LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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Be aware that common language does not equal common meaning or culture
Develop strategies that help you communicate interculturally

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Over 10 million students improved their results using the Pearson MyLabs. Visit mybcommlab.com for simulations, tutorials, and other helpful learning apps.
First International Courier Systems Inc. is an international logistics corporation based in Canada. We serve a niche market. Our services are available 24/7 as we deliver medical devices, organs for transplant, parts for grounded aircraft, and other time-sensitive deliveries across all time zones. Our standard operating procedure ensures that full details about every shipment are carefully communicated every step of the way.

It is critical that the messages we send are clear, concise, and particular to our marketplace, keeping in mind that our marketplace is not a single geographic zone but a mosaic of cultures, religions, gender, and abilities.

I was once speaking on the telephone with a logistics trainee in Los Angeles. This individual was learning on the job at a medium-sized courier company. The shipment in question was an urgently needed part for an MRI machine at an emergency department. This trainee had never cleared customs with a shipment in the cargo sector, and we were taking him through the process, step by step. There was no immediate language barrier of particular note, and I thought I had made myself understood to him. I was very surprised when he called back to tell me that the shipment could not be cleared by customs until the federal Food and Drug Administration inspected the piece. Aghast, I asked why, given that it was a part for a medical device. I had made the mistake of telling him that clearing customs was “a piece of cake,” meaning that it was simple. I confused him. This shipment was significantly late because I did not consider that my use of language would be taken literally by this native English speaker.

Language is full of innuendos, double meanings, and expressions. The challenge, whether it’s a phone call, an email, or a marketing piece, is to make our communications free from such expressions as much as possible. We must be careful to ensure that the recipients of any message are able to understand it without wondering about its true meaning. Any message you send should be unambiguous and clear to everyone who reads it.

Find out at the end of this chapter how Rosen uses ACE to solve these intercultural communication challenges.
communicate with confidence and professionalism in most settings and situations. In particular, you will learn how to
• develop cultural intelligence,
• develop a mindset of inclusion, and
• develop strategies to communicate interculturally and within diverse work environments.

We are seeing that culture now extends to areas of difference such as technical orientation, management style and other domains, which affect how we run the business and interact with others . . . When you begin to build a culture that is respectful and inclusive around things like race, gender and sexual orientation, the organization learns the skills to manage without assumption.

Ron Glover, IBM’s vice-president of global workforce diversity (quoted in Brake, 2013, p. 13)

Workplaces are increasingly multicultural, and businesses are increasingly global. Therefore, learning about other cultures is no longer optional: It is essential. Your natural communications choices, from the words you use to the channel you select to the tone and timing of your message, are influenced by your culture as well as a variety of unique characteristics that make you an individual. Note that your business audience is made up of other people with their own cultural and social influences as well as their own unique individual characteristics. Therefore, not everyone will understand and respond to your communication choices in the way you would expect.

To some degree, learning about others (i.e., your audience) is a continuous process of creating a concept about what others are like and then rebuilding it based on new information. Terence Brake, president of TMA World and author of Where in the World Is My Team? Making a Success of Your Virtual Global Workplace, refers to these ideas about other groups as “tendencies,” or tentative expectations, which are always open to modification based on the individuals you interact with (Brake, 2013). Therefore, it is a mistake to be trapped by rigid cultural stereotypes: oversimplified “single story” images or generalizations of a group. Although stereotypes may describe a generally observed cultural norm, if you assume everyone from that culture follows that norm, you ignore the fact that individuals are, in fact, unique. As Richard Lewis, author of When Cultures Collide, states, “Such generalizations carry with them the risk of stereotyping as one talks about the typical Italian, German, American, etc. It is evident that Americans [and Germans] differ greatly from each other and that no two Italians are alike” (quoted in Hedderich, 1999).

Any time you hold an unverified set of assumptions about another person in your mind as truth, you are missing out on much of what makes that person valuable, interesting, and complex. Your unverified set of assumptions can contribute to a “single story” perception. Sometimes our “single story” originates from our assumptions that people are either completely like us or completely not like us. Neither of these perspectives is ever entirely true. Ethnocentrism is a conscious or unconscious belief that your own cultural norms are superior to all others and, further, that others wish to emulate your cultural norms. If you find yourself in a different cultural setting and your feeling is that “they are doing it wrong. Our way is better,” you are experiencing ethnocentrism. Most people do not realize they are comparing cultures until they catch themselves doing it. Being self-aware about this tendency is critical to developing intercultural adaptability.

In a business setting, if you cling to a “single story” about others you risk seriously damaging relationships with inappropriate and offensive communications choices. You risk alienating, demotivating, and offending the recipients of your messages. Co-workers may refuse to work with you, which could negatively impact productivity. Business partners may refuse to complete contracts or repeat orders if your emails appear inappropriate to them. Employers may find you too risky to keep employed if you are unable to build and maintain relationships with all their valued stakeholders.
4.1 Why do we need to study intercultural communication and workplace diversity?

There are many examples of stereotyping and ethnocentrism causing communications breakdowns that led to negative business consequences. The 1998 merger of two car manufacturers, Germany's Daimler-Benz AG and the American Chrysler Corporation, is a famous example of the destructive impact of such discord. The two organizations were challenged by vast cultural and linguistic differences that were never fully understood. These tensions eventually resulted in the two companies parting ways, at considerable cost to both (Bolchover, 2012). Closer to home, 2015 saw the abrupt end of Target's short-lived expansion from its US home base into Canada. As noted by the analysts at Kantar Retail, “Canadians are not Americans: Target did not fundamentally believe Canadians had significantly distinctive needs and expectations” (Chain Store Age, 2015)

Understand the impact of culture and diversity on communication

You may have heard the saying, “We cannot escape our culture.” Culture describes learned and shared patterns in a society. People are shaped by the cultures they come from, and they develop a set of assumptions about how to act based on those cultural influences. For example, for many Canadians, the following statements are assumed to be true:

- If you have a 10 a.m. appointment, you should arrive a little before 10 a.m. to be on time.
- If someone makes a mistake, it is best to be honest (though polite) and point it out so that he or she has an opportunity to correct the mistake.
- To be efficient, it is important to get right to business quickly at a meeting.
- If you are man, it is a common courtesy to allow a woman to exit an elevator or go through a doorway first.

Not every culture subscribes to these codes of behaviour, however. For example, in the Swiss–German area of Switzerland, you would be rude to jump immediately to business at the beginning of a meeting. Similarly, Latin American cultures value getting to know the other person and building a relationship of trust. In Korea, a young woman would be rude to exit an elevator before an elderly man because respecting elders is highly valued in the Korean culture. Being time conscious is typically not part of many Canadian First Nations societies.

Organizational culture refers to an organization's expectations, philosophy, and values. Over time, any group of people who work together will evolve common attitudes, customs, and written and unwritten expectations that are powerful in guiding the behaviour of the group. Organizational culture is demonstrated in

- the ways the organization conducts its business and how it treats its employees, customers, and the wider community,
- the extent to which freedom is allowed in decision making, developing new ideas, and personal expression,
- how power and information flow through its hierarchy, and
- how communications are conducted, including
  - how and why meetings are held (i.e., the level of formality),
  - how emails are treated (e.g., whether they are readily answered or archived, how often “reply all” is chosen), and
  - how employees at a distance are incorporated into organizational operations and communications (e.g., via Skype, telephone, or other channels).

