

HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE WORKPLACE

Culture is a set of learned attitudes, behaviours and experiences that make up a way of life. Although you'll share your organization's work culture with your colleagues, it's unlikely that you'll all share the same personal culture. A diverse workforce is a stronger workforce, but can also present some challenges. Different people will have different communication styles and etiquette. Here are some areas where there are common differences in style.

- + **Courtesy:** Greeting styles may differ, as do ways of discussing problems or conflicts.
- + **Arguments:** In some cultures, arguing in an impersonal manner is the norm; in others, arguments tend to be emotional.
- + **Assertiveness:** Different cultures have different levels of acceptable assertiveness. One culture may be quite reserved, while another may be more forward.
- + **Candor:** Some cultures value "telling it like it is", while others value preserving harmony.
- + **Simplicity:** Some cultures present information in simple, straightforward language, while others take longer to convey information.

These are just a few examples of cultural difference. There is no "one way" of doing things, so don't jump to conclusions or create conflict because a colleague approaches a problem in a different way. By recognizing that there are different styles, you'll take a big step toward effective communication.