legislation can only occur when the unfair treatment takes place within one of the identified areas of public life identified by the legislation.

These areas of public life are:

- Accommodation
- Clubs Education
- Employment
- Provision of goods and services
- Selling or transferring land
- Sport.

As you can see, this means that many of our dealings with customers in the hospitality, tourism and events industries are potentially covered by the requirements of EO legislation.

### **Stereotypes**

When dealing with people it is important not to use stereotypes. Never assume that someone fits into a particular category, simply based on what you think is the case based on personal observation, information given to you by other staff, your personal experience or your individual perspectives.

Some incorrect stereotypes may include:

- Assuming an older man is taking his daughter out to lunch, when really the woman is his girlfriend or wife

- Assuming elderly people are boring and conservative
- Assuming all teenagers are wild and talk nonsense
- Assuming all Americans will tip
- Assuming all Japanese people drink sake
- Assuming two men will not want a double room
- Assuming a woman in her fifties is not the mother of a young child Assuming your manager thinks he is better than you
- Assuming a woman and a man are married or are in a relationship
- Assuming all men like to drink their beer and women drink champagne.

### **Verbal and non-verbal communication**

#### **➤ Verbal communication**

We always need to be sensitive and respectful in the way we:

- Communicate with others from a different culture
- Interpret the communication we receive from people from another culture.

Keys in appropriate communication when dealing with people from another culture include:

- Identify the country and culture
- Take time to plan what to say and how to say it Be mindful of your body language – most non-verbal communication is spontaneous Avoid industry and establishment jargon
- Avoid local expressions

When speaking to a person from a different culture, it is important to take into consideration their particular cultural differences.

This can include:

- Pitch or tone of your voice
- Volume of the talking Speed at which you talk
- Pauses in the conversation - to allow for understanding, questions to be asked, clarification.

When coming face-to-face with customers who speak another language, it is important to slow your speech, but not too slow to the point of sounding unnatural or giving the other person the impression that you think they are stupid!

Always try to deliver your thoughts using basic words and sentence constructions.

Remember that there are times when it is socially acceptable to say a particular word, while in other circles the same language could be considered unacceptable.

Be careful when choosing your words, as confusion can result in cultural misunderstandings.

Always try to modify your language to suit the listener as much as possible.

Keep smiling! Your efforts at trying to help will shine through even though you may make an unintentional cultural gaff.

### **Simple words in foreign languages**

There is no expectation that you learn words in every language but you should identify countries from which co-workers and/or customers come and learn some simple words and phrases.

The more you learn, the easier other words and phrases will become.

Make a start by learning simple words as follows:

- To greet and welcome
- To farewell and say goodbye
- Count the numbers 1 – 10
- The days of the week and months of the year
- Titles used by people including Mister and Missus
- Basic functions – walk, drive, sleep, eat and drink
- Basic establishment facilities
- Basic products and costs
- Methods of transportation.

It can be useful to prepare a hard copy list that you can refer to, or to have a range of dual language dictionaries or phrase books.

Never be afraid to try to communicate in foreign languages. Most people appreciate you making the effort even though your pronunciation may be wrong, or there is still a lack of clear understanding.

You don't need to attend a formal course to learn these basic words or terms; you just need to have the desire to do so.

You can learn simple words from:

- Customers
- The internet
- A foreign language dictionary
- Staff
- A local ethnic club or association
- Avoid complex statements
- Give the person your full attention

### **Attempt to overcome language barriers**

#### **Introduction**

Providing the goodwill exists on your part to communicate with a person from another background, this can usually be successfully accomplished. It will take a little extra time and will demand a little extra effort but it can normally be done. There is no doubt that most failures to communicate between cultures are because one of the parties made no real and honest attempt to do so.