For example, in Learning Outcome 3.1, page xx, there is an example of Joe, who moved from Company A to Company B and found the manner of holding meetings to be well out of his previous work experience. Company B's method put Joe out of his comfort zone, but that does not necessarily mean it was the wrong approach. This is an example of an employee being placed into a new organizational culture. The Case Study at the end of Chapter 3 could also be seen as an extended example of Joe struggling with a new organizational culture.

First Nations A term used to refer to the peoples who inhabited Canada from the earliest times, before colonization. There are currently over 630 recognized First Nations governments or bands across Canada, roughly half of which are in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. The total population is nearly 700,000 people (as of 2011).

Organizational culture The values and behaviours that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization (BusinessDictionary.com, 2015a).
Know that each individual is unique

We work with individuals, not “members of groups.” In the opening section of this chapter, the author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie suggests that we cannot limit our perception of others to a “single story” or a rigid set of assumptions about a “group” someone might identify with. Karim H. Karim, former co-director of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, England, and Carleton University professor, notes that almost everyone has a unique, multilayered sense of self:

> There are multiple kinds of identity that a person has—for many people, national identity is very different from ethnic and cultural identities. Focus groups that I have carried out with Muslims of various backgrounds over the last few years, as well as interviews that a doctoral student of mine has conducted with South Asians more recently, have demonstrated that most of these first- and second-generation immigrants felt equally comfortable with their religious, ethnic, cultural, and Canadian identities. . . . [T]he researchers of the study [did not] understand that most people have a multilayered sense of self. (Karim, 2009)

FIGURE 4.1 suggests that each person we meet and work with will have at least three “stories”: three major influences on their sense of identity:

- **A foundation of common human needs and desires.** This includes some basic human qualities, such as love for one's offspring, gratitude for favours, anger at perceived injustice, and basic physical and psychological survival needs for shelter, food, companionship, acceptance and respect (Brake, 2013).

- **Cultural and social identity.** Your self-identity can originate from any group or groups you identify with. This can be a strong influencer for some people and a less strong influencer for others. People can cultivate behaviours, expectations, and beliefs when they identify with cultural groups or with socially identified groups, such as people living with disabilities or with gender dysphoria, or as part of a specific generation or age group, to name but a few possible group identities. It is possible for a person to identify with more than one group (Brake, 2013).

- **Unique individual identity.** There are elements of identity that each person develops that are uniquely their own: preferences (music, colour, food, personal style), personal beliefs based on experience that may conflict with cultural or social norms, and lifestyle choices, to name but a few possible individual traits (Brake, 2013).

Develop a mindset of cultural intelligence

When you understand that each person you meet has at least three “stories” that influence his or her sense of identity, you are much closer to developing a mindset of cultural intelligence. This mindset is critical to respectful communication in our diverse and globally active workplaces. Here are three keys to strengthening this crucial perspective:

1. **Always allow others to define themselves.** If you meet someone who appears to be different than you, let their stories unfold naturally. Do not make hasty assumptions. **Pay attention.** Find out which cultural, individual, or shared aspects of their identity are most important to them.

2. **Remain flexible.** Many sources on cross-cultural communication point to “adaptability” as a key skill. This skill was discussed at length in Chapter 3 and it continues to be important in an intercultural environment. **Pay attention.** If your method of connecting with others is not working, slow down and watch for new opportunities to learn and adapt.

3. **Keep all three “stories” in balance.** When you are unable to keep these “stories” in balance, your ability to communicate is deeply compromised. **Pay attention** to where you are placing your assumptions.

**FIGURE 4.2** shows how our perceptions can sometimes become unbalanced if we ignore specific aspects of our audience’s self-identity. This can lead to misunderstandings, mistrust, and the absence of actual communication.
4.1 Why do we need to study intercultural communication and workplace diversity?

Note the three examples here that show why maintaining a balance between the three stories is crucial:

- **Khadeer meets Joyce**, an accomplished and skilled administrator who happens to be black and from the Caribbean. Khadeer only relates to her as he perceives her: someone of a different race and cultural background. His image of Joyce does not include her skills and experience in administration nor any common ground he shares with her. Therefore, in an inappropriate attempt to be friendly, Khadeer's communications with Joyce always include references to reggae music, jerk chicken, and warm weather. Instead of getting to know Joyce as an individual and rebuilding his mental image, Khadeer remains stuck on his inaccurate assumptions about her cultural and social identity. Khadeer has
  - ignored individual identity (Joyce as a skilled and experienced administrator),
  - overstated his stereotype (Joyce as someone of a different culture about which Khadeer has simplistic assumptions), and
  - ignored commonalities (Joyce as someone with the same education and industry experience as Khadeer).

- **Sophia meets Chris**, a talented web designer who has a hearing impairment. Instead of making small but important changes to her communication style, such as being sure to face Chris when she speaks, she carries on her normal, multitasking style. Sophia failed to ask Chris if he needed her to change her communication style. She ignored a key difference between them and assumed that Chris values her usual fast-paced style. Sophia feels it is respectful to treat Chris “the same” as everyone else. However, her inability to respond to a key difference has the opposite effect. Chris feels slighted and his ability to keep pace with her is compromised. Sophia has
  - ignored individual identity (Chris cannot be a talented web designer if he cannot understand Sophia's instructions),
  - ignored a key social difference that needs to be respected (Chris as someone who needs minor accommodation to thrive in the workplace), and
  - overemphasized commonality (Chris as a fellow human being who is “exactly like” Sophia).

- **Rixon meets Stephanie**, his new co-worker and team member, and sees her only as a new financial expert on his project team. He does not exhibit any interest in
Stephanie as a person. In conversation over lunch, Rixon continues to discuss the project with Stephanie, even though they are both clearly taking a short break from work tasks. During their lunch discussion, Stephanie makes passing reference to her family (her daughter, Chrissie, and her same-sex partner, Leah). Rixon does not respond to these references and steers the conversation back to work-related matters. While pleased that her professional opinion is valued by Rixon, Stephanie feels ignored as a person. Rixon has

- ignored individualism (Stephanie as a person with a family life),
- ignored cultural/social identity (Stephanie as a successful woman in a male-dominated profession or as a person with a same-sex partner), and
- focused on commonalities (Stephanie as a member of the same project team).

You will continue to develop your ability to self-regulate your perceptions and adapt your message across cultural and diversity dimensions throughout your working life. To communicate effectively and respectfully, you need to step beyond a “single story” perception to a more complex understanding of the individuals you interact with. Achieving this more complex perception is critical to further developing your cultural intelligence.

What do you need to know to improve your cultural intelligence?

As noted in the previous section, it is important to avoid rigid “single story” cultural stereotypes. It is also important to recognize that cultural norms have an impact on the assumptions we make when we communicate.

The difference between a “cultural norm” and a “stereotype” is often debated. How can we say that we should avoid stereotyping while proceeding to use the concept of cultural norms to help us understand specific cultures? This would be a worthwhile debate to undertake in a classroom setting. Exercise 3 on page XXX is intended to help students explore this important question. In the meantime, it is useful to consider that respectful exploration of cultural norms prior to communicating with someone from a different culture can help you manage your expectations with regard to unfamiliar behaviours. Armed with a bit of basic information, you can more correctly interpret what you are experiencing. On the other hand, the use of stereotypes to generalize or judge values and behaviours different than your own is not respectful and does nothing to assist you in communicating in a professional manner. Your deepening sense of cultural intelligence will help you make this distinction.

Understand how cultures differ

In this section, you will explore specific theories on world cultures. These theories may help you understand the ways in which cultures may differ or intersect. Keep in mind that these are theoretical models of cultural norms rather than absolute truths.

Over the years, anthropologists, sociologists, and intercultural theorists have identified several dimensions of cultural differences. This section covers seven of those dimensions, all of which have implications for business communication.

**High- vs. low-context cultures**

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall first used the term context to describe how people deliver, receive, and interpret messages (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Hall proposed that countries exist on a continuum from high context to low context, as illustrated in Figure 4.3. In a high-context culture, such as China or Japan, communicators convey meaning not just by words but also by all the context surrounding the words: how something is said, the nonverbal behaviour of the communicator and audience, the history of the relationship between the two communicators, and even the silences in the conversation. In a low-context culture, such as in the English-speaking parts of Canada, communicators rely less on context and more on explicit language to communicate a message as clearly and unambiguously as possible.
4.2 What do you need to know to improve your cultural intelligence?

Therefore, when working in a low-context setting, such as the English-speaking parts of Canada, occupation-specific language can be important. However, there is some debate as to whether this strong emphasis on language acquisition is fair or ethical to newly arrived Canadians. See the ETHICS BOX for an exploration of this topic.

Reflecting this difference, people in the United States and Germany typically value direct conversations that immediately get to the point. In contrast, people from Japan tend to rely on more subtle cues. If a Japanese businessperson wants to say “no,” she may not actually use that word but may instead respond with silence or a reserved reply, such as “That is very interesting.” She will rely on you to interpret the message correctly, based on the context of the communication.

Individualism vs. collectivism

Individualism versus collectivism is one of the key dimensions of culture identified by Dutch intercultural expert Geert Hofstede (Hofstede & Minkow, 2010). In an individualistic culture, people value an individual’s achievements, satisfaction, and independent thinking. By contrast, in collectivist cultures, people put the welfare of the group or organization before their own individual interests. Obligation and loyalty to the group are more important than one’s own achievement, and harmony is extremely important. Explore more of Hofstede’s work at http://geert-hofstede.com.

Individualistic and collectivist values influence communication and business in a number of ways. In the United States, many companies reward individual leaders, such as CEOs and other executives, with multimillion-dollar bonuses for the companies’ successes. By contrast, in more collectivist China, PepsiCo learned during its early years in that country that rewarding an individual leader was not an effective incentive. When one highly regarded manager chose to divide his bonus equally among his employees, PepsiCo changed its practice to reward an entire group when goals are met (Formula for success, 1992). Similarly, in collectivist cultures employees may be embarrassed if they...
Globalization has changed both whom we do business with and how we do business with them. We have heard many discussions on the importance of embracing diversity and seeing the value of a diverse team in bringing fresh new perspectives and perceptions. An ability to reflect on the ethics and impact of diversity, integration, and resettlement is certainly useful.

Take a look at the occupation-specific language training announcement below. Many colleges and other institutions offer similar types of programs across Canada.

Are you new to Canada? Want to improve your workplace communication skills?

Free occupation-specific language training courses offered by 13 Ontario colleges will teach you the language and workplace culture skills required to communicate effectively in your job. Gain the communications skills you need to build a successful career in your field.


These services exist to assist English language learners in adjusting to the low-context, language-heavy expectations within Canadian workplaces. However, to an extent these expectations can have consequences:

• They can perpetuate a perception that everyone who is new to Canada must make significant changes to their language and identity to succeed.
• They can suggest that full assimilation to Canadian culture is required for success.
• They can imply that certain aspects of identity need to be changed or suppressed to gain employment.

It would be hard to argue that it is not important to learn English, especially work-specific vocabulary, to achieve workplace success in English-speaking Canada. Does this mean that a person’s first language is no longer a valued part of his or her identity? Perhaps, when arriving in Canada, an expanded definition of self is required. Dr. Vicki Bismilla found that “the creation of space for students’ mother tongues in college classrooms is an ethical imperative since their mother tongues are integral components of their identities, and all of their prior learning and life experiences are encoded in their mother tongues.” Overall the findings highlighted bilingual students’ perceptions that their [first language] constituted an important scaffold for their learning of English. Students’ comments also expressed their sense of the centrality of [first language] to aspects of their identity” (Bismilla, 2011). In a globalized economy, many languages are valued. A first language that is not English could help “scaffold” (or support) the acquisition of English if you are working with others of your original language group. Non-English languages are becoming more and more in demand in Canada as businesses and organizations expand their markets and business relationships across the globe.

Edward T. Hall, one of the pioneer researchers into intercultural communications, famously said the following:

We should never denigrate any other culture but rather help people to understand the relationship between their own culture and the dominant culture. When you understand another culture or language, it does not mean that you have to lose your own culture. (E. Hall, n.d.).

A useful mindset to adopt is that strong spoken and written English provides additional, valuable skills in the Canadian workplace. These skills do not replace or supersede a first language.

Can O-A-R help you understand the role of language acquisition for employment?

Observe: How can these implications affect a person’s understanding of social class, identity, and self-perception? Do your own beliefs, values, or behaviours perpetuate this kind of thinking? Are you asking others, or being asked yourself, to give up valuable elements of identity in order to “fit in”? Or are you being asked to acquire a new language skill? This is deep reflection that you need to consider and revisit when seeking employment or, alternatively, when hiring others, creating teams, or building your own business.
4.2 What do you need to know to improve your cultural intelligence?

Ask: Informational interviews with any prospective employer or industry representative can assist you in learning about the practices and expectations of a firm. When considering a job offer from an organization, in addition to evaluating wages, hours, and benefits, it is wise to consider whether the values and ethics represented by the organization are in sync with your own.

Research: Research any prospective employer thoroughly. Are there recent news articles related to ethics and employment? If so, how has your potential employer responded? Be sure to research a target company’s corporate social responsibility strategy or vision. Business reputations, responses to ethical issues, and chosen marketing strategies should all contribute to a picture of the kind of values the organization represents. You can then decide if you and this organization are a “good fit” for a long-term, successful employment relationship. Should you be in charge of your own company or organization, follow the same process for researching future business partners. When you are in partnership with another organization, anything negative that tarnishes their reputation could also affect yours. Be sure to proceed with a long-term commitment only when you are sure that their values and yours are a match.

For an ETHICS challenge, go to Exercise 20 on page xxx.

are singled out and praised for their accomplishments. In individualistic cultures, employees expect to be acknowledged for individual achievements. Although people in the United States tend to think of individualism as the norm, there are significantly more collectivist cultures in the world than individualistic cultures (ITIM International, 2009). US companies that respect these collectivist values and build business practices around them, as Pepsi did, can be extremely successful.

Power Distance

Power distance is the term Hofstede developed to describe how cultures perceive inequality and authority. In cultures with high power distance, organizations are very formal and hierarchical, with a clear separation between superiors and subordinates. People are granted respect based on their position alone. In high-power-distance cultures, people typically expect to conduct business with others of equal rank. To send a junior executive to meet with a CEO would be considered an insult to the CEO.

By contrast, cultures with low power distance believe in social equality and therefore have a more relaxed attitude about title and status. Seniority and age alone do not earn someone respect. Younger workers expect to be taken seriously and respected for the quality of their work despite their lower status. In low-power-distance cultures, people progress to a first-name basis much more quickly than in high-power-distance cultures.

Although there is often a correlation between power distance and context, this is not always the case. For example, French culture is relatively low context and direct. However, the French have more respect for formality and authority than people from other low-context cultures, such as Canadians.

Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance relates to how comfortable a culture is with ambiguity, risk, and change. Cultures that are uncomfortable with uncertainty tend to rely on rituals, rules, and codes of conduct that help make the future more predictable. For example, employees in these cultures tend to like clear guidelines that lead to a predictable result. These employees value learning by observation so that results are repeatable. By contrast, cultures that are more comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity tend to like more flexible work environments that allow risk-taking and entrepreneurial behaviour. These employees value learning by doing, even though the result may be less predictable.