#### **The role of planning and preparation**

Very few attempts at overcoming language barriers will be successful unless there has been appropriate and sufficient planning and preparation: these can be seen as essential prerequisites. You should identify the languages that need to be taken into account. Once these have been identified, develop phrases that will allow you to:

- Meet, greet and farewell customers – at different times of the day, and to different types of customers including men, women, children and business people
- Provide simple directions – to the restaurant, bar, swimming pool, different floors, various rooms as well as to common landmarks and tourist attractions
- Give simple instructions – on how to use telephones, how to operate in-room and venue facilities
- Answer simple enquiries – such as questions relating to availability of rooms, process of goods and services and local conditions

- Prepare for, serve and assist customers – in accordance with your designated work role and responsibilities. For instance, the language needs of a front office receptionist will differ to those of a room attendant which will be, in turn, different to those required by a food and beverage waiter or a bar attendant
- Describe goods and service – once again this will relate to your specific workplace role. For example, a food waiter should be able to describe tastes, smells, ingredients, cooking styles, portion sizes and so on.

Once you have developed these phrases you will need to practice them. Conducting role plays with staff from another country are a good idea and use them in the workplace whenever the opportunity arises.

### ➤ **Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal communication occurs in all person-to-person situations.

Some people use more non-verbal communication than others, though we all use it to some degree.

Some people read non-verbal communication than others, but everyone forms an impression about the speaker based on their interpretation of their body language. Non-verbal communication is traditionally more important when communicating with someone from a culturally diverse background where there is a spoken word language difficulty.

### **Types of non-verbal communication**

The speed with which you move may be interpreted as:

- Slow walk – don't care
- Fast walk – flat out and stressed.

Your facial expression may be interpreted as:

- Grumpy face – don't want to be at work; don't like the person they are talking to
- Smiling face – happy with life; happy to work with customers.

How you hold your arms may be interpreted as:

- Arms crossed – defensive
- Arms at your side – open to discussion

Hand and finger gestures may be interpreted as:

- Waving a hand – saying goodbye
- Curling a finger - beckoning
- The thumbs up – all is okay or some other more abusive message!

How you attend to your personal hygiene may be interpreted as:

- Bad body odor – don't care attitude; disrespect for others
- Hair tied back neatly – person with pride; respect for others.

Eye contact may be interpreted as:

- Direct eye contact – telling the truth, intimidating, sexual
- No eye contact – not listening, disinterested or lying.

When using body language, be aware that you can also be transmitting feelings, which could be interpreted as conflicting with your words.

It is important to be consciously aware of your own body language and that of others at all times when communicating

### **Language barriers - the role of gestures**

When faced with a language barrier, service staff should attempt to communicate through the use of gestures or simple words.

Gestures are preferable for saying nothing and risking the person feeling ignored.

Attempts at gestures may include:

- Pointing to indicate a location, a position or a menu item
- Holding fingers up to establish quantities
- Rubbing your hands to indicate temperature
- Nodding your head in agreement
- Shaking your head in disagreement
- Using facial expressions to relay your feelings.

### **Written communication**

Where there is a problem with dialects or perhaps the customer cannot understand your accent, you may still be able to communicate by writing.

This can be especially true where staff have studied a second language. They can be reasonably competent with the written word but yet to develop their competency with the spoken word due to speed or accents. The use of pre-prepared written documents developed in various other languages is a great idea.

### **Sign language**

When communicating with deaf people, it can be extremely useful to be able to use sign language. It may be worthwhile learning a few signs to help communicate.

### **LO1.3. Obtain assistance from colleagues, reference books or outside organizations when required**

Unless you have indicated to your employer that you have competencies with certain languages, no business will expect you to be proficiently communicate with people from other countries.

They will, however, expect you to make an effort to learn the basics that will enable you to do your job properly. To learn the basics you will need to get help from other people, various agencies or external organizations. This section looks at where you might obtain such assistance.

#### **1. Colleagues**

You may be able to get help from co-workers or in-house trainers. Where a colleague is from a different speaking country, simply ask them to give you some lessons that cover basic words or phrases that may be helpful.

This may be informal „training“ but it can be very effective, and is a great way of demonstrating to them (and management) that you have an interest in their culture and in serving people from that country.