Robert Gibson, senior consultant for intercultural business competence at Siemens AG in Munich and a British national, offers the following example:

German colleagues often want a detailed agenda but I sometimes ask myself, why are we doing all this planning? I just feel like going in, doing something and seeing what happens. This can irritate them. For Germans planning provides security, a framework and a logical structure. The British tend to be more pragmatic, reacting to the situation rather than strictly following a plan. The key to dealing with this is to be aware of the differences. (Gibson, 2014)
Attitudes toward uncertainty and ambiguity affect communication on many levels. Cultures that avoid uncertainty are often collectivist and tend to be cautious about integrating new people into a group. They also value harmony and consensus. Cultures that tolerate uncertainty are open to new people, new ideas, and risks.

### Time orientation

In addition to cultural context, anthropologist Edward T. Hall introduced the terms *monochronic* and *polychronic* to describe two different cultural orientations toward time. **Monochronic cultures**, like the United States, most of Canada, and Northern European countries, value punctuality and efficiency. Meetings begin on time and are expected to follow a set agenda. Deadlines are usually strict. Although most monochronic cultures are also individualistic, some collectivist cultures, like Japan, also value punctuality and efficiency. In their view, keeping to an agreed schedule shows respect for the entire group. **Polychronic cultures** are more relaxed about time and punctuality. Polychronic cultures typically put people and relationships before schedules. In a meeting, participants may easily change the order of items on the agenda. While it is important for work to be completed, people may choose to spend time building a relationship over completing a task. In polychronic cultures, deadlines can often be adjusted.

Understanding the various approaches to time is crucial to maintaining smooth relationships. An American who lived for many years in both Denmark and Latin America said, “When you are invited to dinner at 7 p.m. in Denmark, this means you’ll be sitting at the table at 7 p.m. When you are invited to dinner at 7 p.m. in Argentina, this means you’ll be expected to arrive at around 8 p.m. The only thing they have in common is this: for both cultures, to arrive at 7 p.m. would be rude.”

### Holistic vs. Specific Thinking

How do you typically write down an address? In Western cultures, addresses move from the specific unit and street location, to the city or region, to a state or province, and then to a country. However, in Asian or Eastern cultures, addresses more typically are recorded by province, then city, then block, and finally gate or street number. This reflects a basic difference in thinking patterns between most Asian cultures and Western cultures (Matsuda & Nisbett, 2001). Western cultures (e.g., Canadian, American, British, and many Northern European cultures) tend to think specifically before considering context. Another way of describing this is that Western thinkers look deeply first at details (i.e., a specific location). Many Asian cultures (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) tend to consider context first (i.e., the whole picture). Erin Meyer, renowned author in the field of intercultural communication in business notes that, “In a specific culture, people usually respond well to receiving very detailed and segmented information about what is expected of each of them. If you need to give instructions to a team member from this kind of culture, focus on what that person needs to accomplish and when. Conversely, if you need to motivate, manage, or persuade someone from a holistic culture, spend time explaining the big picture and how all the pieces slot together” (Meyer, 2014).

### Touch

Touch, as a nonverbal form of communication, varies widely across cultures. In some cultures, touch is an important way to show warmth, reassurance, and confidence. Touch is such a powerful form of communication that it is governed by cultural customs that establish who can touch whom and how. In Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, people informally touch each other less frequently than people in France or Costa Rica. Even within each culture’s norms, however, individual comfort levels with touch can vary. A manager might feel comfortable using hugs to express support, but his or her subordinates might interpret those hugs as either a show of dominance or as sexual interest (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000).

In Western cultures, a handshake between business partners is a normal part of a business meeting. However, some cultures have prohibitions against men and women touching, even in this highly formalized way. In France, Quebec, Spain, and many other parts of Europe, it is common to “air kiss” on or near the cheek, regardless of gender, as a greeting or upon departure. It is wise to be prepared for this to happen and to recognize it as a gesture of warmth and courtesy.

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**Monochronic culture** A culture that values punctuality and efficiency.

**Polychronic culture** A culture that has a relaxed attitude toward time and punctuality.
Integrate communication style and culture: The Lewis model of cultural types

In Chapter 3 we discussed communication styles and noted that everyone has developed a unique, preferred style. In a general way, the idea of “communication style” can be applied to cultures as well. In his book, *When Cultures Collide*, Richard Lewis outlines the results of his work on this subject. He cautions that this work should not be used simply to create clearer stereotypes of specific cultures. He states that “determining national characteristics is treading a minefield of inaccurate assessment and surprising exception. There exist excitable Finns, wooden Italians, cautious Americans and charismatic Japanese. There is, however, such a thing as a national norm” (Lewis, 2006).

Lewis theorizes that there are three distinct types of “national norms”:

- **Linear-actives.** Those who plan, schedule, organize, pursue action chains, and do one thing at a time.
- **Multi-actives.** Those who do many things at once, planning their priorities not according to a time schedule but according to the relative thrill or importance that each appointment brings with it.
- **Reactives.** Those who prioritize courtesy and respect, listening quietly and calmly to speakers and reacting carefully to the other side’s proposals (R. Lewis, 2006).

**FIGURE 4.4** shows a diagram of the spectrums between these three different styles. **FIGURE 4.5** provides some additional detail to the three types of “national norms” that Lewis identified.

**FIGURE 4.4** The Lewis Model of Cultural Types

This theoretical model maps out many possible cultures across these three spectrums. The advantage of such a model is that it gives you a rough assessment of the kind of cultural norms you may be interacting with when doing business across cultures. The disadvantage of such a model is that it can be misused to categorize cultures in a simplistic way. Also, some of the subtler differences between cultures are not captured. For example, the UK and Germany are quite close to each other on the Lewis spectrum. However, it is clear that there are important differences between these cultures:

*What has it been like as a British national in Germany? When I came to Germany all those years ago I didn’t think there would be massive differences between Britain and Germany. There probably aren’t in the world context. When you go to China, you expect people to be different. The differences between Britain and Germany are more subtle. One of the main differences is in terms of communication style. Issues in Germany are often dealt with and understood in a very direct manner. For instance, the feedback I got after I ran a workshop was, “You use the word vielleicht (perhaps) too much.” That made me think. The word suggested to my German colleague that I wasn’t sure what I was doing. To me it was a way of trying not to be too bossy, softening the instructions to get the group on my side. Or when a German says, “I gave a presentation in England and they said it was very interesting.” I reply, “Oh dear.” They are confused and then I point out that it may be that the British person was just being polite and didn’t find it interesting at all. I like the saying “The Germans are too honest to be polite and the British are too polite to be honest.” After nearly 30 years in Germany, I have got used to this direct communication and even find it quite refreshing. For many Germans, though, I’m still not direct enough. (Gibson, 2014)*

**Be aware that common language does not equal common meaning or culture**

Language is a powerful foundation for communication. It defines, usually with precision, what we mean to communicate. However, language can also be confusing,
4.2 What do you need to know to improve your cultural intelligence?  

especially when we assume that same-language speakers ascribe the same meanings to words. A comparison of British English, American English, and common Canadian English bears this out. Canadians and Brits call the last letter of the alphabet “zed,” while our American friends say “zee.” A Canadian will wear a “toque” on his or her head in the winter to keep warm, whereas Brits and Americans wear a knit cap. Canadians and Americans use an elevator in tall buildings, but Brits use the lift. For more English words and phrases that are different in Canadian, British, and American cultures, see our handy chart on MyBCommLab.

Tone of voice and volume can leave different impressions. It would not be unusual for a Canadian to mistake a British speaker’s soft tone and understated language as indications of the person being uninterested in the topic at hand. British and Americans often remark that Canadians use language that sounds apologetic. Each speak their native first language, English, but there are numerous variations among the three countries. There are, at minimum, 58 different countries that list English as their national language. Given that each country likely has multiple regional variations, a more accurate estimation would suggest that the variations on the use and meanings of spoken English could number in the hundreds.

Of course, non-English examples exist of this “same language, different culture” reality. For example, centuries ago the French language was exported to large areas of Africa and North America. The French spoken in modern-day France is quite different than the French spoken in the province of Quebec, Louisiana, or Senegal. Canadian French was deeply influenced by the origins and dialects of the original French settlers who came from the northwest or Norman areas of France.

Speaking of words with different meanings, what about business meals? Is lunch in Toronto the same as lunch in London, England? Or Montreal? What time should you show up to a dinner in France? Check out our handy reference chart on the MyBCommLab!

Develop strategies that help you communicate interculturally

This chapter is intended to help you think about intercultural communications a bit differently than you may have in the past. Here are some additional strategies you can work on to improve your ability to adapt to a variety of intercultural communication situations:

• **Experience other cultures often.** This could mean travelling to a new part of your city that features a cultural community, or it could mean travelling to different parts of the world. People who have purposefully and thoughtfully had exposure to multiple cultures are far more open and adaptable to new cultural situations.

• **Employ your understanding of your own style.** Suppose, in your analysis of your own communication style in Chapter 3, you have learned you are direct, you speak quickly and with a slight accent to people outside your culture, and you often speak in incomplete sentences. By being aware of these tendencies, you will know that you should speak slower and make more of an attempt to complete your thoughts fully when you are trying to be understood across cultures.

• **Do your homework: Research!** If you know you are travelling to a certain area of the world or will be doing business with someone from that area, there are ample websites available to assist you with basic background, culture, and business practices for that area. Be prepared with some rudimentary knowledge.

• **Learn language basics.** If you will be doing business with someone who speaks another language, take the time to learn some basics in that language. See FIGURE 4.6 for a list of basic concepts you should learn in other languages, as needed.

• **Talk less. Listen more.** Focus on the message and try not to be distracted by differences in accent and dialect. Listen to more than the words to ensure you understand the intended meaning. Listen for tone and emphasis (Beall, 2010).

• **Pay attention to the other person’s nonverbal communication and, when appropriate, mirror it.** If you are doing business with someone from another culture, pay attention to how that person acts. Does she maintain eye contact? Does he shake hands vigorously? Also, pay attention to how closely people stand together to talk.
In the United States, a comfortable conversational distance ranges from four feet to seven feet. In northern Europe, the distance is half that much, close enough for a handshake. In Latin America and southern Europe, the distance is less, and in the Middle East the distance may be as close as one foot (Morrison, 2004). Watch for these signals and learn to moderate your own nonverbal behaviour to fit what you are learning through observation.

- **Default to extra formality and respect until you are sure of the cultural expectations.** Canadians are less formal than people from European and Eastern cultures. In situations where you might think people appear impersonal and distant, they believe they are behaving with propriety and decorum. To maintain formality and respect, address people by their last names (“Hello, Ms. Tsai”) until they ask you to call them by their first names. Be polite and courteous. Avoid informality.

- **Avoid idiom, slang, and jargon.** Be specific with your choice of words when communicating with people from different cultures. Avoid idiom or slang because these phrases are difficult for other cultural or language groups to interpret correctly. Expressions such as “drive me up the wall” and “pass with flying colours” are culture specific. Similarly, avoid jargon. Even business jargon like “in the red” or “headcount” may be unfamiliar to your audience.

  Some slang has gradually receded from common use because it is offensive to some groups of people (Joseph, n.d.). For example, use of the following terms is becoming less common since they reinforce historical injustices or disrespectful stereotypes of Canada’s Indigenous peoples. Therefore, do not use these colloquialisms:
  - Indian giver
  - Circle the wagons
  - Low man on the totem pole
  - Rain dance
  - Too many chiefs, not enough indians
  - Pow-wow
  - Indian summer
  - Indian time

- **Avoid humour.** Humour is extremely culture specific. It is easy to mistakenly offend your audience when you are trying to connect with them in a lighthearted way.

- **Speak more slowly than usual.** People who are unfamiliar with your dialect and accent will hear and understand you better if you talk relatively slowly and pronounce words clearly.

- **Request feedback to ensure understanding.** When speaking with people from different cultures, do not assume that smiling and head nodding mean they understand what you are saying. These nonverbal responses mean different things in different countries. Instead, ask friendly, open-ended questions that encourage people to give you detailed verbal feedback so you can ensure mutual understanding. For example, you can ask for others to summarize what they understand in their own way or...
4.3 How can you make your communications inclusive?

The concept of diversity includes the idea of culture, but it also encompasses other elements. The HR Council for the Voluntary/Non-Profit Sector states that “diversity extends beyond race or ethnicity, religion, culture or newcomer status to include factors such as geography, language, politics, gender, beliefs, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities, skills and interests” (Community Foundations of Canada, n.d.)

For many Canadian businesses and organizations, inclusiveness is a key value. This means that many leading Canadian employers take the recognition of diversity very seriously.

Mediacorp, a human resources publications specialist, runs a Canada-wide competition each year for Canada’s Best Diversity Employers. To make it to the Top 100 list in the diversity category, employers must have “noteworthy and unique diversity initiatives” that focus on making the workplace welcoming and positive for people who identify as disabled, as an Aboriginal person or as a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) community” (Mediacorp, 2014).

Employees, business partners, clients and customers, and other organizational stakeholders appreciate language that is respectful and inclusive. However, when we are not mindful of our use of language, we can speak without thought for how our language might exclude someone. This is why it is important to cultivate a mindset of inclusion.

Aside from inclusiveness being identified as part of a Canadian value system, ensuring that all employees and co-workers are treated with respect will create a positive impact on any organization’s effectiveness and productivity. Employees who do not feel valued or respected in the workplace will experience reduced motivation, loyalty, and team cohesion. Employees who are treated respectfully can contribute their full energies to their workplace endeavours.

Develop a mindset of inclusion

The words you choose are rarely neutral. Language is closely tied to the style of the communicator and the context in which it is used. Inclusive communication respects and includes everyone. Therefore, you need to develop the ability to choose words that

- include rather than exclude,
- challenge and avoid stereotypes,
- are not burdened with extra meaning or connotations, and
- are not patronizing to individuals or identified groups.

It is important to review your word choices regularly. Different people prefer to be described in different ways. Ask people for their preferred descriptors and always honour individual preferences (University of Victoria, 2015).