#### **2. Customers**

Never be afraid to ask customers to help you out, especially where the customer has good language skills

Make sure you don't impose on them or their time but they will usually accommodate a request for either a very quick verbal lesson“ or a couple of written words or phrases.



### **3. Other people**

In addition, you can seek information on different cultures and possibly get some language-related assistance from:

- Teachers – in-house and industry trainers
- Family and friends
- Service providers – private and public
- Suppliers
- Supervisors.

### **4. Sign Language Companies**

Sign Language companies provide training used for communicating with deaf people.

### **5. Written information**

Written information about different cultures and countries may be found through:

- The Internet
- Media – especially newspapers, radio stations and magazines that are specific to certain countries
- Local cultural centers
- Local library – books and electronic formats
- Language centers
- Government or private training and educational providers
- Purchased or borrowed books.

### **Outside organizations**

We have already mentioned some of the external organizations that may be able to help.

They include:

- Interpreter services
- Diplomatic services
- various embassies can provide advice on where to obtain specific detailed information on languages and cultures. They may also have „Fact Sheets“ or similar that can be

mailed or e-mailed to you. Some embassies may be able to provide on-the-spot interpretation of emergency language needs

- Appropriate government agencies
- Individual agencies specific to unique needs
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Educational institutions – both public and private. These institutions can only be expected to provide advice and information to enrolled and fee-paying students or a commercial fee-for-service basis
- Disability advocacy groups.

## **L.U.2.ADDRESS CROSS CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS**

### **LO.2.1. Identify issues which may cause conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace**

#### **Introduction**

It is important for all workplace conflict and misunderstandings to be identified immediately and dealt with on a case-by-case manner that is sensitive and respectful.

This requirement applies to both colleagues and customers.

#### **What is conflict and misunderstanding?**

In relation to working effectively and successfully in a socially diverse environment, „conflict and misunderstanding“ must be given a very broad interpretation and definition.

**Anything that upsets another person, whether that person is a customer or colleague, can be regarded as a conflict or a misunderstanding.**

#### **Possible causes of conflict and misunderstanding**

There are a number of key areas that can cause conflict and misunderstanding in the workplace.

- Poor communication: If a message is not interpreted in the way the sender intended, problems can easily arise.
- Lack of communication
- Intolerance
- Impatience
- Poor judgement

- Conflicting personal values, beliefs and opinions
- Personal prejudices ( is defined as unjustified attitude or opinion towards some one)
- Competing (opposing, challenges) group,
- family or personal interests
- Power and control issues
- Cross-cultural issues
- Differences between cultural groups
- Dissatisfaction in the community and Competing needs
- Resolve misunderstandings may relate to:
- Staff training
- Utilizing staff cultural skills
- Employing a variety of communication methods
- Knowledge of location of cultural buildings sites and support agencies
- Developing an understanding and tolerance of cultural diversity
- Overcoming prejudice and assumptions
- Utilizing non-verbal communication skills
- Actively seeking to break down barriers
- How to identify issues
- Issues causing conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace are most commonly identified by:
- Personal observation: This is where you notice by seeing or hearing that something you have said or done has upset someone
- Being informed by person themselves: This is where the person explains that your action or words have upset them and have offended them.
- Being told by another person that you have upset **someone**: It may be a staff member who tells you that you have upset another staff member or annoyed a customer, a supervisor resulting from a personal observation or complaint or another person within the group to which a person belongs.

**L.O.2.2 Address difficulties with the appropriate people and seek assistance from team leaders or others where required:**

**Introduction**

Where cross-cultural misunderstandings occur, efforts to resolve the situation should be made with the

**Tips (advice, guideline) when addressing conflict and misunderstandings.**

When dealing with a cross-cultural misunderstanding it is important to remember that:

- Quick identification of a misunderstanding can prevent a conflict from occurring a misunderstanding that is not addressed can quickly and unnecessarily involve others and have greater consequences than were really necessary
- When difficulties or misunderstandings occur, all possible cultural differences should be taken into consideration – standing in the other person’s shoes can give a better perspective (view points) about the issue
- All efforts should be taken to resolve the misunderstanding as quickly as possible, taking cultural considerations into account during the process – the key is to individualize the context of the misunderstanding as appropriate for the people who are involved
- If appropriate, or where it is an establishment requirement, all issues and problems must be referred to the appropriate person for attention after the initial issue has been resolved, so that action can be taken to prevent recurrence
- Putting yourself in the other person’s shoes and seeing the other side of an issue can help to put your stance into a better perspective
- Frustration(prevention) or impatience should be avoided at all times – the focus must be on respect and sensitivity.