Indigenous peoples of Canada

Before Europeans settled in North America, the land had been populated by groups of Indigenous peoples. Each group has their own language and cultural traditions that are distinctive from each other. When referring to or communicating with members of the Indigenous population, you must remember to refer to these cultures respectfully. Here are some basic guidelines (Joseph, n.d.; University of Victoria, 2015):

- Capitalize terms referring to specific Indigenous groups:
  - Métsis (pronounced “may-TEE”)
Who Are You? Understanding Intercultural Communication and Workplace Diversity

- First Nations
- Aboriginal peoples
- First Peoples
- Inuit
  - “Indigenous” is preferred as being more reflective of a wider global community.
  - “Aboriginal” is used in legislation to refer to Aboriginal peoples of Canada. It is legally inclusive of Métis, First Nations, and Inuit.
  - Some Aboriginal people identify more closely with their tribal or linguistic group designation. There are over 630 recognized First Nations governments or bands in Canada. Be sure to find out if you are referring correctly to the appropriate group. When uncertain, ask. Major tribal groups include, but are not limited to the following:
    - Haida
    - Kwakiutl
    - Salish
    - Blackfoot
    - Anishinaabe
    - Mi’kmaq
  - Research and use the correct Aboriginal spellings for the names of tribes, bands, councils, and communities.
  - Be prepared for decision-making processes to take quite a bit of time. Many First Nations councils prefer to operate by consensus.
  - When a meeting is hosted by a First Nations council or organization, be prepared for everyone attending to be given an opportunity to speak and to be acknowledged. This means that meetings can run longer than you had anticipated.
  - Avoid the word “native.” This is an informal term used among members of Aboriginal groups with each other and in some titles for social organizations, such as the Native Students Union.
  - Avoid the terms “Indian” and “Eskimo,” as these will be perceived as outdated or derogatory.
  - Avoid imposing a timeline when working with representatives from First Nations groups. Many Indigenous cultures are more polychronic than monochronic. Instead, emphasize your willingness to listen and adapt.
  - Expect less eye contact from an Indigenous audience and, similarly, be mindful of your own level of eye contact. Many Indigenous cultures find too much eye contact discourteous.
  - Avoid overdressing for meetings with First Nations communities. This may send an unintended message of assumed power or authority.
  - Be prepared for periods of unfilled silence during meetings with First Nations groups. Ensure that the last speaker has completely finished before you make your contribution.

People with physical impairments and disabilities

You will encounter classmates and work colleagues who may be living with some kind of physical disability. In some cases, the disability is visible (e.g., the use of a wheelchair or other device for mobility) and in some cases the disability is less visible (e.g., a hearing impairment or dyslexia). It would be a mistake to underestimate the degree to which people with disabilities can contribute to our economy and society:

According to the Royal Bank of Canada, people with disabilities have an estimated spending power of about $25 billion annually across Canada. People with disabilities also represent a large pool of untapped employment potential (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2015).

As a general rule, most people who live with a disability prefer to be referred to with an emphasis on their individuality, skills, performance, or job duties and with minimal
4.3 How can you make your communications inclusive?

or no emphasis on their disability. A guiding principle would be to refer to the person first rather than identifying a person by their disability. If you feel it is necessary to refer to a disability, make a respectful inquiry with the individual concerned to see which term is preferred. See FIGURE 4.7 for some examples (University of Victoria, 2015).

In 2005, the Ontario government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This law stipulates that, among other actions companies and government agencies must take, websites must be designed to specifications that allow most people with a range of visual impairments to navigate and use the site. Sites must also be designed to be accessible to screen readers that read content “out loud” to users (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2015).

People of diverse ethnicities

The Employment Equity Act (1998) refers to members of visible minorities as those who are “non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” This topic has been the subject of much discussion, and the concept of “race” is widely challenged as a valid scientific category. However, people who are visibly in a minority group because of their skin colour can face social and employment barriers that need to be addressed. Groups and individuals within these groups should be identified by the names they choose for themselves.

The use of the term “visible minority” is complicated, because minority status is relative. A person who is considered a “visible minority” in Canada may be considered part of a majority in other parts of the world.

Avoid stereotypes, generalizations, or assumptions about ethnic or “racial” groups. Try to be inclusive in the use of examples. Be aware that some references can, even unintentionally, extend to racial connotations (e.g., when the word “black” denotes negative attributes, such as a black mood, black magic, a black heart, a black day, or when the word “white” denotes positive attributes like virtue and purity: white knight, white rose) (University of Victoria, 2015).

People of diverse sexual and gender identities

The World Health Organization uses the term “sex” to refer to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. In contrast, “gender” refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, mannerisms, expectations, activities, and attributes. “Male” and “female” are sex categories, while “masculine” and “feminine” are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREFERRED TERMS</th>
<th>PREFERRED USAGE</th>
<th>INAPPROPRIATE TERMS</th>
<th>INAPPROPRIATE USAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person with mobility issues</td>
<td>Sam, our lead customer service representative, is someone who has mobility issues.</td>
<td>crippled</td>
<td>Sam, the crippled fellow in customer service, is a team leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wheelchair bound</td>
<td>Sam, the man who is wheelchair bound, is our lead customer service representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with a hearing impairment</td>
<td>Joyce brings unique skills, such as fluency in American Sign Language and a proficiency in lip-reading. Our store draws more customers with hearing impairments because they know they will receive top-quality service.</td>
<td>It is inappropriate to define a person by their disability rather than their skills. The term “deaf” is not necessarily inappropriate, but it can be used poorly.</td>
<td>Because she is deaf, Joyce connects well with our deaf customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kiki’s input was extremely valuable when we were designing a hazard-free office floor plan.</td>
<td>It is inappropriate to define a person by their disability rather than their skills. The term “blind” is not necessarily inappropriate, but it can be used poorly.</td>
<td>Because Kiki is blind, she has tripped over and bumped into a lot of poorly placed office furniture. She had a lot to say about our office redesign.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 4.7 Useful Terms Related to People with Physical Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred Terms</th>
<th>Preferred Usage</th>
<th>Inappropriate Terms</th>
<th>Inappropriate Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person with mobility issues</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gender categories. Aspects of sex (i.e., biology) will not vary substantially between different human societies and cultural groups, but aspects of gender may vary greatly. Always be guided by the stated preference of those concerned. Inclusive terms are usually preferred. Check out the table in Figure 4.8 for some examples of inclusive and noninclusive terms.

This list is not intended to be a full list of possible terms. Look at the list carefully. When you use the noninclusive term, not only are you stating a role, status, or activity, you are also implying a gender assignment. When you imply a gender along with a role or action, you are implying an association between the gender and the role or action. Using inclusive language removes this association. In other words, anyone could perform the activity, regardless of gender.

In the case of marital status, it is best to use a neutral term such as “Ms.” The use of “Miss” or “Mrs.” denotes a specific marital status. Most interaction in the workplace does not require knowledge of an individual’s marital status.

Take special care when using pronouns. When the sex or gender is unknown or a group is composed of both men and women, do not assume that the use of the masculine pronoun is appropriate. The usage of the masculine is not a neutral choice. Check out the table in Figure 4.9 for some examples of biased and nonbiased usage.

You may encounter classmates or work colleagues for whom the traditional binary terms for male and female, masculine and feminine, are simply not applicable. The word “transgender” is a term used to refer to people who find the traditional concepts of gender to be limiting, confining, or inappropriate to their self-identity. Some people feel as though their biological sex (male, female, intersexed) and their socially constructed gender (masculine, feminine) do not match up. In these cases, when considering how to refer to these individuals in an inclusive manner, always be guided by the stated preference of those concerned (University of Victoria, 2015).

Cathy LaRose, a senior manager for a luxury retail brand, recounts the story of hiring Judy, an 18-year-old repair technician, to provide service to high-end products:

She was highly skilled and very focused on developing her specific niche repair specialties. Judy worked for me for 10 years and was the most reliable...
and skilled technician on staff. After about 10 years of service, Judy transitioned from female to male. He wanted to be called “John” and, while everyone accepted the change, we all had to adjust our use of language, especially changing “she” to “he” consistently. It was a bit of an adjustment for everyone. Our store was the flagship location for our area. Many training sessions and location tours with staff from other regions would take place in our store. Although John no longer reported to me directly, I understand there were a lot of whispered questions about John from our out-of-town visitors. Many were confused by his gender change. The staff responded by stating that John remained the top repair technician and had simply and clearly communicated his need to be referred to as male. Responding to this need was really fairly simple and respectful of his request. In a way, the “transition” in language was far easier for staff and colleagues to manage than John’s gender transition must have been for him to manage. (Cathy LaRose, personal communication, January 1, 2015)

**People of diverse sexual orientations**

In Canada, you should prepare for a full range of diversity in your classrooms and workplaces. You will work and study with people whose sexual orientation may be undefined, fluid, or different than your own. In terms of business communications, it remains important to be inclusive of everyone. As with other instances, always be guided by the stated preference of those concerned. When uncertain, make a respectful inquiry. Check out the table in [FIGURE 4.10](#) for some useful terms you may need relating to sexual orientation and relationship status.

Here are a few guiding principles to help you when you need to make communications decisions related to diversity:

- **Use names correctly.** Using a person’s name is rarely, if ever, incorrect. If you are communicating in writing, be sure to spell the person’s name correctly. If you are using a name in a presentation, check with the person to get your pronunciation as accurate as possible. If a person has a preferred name, you may wish to inquire about this. For example, some people named *Elizabeth* may prefer to be called *Liz* or *Beth*. Using a person’s correct and preferred name avoids possible issues of gender or cultural identity. Asking and checking on these small details will indicate your interest in getting it right and will solidify your standing with your audience.
• **Use job titles.** Using a person’s job title when referring to job duties is rarely, if ever, incorrect. At work, it is appropriate to refer to what someone does rather than your perception of who someone is.

• **Provide facts rather than assumptions.** Often, if you provide factual information to your audience they will guide you appropriately. This is more respectful than assuming your perspective on their needs is correct.

To get an idea of how all these guidelines apply, take a look at the email inquiry with two possible responses in Figure 4.11.

In the first response, the writer appears to have misunderstood the original inquiry. Some of his word choices and his tone could be taken as disrespectful. In this case, the writer’s carelessness could mean a loss of valuable business.

The second response demonstrates a more appropriate approach. In addition to the specific changes in the text of the second response, notice how the writer avoids making any assumptions about the suitability of their facilities. In the first response, the writer implies that all other people with mobility impairments have been fine staying at their location. However, in the second response, the writer describes facts:

- Previous guests with mobility impairments have stayed there
- The property has been updated to provide access for people using wheelchairs
- Nuts are used in the kitchen

The writer provides concrete, factual information and allows the guests to decide what is suitable for their needs. This is a much more respectful approach.
4.3 How can you make your communications inclusive?

To: Phil's Bed and Breakfast phil@philsbnb.com
From: Lucy Parker lucyp@othermail.com
Subject: Inquiring about accommodations

Dear Phil,

My partner, Pat, and I were happy to find your website and are interested in staying at your bed and breakfast. We would like to arrive on June 10 and depart on June 13.

We have a few questions for you:
• Is your house wheelchair accessible? Pat occasionally needs a wheelchair for mobility and would need to be able to enter and exit the house and the bathroom facilities using either a standard wheelchair or a mobility scooter. There were no photos of either the front door or the bathroom access, so it is hard for us to tell.
• I have a severe nut allergy. Bed and breakfast establishments often find it difficult to provide fully nut-free food. Is there a local restaurant that could provide a nut-free breakfast?
• We are interested in attending some social events in Forest City, which we understand is only 20 minutes from your location. In particular, we are thinking of attending the LGBTQ dance on June 11. Would we have access to our room, without causing too much disturbance, if we returned quite late that evening?

Thanks in advance for helping us out with these questions. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Lucy Parker and Pat Woods

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INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE

To: Lucy Parker lucyp@othermail.com
From: Phil's Bed and Breakfast phil@philsbnb.com
Subject: Re: Inquiring about accommodations

Dear Mrs. Woods,

I am glad that you and your husband are considering staying with us next June. Currently, those dates are available.

With regard to your questions:
• We have had crippled guests in the past, and they have had no trouble navigating the accessibility ramp to our back door nor have they had trouble using the bathroom facilities.
• Sorry to hear you are nut-allergic. My wife uses some nuts in our homemade granola, but I'm sure it won't be a problem for you if you just eat eggs instead.
• Since your disabled husband needs to use the back door entry, and the main floor bedroom is far from the other guests on the second floor, you will not be disturbing anyone with a late evening return on June 11. I don't know what an LGBTQ dance is or why someone in a wheelchair would go, but I hope it is fun.

My wife and I look forward to confirming your booking.

Sincerely,

Phil Dunning
Proprietors, Phil's Bed and Breakfast
(877) 987-6543
www.philsbnb.com
info@philsbnb.com

FIGURE 4.11 Email Inquiry with Two Possible Responses (continued)
Learn the art of respectful inquiry

In a cross-cultural, diverse workplace, there are several instances where learning how to ask the right questions can help you bridge gaps while earning the respect of others. Throughout the previous section, you read that you should be guided by the stated preference of others. How, exactly, do you find out how another person wishes to be addressed? Or how they wish to be referred to?

This is actually a variation of the earlier concept of “know your audience.” Often it is possible that by being direct and respectful you can get the guidance you need.

What is a respectful question? According to Ned Parks, founder of New Directions Learning and Development, a respectful question “when asked, is not judgmental, accusatory, or threatening. It is a question that does not cause the person that answers it to recoil, hide for cover, or feel less than important” (Parks, 2013).

What do disrespectful questions sound, look, or feel like? A disrespectful question implies some kind of assumption, judgment, or bias. Often a question that asks for irrelevant or unnecessary information can be perceived as disrespectful. Check out the CULTURE BOX for a situational example.

Respectful questions should demonstrate, by tone and attitude, that you are genuinely asking for information that will help you understand your audience and their needs. Here are a few guiding principles to keep in mind:

- **Provide context.** Explain why you are asking. What kind of communication are you preparing and who is the audience? This will help the individual understand that you are not making a personal or inappropriate request.
- **Demonstrate “best interests.”** Most people, regardless of how they identify, appreciate the ability to have some input on how information about them appears in print or on social media. If you phrase your request in a way that shows that you are...
4.3 How can you make your communications inclusive?

**CULTURE**

**WHEN THE QUESTIONS SAY MORE THAN ANSWERS**

Skylar’s business program at Provincial College has an internship opportunity. This offers students with no previous experience in their field the opportunity to gain relevant work experience. Skylar has been given the opportunity to apply to CityScape Marketing for a three-month internship. To successfully acquire the position, she must be interviewed. Given her quiet nature and relative inexperience, this is a great opportunity for Skylar to hone her interview skills.

She is asked to arrange an interview time via email with Mr. Patrick Harris, the marketing manager for CityScape Marketing. Skylar sends a well-worded, error-free email to Mr. Harris. In response, she receives an email that is formal and polite. Mr. Harris asks about Skylar’s time availability, program skills, and marketing career interests. After a few email exchanges, they set a date and time for the internship interview.

For the interview, Skylar is prepared and punctual. As soon as Skylar is introduced to Mr. Harris the interview begins. During the interview, Mr. Harris said three things that surprised Skylar:

- He commented, with surprise, on how well-spoken she was and then asked if English was her first language.
- He asked if she enjoyed attending Caribana.
- He commented that she would fit in well with the culture of CityScape as all of the interns were women. He then told a short story about his own start at the firm, as a junior manager, five years earlier.

Although the interview seemed to end well, Skylar left the marketing firm feeling uncomfortable. She was puzzled that Mr. Harris would be surprised at her use of clear and precise language. She has never attended Caribana since her family has preferred to travel in the summers. She felt particularly concerned that “all the interns” at CityScape are women. She wondered if she would be considered for a junior manager’s job in two years, after graduation, if the company only saw her as capable of an “intern” role.