**Assistance may include:**

- Co-workers who speak the same language
- Interpreter services
- Diplomatic services
- Supervisors, or managers, or specialist customer service staff within the enterprise, family, teachers, relatives.

**2.3. Consider possible cultural differences when difficulties or misunderstandings occur**

**Introduction**

It is possible that the cause of differences and difficulties are due to traditional service problems such as poor service, slow service, low-quality products or unclean rooms. However, when dealing with people from diverse backgrounds it is also possible that cultural differences have caused the problems.

**Possible cultural differences and needs:** Misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication can occur as a result of the following cultural differences and needs:

- **Language spoken**

It is possible that one party thought they used a word in an appropriate context, but it may have been misinterpreted. This lack of a comprehensive understanding of a language can lead to many of the problems encountered.

People from a different language speaking background can also be confused, embarrassed or offended by the use of local terms so this is best avoided.

- **Forms of address**

Different cultures use different forms of address when greeting:

Where we use what we regard as a standard, acceptable and polite greeting, there is always the potential that the recipient of the greeting can feel affronted when we fail to conform to their culturally-based expectations.

For example, guests may feel that if we are unable to greet them appropriately then we can't meet their other culturally-based needs and wants.

- **Levels of formality/informality**

There is always a need for us to act professionally in the industry and part of that requirement is a need to act in a manner appropriate to the venue where we are working.

**Formal (Written to an unknown audience): I am applying for the receptionist position as advertised in the local paper. I am an excellent candidate for the job because of my significant secretarial experience, good language skills, and sense of organization.**

**Informal (Incorrect): Hi! I read in the paper that you'll were looking for a receptionist. I think that I am good for that job because I've done stuff like it in the past, am good with words, and am incredibly well organized.**

In addition, there is also the possibility that a guest or another staff member may try to adopt and use what they believe to be a local „attitude“ when talking or interacting with us believing that this is the approach we prefer.

- **Non-verbal behavior**

It is always possible that, through a simple lack of knowledge and not due to any bad intentions whatsoever, someone has used some gesture in the wrong context. Where you have no real knowledge about the body language of another country or culture, it is best to avoid using overt gestures just in case they give unintended offence.

- **Work ethic**

Generally speaking, guests expect us as staff to have an appropriate work ethic. They expect us to be polite, to offer excellent levels of service, to meet their needs and to be helpful.

- **Personal grooming and dress**

We need to look beyond the clothes and grooming to what the person is about. We must ensure that we don't stereotype people simply on the basis of, say, their national dress, or grooming preferences that may be influenced by their cultural heritage.

The most important things to remember in relation to this are to:

- Not stare at people who are dressed differently – this applies especially to people who are dressed in their national dress
- Not make public derogatory comment about the way a customer presents themselves.

- **Hygiene habits**

Different cultures can have hygiene (clean less) habits and activities that are different to what you may regard as normal.

These variances should be accepted and accommodated and you must refrain(abstain) from making adverse or negative comment.

These differences can include:

- The extent(degree) and timing of bathing or washing
- Frequency of bathing General styles
- Emphasis placed on personal hygiene – especially in relation to body odor

- **Family, social obligations and status**

Some cultures place an extremely high value on family. Nothing is more important than their family, including work obligations. Similarly, in certain circumstances they may have to attend various social functions because failure to attend could indicate a significant lack of respect.

Some cultures regard males as holding primary status in other cultures, the role of women is quite different and a failure to include them in conversations or to speak directly to them will definitely be seen as rude (impolite).

- **Observance of special religious, feast or other celebratory days**

People might be required by their faith to take time off from work to attend or observe a religious event, or take a break during traditional working hours to pray

- **Customs, beliefs and values**

It is accepted that a shared system of customs, beliefs and values is what underpins(support) the core of any culture.

## **Product preferences**

It is to be expected that people from different countries and cultures have different needs, wants and preferences in relation to product and service preferences. These preferences may be based on:

- Wanting to try something from the country in which they are travelling:
- Wanting to re-experience something from their home country

### ***Make efforts to resolve misunderstandings, taking account of cultural considerations***

When a cross-cultural misunderstanding occurs with a customer, it is necessary for service staff to take the appropriate steps to find a resolution.

All talk should be honest, explained clearly, briefly and in simple unbiased(balanced) terms.

### **Actions that can help to resolve the situation**

This may involve you in:

- Discussing the issue in a courteous(polite) manner – which will demonstrate a desire to fix the problem
- Speaking directly with the person concerned in a respectful way
- Apologizing for offence or misunderstanding that may have been caused
- Taking time to talk with the person concerned
- Asking for advice from the other party
- Seeking advice from a supervisor or manager about the issue
- Attending mediation(intersection): This action may include further training or education, or implementing in-house team building programs

### **Refer issues and problems to the appropriate team leader/supervisor for follow up**

There may be a need in your workplace to refer any issues relating to cross-cultural issues to management.

In other situations, there may only be a need to refer unresolved issues to management, so that they can assist in finding an acceptable and effective solution that accommodates, to the best extent possible needs.

- **Know when to refer issues to management**

It is always important to know when and where to draw the line in relation to any cross-cultural misunderstanding.

- **Who should problems be referred to?**

Depending on the establishment, and its organizational structure, the appropriate person could be:

- Your team leader



- Your supervisor
- The manager
- The owner.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, working in the hospitality and tourism industry is truly an international experience. The people you interact with on a daily basis will come from all corners of the globe, each with their own beliefs, customs, languages, religions, experiences and expectations. As a staff member in this global industry, it is your role to ensure that everyone receives friendly quality service, regardless of their origin.

**L.O.1.2. Take into consideration cultural differences in all verbal and non-verbal communication and overcome language barriers.**

**1. The essential facts (evidence, proof) to identify when communicating with people from culture differences are:**

- ✓ **Race:** The first basic fact to identify when communicating with people from another culture is to identify their race. That is, the country they come from
- ✓ **Language: People** from different countries may have trouble with your language. For those who have knowledge of your language can have trouble understanding you because of **accents**(pronunciation) and local expressions.
- ✓ **Family structure:** Family structure refers to the relationships that exist within families for the members of that family. It covers how family members treat each other, how they speak to each other, the freedom that family members are given, the roles of members of the family.
- ✓ **Disabilities:** Many of us encounter problems communicating with people suffering from certain disabilities, this problem is hugely compounded when the individual concerned is from another culture

Keys to treat people with disability are to:

- Identify the disabilities that colleagues and customers commonly present with
- Plan how to accommodate these needs by talking to support groups
- Talking to disabled people to learn about their needs and how they prefer to be treated
- ✓ **Gender:** The equality experienced in your country may not be as strongly shared by people from other nations. While many countries will have some form of equal opportunity legislation which purports to treat males and females equally
- ✓ **Age:** In some countries it may be the case that old age confers respect and prestige, while in other countries it may be the young people who are regarded with respect and prestige. In each country laws govern the treatment of people on the basis of age but these laws may not apply elsewhere. We must be sensitive to these age-related considerations and treat each culture appropriately based on their traditional approach to age.
- ✓ **Law and Culture:** All people should be valued and treated with respect when they come to their individual differences.

**Equal Opportunity legislation** is the action of prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial

Objectives of **Equal Opportunity legislation** are:

- To promote recognition and acceptance of everyone's right to equality of opportunity
- To eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of various „listed attributes“
- To eliminate, as far as possible, sexual harassment.

**2. Personal characteristics(attributes) are:**

- Age
- Breastfeeding
- Career status
- Disability/impairment
- Lawful sexual activity

- Marital status
- Physical features: covering height, weight, size, shape
- Pregnancy
- Race
- Religious belief
- Sex/gender

### **3. Areas of public life are:**

- Accommodation/shelter
- Clubs Education
- Employment cite
- Provision of goods and services (market)
- Sport.
- Churches
- Hospital

### **4. Personal needs are:**

- Food
- Privacy (isolation)
- Religious devotion (care, attentiveness)
- Beverages (drinks)
- Sleeping requirements (wants, desire)

### **5. Verbal and non-verbal communication**

**Verbal communication:** Verbal communication is the use of words to share information with other people. It can therefore include both spoken and written communication.

Keys in appropriate verbal communication when dealing with people from another culture include:

- Identify the country and culture
- Take time to plan what to say and how to say it
- Avoid industry and establishment jargon (slang)
- Control tone of your voice and volume of the talking Speed at which you talk
- Pauses in the conversation to allow for understanding, questions to be asked
- Try to deliver your thoughts (feelings) using basic words and sentence constructions.
- Be careful when choosing your words as confusion can result in cultural misunderstandings.
- Always try to modify your language to suit the listener as much as possible.
- Keep smiling

### **Simple words in foreign languages**

You may learn simple words and phrases to help you in communicating.

These include:

- To greet and welcome
- To farewell and say goodbye
- Count the numbers 1 – 10
- The days of the week and months of the year
- Titles used by people including Mister and Messiers
- Basic functions: walk, drive, sleep, eat and drink
- Basic establishment facilities
- Basic products and costs
- Methods of transportation.

It can be useful to prepare a hard copy list that you can refer to, or to have a range of dual language dictionaries or phrase books.

Never be afraid to try to communicate in foreign languages.

You can learn simple words from:

- Customers /colleagues
- The internet
- A foreign language dictionary
- Staff
- A local national club or association
- Giving the person your full attention/Training

### **Nonverbal communication**

**Nonverbal communication:** is a communication involves the use of nonlinguistic transmission of information through auditory, visual (signs and gestures) etc.

Non-verbal communication is traditionally more important when communicating with someone from a culturally diverse background where there is a spoken word language difficulty.

### **Movement and body position (Kinesics)**

**Kinesics** is the area of nonverbal communication related to movements of the body, including gestures, posture, and facial expressions, and the study of that area. Below are some examples:

1. The speed with which you move may be interpreted as:
  - Slow walk – don't care
  - Fast walk – stressed.
2. Your facial expression may be interpreted as:
  - Grumpy face – don't want to be at work; don't like the person they are talking to
  - Smiling face – happy with life; happy to work with customers.
3. How you hold your arms may be interpreted as:
  - Arms crossed – defensive
  - Arms at your side – open to discussion
4. Hand and finger gestures may be interpreted as:
  - Waving a hand – saying goodbye
  - The thumbs up – all is okay

5. How you attend to your personal hygiene may be interpreted as:

- Bad body odor – don't care; disrespect

6. Eye contact may be interpreted as:

- Direct eye contact – telling the truth, intimidating, sexual
- No eye contact – not listening, disinterested or lying.

When using body language, be aware that you can also be transmitting feelings, which could be interpreted as conflicting with your words.

### **Language barriers - the role of gestures**

When faced with a language barrier, service staff should attempt to communicate through the use of gestures or simple words.

Gestures are preferable for saying nothing and risking the person feeling ignored.

Attempts at gestures may include:

- Pointing to indicate a location, a position or a menu item
- Holding fingers up to establish quantities
- Rubbing your hands to indicate temperature
- Nodding your head in agreement
- Shaking your head in disagreement

### **Sign language**

When communicating with deaf people, it can be extremely useful to be able to use sign language. It may be valuable while learning a few signs to help communicate.

### **6. Attempt to overcome language barriers**

When attempting to overcome language barriers, it is useful to learn a few simple words in a foreign language.

- To greet and welcome,
- To farewell and say goodbye
- Count the numbers from 1 – 10
- The days of the week and months of the year

- Titles used by people including Mister and Misses
- Basic functions: walk, drive, sleep, eat and drink
- Basic establishment facilities (tables, chairs etc.)
- Methods of transportation (by Bus, motorcycle, train etc.)
- Meet, greet and farewell customers – at different times of the day, and to different types of customers including men, women, children and business people
- Provide simple directions – to the restaurant, bar, swimming pool, different floors, various rooms and tourist attractions
- Give simple instructions – on how to use telephones, how to operate in-room
- Describe goods and service – once again this will relate to your specific workplace role. For example, a food waiter should be able to describe tastes, smells, ingredients, cooking styles etc.

## QUESTIONS OF DISCUSSION

1. Give me an example of how you demonstrate the value you place on customers/guests from different cultural groups, and on colleagues from different cultural groups.
2. Give me one example of how you have taken into account the non-verbal communication requirements of a person (customer/guest or colleague) from a different cultural group in your workplace activities.
3. Tell me how you have attempted to overcome the language barrier between yourself and a person (customer/guest or colleague) from a different country or culture.
4. What assistance is available to you outside your workplace for you to learn about people from another culture/country?
5. Give me an example of a conflict or misunderstanding that has occurred in your workplace as a result of cross-cultural differences: what happened? How did the problem arise? How could it have been avoided?
6. You are experiencing a conflict or misunderstanding at your workplace with a customer/guest from another country/culture: what assistance is available to you within your workplace to address and resolve this situation? Who would you contact and why?
7. Give me an example of how you considered possible cultural differences when addressing and resolving a conflict or misunderstanding between yourself and another person (customer/guest or colleague) in your workplace.
8. What cultural factors are you prepared to take into account and accommodate when attempting to resolve a conflict/misunderstanding with a person from another culture?
9. You have attempted to resolve a problem/complaint in the workplace involving what you believe to be a cross-cultural issue/misunderstanding but have decided it is time to refer the matter to your supervisor: explain how you would do this.



**1. People are all different. What are three characteristics that make one person different from another?**

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**2. What are two ways you can improve your knowledge about different cultural requirements.**

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**3. What are two things you can do to help verbal communication with a customer who has a little understanding of your language?**

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**4. What are two points for using appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication when dealing with people from another culture?**

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5. When attempting to overcome language barriers, it is useful to learn a few simple words in a foreign language. What are three topics in which you could learn simple words or phrases?

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6. Using gestures is an effective way to communicate with someone who does not speak your language. What are three ways you can use gestures to help a customer understand?

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7. What are two examples of written communication you can use to collect information relating to cultural communication?

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8. Answer „True“ or „False“ to the following statement: It is not a good idea to ask the customer questions about cultural needs as this is seen as unprofessional.

True  False

**9. Difficulties or conflict often arise out of misunderstandings. What is this caused by?**

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**10. How can you identify conflict in the workplace?**

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**11. What are some tips when addressing conflict and misunderstandings?**

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**12. Answer „True“ or „False“ to the following statement: Giving someone a free item will not solve all problems**

True  False

**13. Answer „True“ or „False“ to the following statement: You should always be informal with all customers as it shows you are friendly. All customers will appreciate this approach.**

True  False

**14. What is a cultural difference that a Hindu customer would have in relation to food? Insert Question**

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**15. What are actions you can take to help resolve misunderstandings?**

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**16. Answer „True“ or „False“ to the following statement: A person from another country must change their culture to that of the country they are visiting.**

True  False

**17. Answer „True“ or „False“ to the following statement: If you can't solve a problem, you should refer it to your manager or supervisor as soon as possible.**

True  False

**18. Answer „True“ or „False“ to the following statement: As soon as a problem is referred to someone else, you don't need to follow it up any more.**

True  False

**END!**