What has unfolded in this interview? This is where O-A-R can guide you:

- **Observe:** If we were to observe Canadian business culture, we would see that women still occupy fewer management and senior-level positions. As of January 2015, *Canadian Business* reported that women occupy 20.8% of corporate board seats in Canada. While this is a significant improvement on the 15.9% reported in 2013, the 2015 statistic places Canada slightly ahead of the United States (at 19.2%) but behind the United Kingdom (at 22.8%) and far behind the leader, Norway (at 35.5%) (Toller, 2015).

- **Research:** Before attending your first interview, do some reading on the human rights legislation in your province. Most provinces have strict guidelines on what an employer can ask during an interview. Typically, questions that pertain to educational background, the job, and the job posting are fair and valid. Questions (and comments) related to cultural background, sexual orientation, marital status, age, and other elements of identity are usually prohibited. If you are knowledgeable in this area prior to the interview, you will be able to assess whether the employer is also knowledgeable and aware of his or her obligations in creating an inclusive and welcoming working environment.

The statistics illustrate the slow progress of change. Some managers, like Mr. Harris, assume that women still start their business careers as interns rather than as junior managers. Mr. Harris has revealed the culture of the marketing firm through these comments. His remarks about her proficiency in English and his statement that she attended a local Caribbean festival are assumptions he made based on her mixed heritage.

- **Ask:** Many student interviewees feel overwhelmed, nervous, and vulnerable in the interview process. Be sure to prepare and rehearse a few key questions in advance. Knowing when and what to ask is an important skill. Here are some useful questions:
  - How would you describe the culture of this workplace?
  - What policies and practices are in place to ensure this is an inclusive workplace?
  - Is it possible for me to advance in this company? Can you share with me examples of people who have started in this position and thrived in this environment?

- **Frame your question as a request for assistance.** Most people respond well to a sincere request to help others understand. Questions that begin with a gently phrased attempt at accuracy and clarity, you are operating ethically and in the “best interests” of the recipient.

- **Allow maximum flexibility.** Instead of asking for specifics like “Which pronoun should I use?” or “How should I refer to your partner, Jane, in the company bio?” Explain your dilemma more generally and allow the recipient to provide the information he or she feels will resolve your problem. See **FIGURE 4.12** for an example.

For CULTURE exercises, go to the Case Study on page xxx, the Review and Critical Thinking Questions on page xxx, and Exercises 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13 on pages xxx-xxx.
INAPPROPRIATE REQUEST

To: Kristopher Smythe <SmytheK@corporatehouse.com>
From: Wendy Gibson <GibsonW@corporatehouse.com>
Subject: Updating Your Online Bio

Hi Kristopher,

I hope you don’t mind if I address you, between us, as Krystal. I have called you Krystal since we both started working here five years ago and it is a hard habit to break!

In any case, I need some information from you for a project I’m working on. Can you get back to me fairly quickly as I’m on a deadline?

• Marital Status: In the online bio that was updated before your gender transition, or whatever it is called, you are listed as married (to Steve) with three children. Is this still correct?

• Pronouns: I can’t decide if you should be called “he” or “she” in the bio. Maybe I should use “she” until six months ago and then switch to “he” for the more current items? For example, “She graduated from the University of Toronto with an MBA in 1995,” and then “He was awarded the President’s Gold Leaf Success Award in June 2015.” Will that work?

• Voluntary Service: The online bio discusses your work with the ValleyBrook Business Association, but I wonder if, under the present circumstances, you would like this left out.

I’m working on these updates now. I’ll just go with what I’ve got if I don’t hear from you by Friday.

Thanks!

Wendy Gibson
Site Administrator
426-555-8844 x345
GibsonW@corporatehouse.com
www.corporatehouse.com

FIGURE 4.12 An Inappropriate and an Appropriate Request for Sensitive Information

APPROPRIATE REQUEST

To: Kristopher Smythe <SmytheK@corporatehouse.com>
From: Wendy Gibson <GibsonW@corporatehouse.com>
Subject: Updating Your Online Bio

Hi Kristopher,

Currently, there is a project underway to ensure that all the information on our corporate website is up to date. Your bio is available at: www.corporatehouse.com/staffbios/KSmythe. Could you please review the current bio and let me know how you would like any changes to appear?

There are a few options in terms of getting these changes to me.

• You could send me any specific changes you want by email. Please be as precise as possible.

• We could meet for coffee to discuss any changes you recommend. This has the added advantage of allowing us to go through the changes in detail to ensure accuracy.

Either way, I will provide you with a full edit with your changes by email for your review and verification. If I could have your suggested changes by Friday, I’d really appreciate it.

Thanks!

Wendy Gibson
Site Administrator
426-555-8844 x345
GibsonW@corporatehouse.com
www.corporatehouse.com
“Can you please help me . . .?” are usually well received. For example, if you are unsure about the pronunciation of a name, you can phrase the request as follows: “I want to be sure to introduce you correctly at the staff meeting, but I’m unsure how to pronounce your name. Can you help me learn the pronunciation?”

When you are asking for sensitive information, your request should not include any assumptions you may have about your audience. Take a look at the two emails in Figure 4.13. Wendy Gibson is writing to clarify information posted on Kristopher Smythe’s corporate bio on the website. Kristopher is a manager at Corporate House, an investment firm. Until recently, Kristopher was known as Krystal. However, six months ago he transitioned his gender identity from female to male. Employees at Corporate House were informed by the human resources department that Krystal should now be referred to as male. Wendy is in charge of keeping the corporate website updated. Wendy and Kristopher were hired in the same week several years ago and have attended many internal training sessions together. Wendy and Kristopher have always been friendly and have often sat together during these sessions.

The secret of our success in this community is very simple. We’ve learned a basic truth that evades so many in this broken world. We’re all in it together. Our neighbour’s pain is our pain; our neighbour’s success is our success. (Elliott, 2013)

Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi

Use ACE to navigate diverse and intercultural situations

FIGURE 4.13 provides some ideas for applying ACE to your work within intercultural and diverse environments.
In summary, ACE can be applied to help navigate complex communications challenges such as those presented by diverse and intercultural workplaces. Take the time to honestly analyze your assumptions, the situation, and the audience to create messages that will win you valuable alliances and credibility.

The skills you learned in this chapter are wide-ranging and challenging. Chapter 5 will continue to build on these skills as you examine the role of communication technologies in supporting productive workplaces in a globalized business environment.
At the opening of this chapter, Adrienne Rosen recounted a story in which an innocent phrase, “a piece of cake,” was misinterpreted during a phone conversation, leading to unforeseen delays and other consequences. How has Adrienne used ACE to ensure this does not happen again?

How Does Adrienne Rosen use ACE to craft her messages?

First, I take time to analyze each unique situation:

• **Who am I speaking to?** Avoid thinking about your audience in terms of your own set of beliefs.

• **Think of the word “culture” in more than one way.** We commonly analyze our message in terms of the cultural heritage of the person or place that is receiving our message. We forget that culture is also a word we use to define how we behave and think as a group. Look in and look out.

• **Do not make assumptions about your audience.** When in doubt, ask. Engage your audience. Listen. Record (i.e., write down) their responses and carefully consider the words they use.

Next, it is time to compose the message:

• **Use what you learned.** When communicating messages use the information you gleaned from analyzing your marketplace. Use the language that you heard, use the images that you have seen, and embrace the cultural thread that runs through it.

• **Check for organizational fit.** Ensure that the language that comes from you and your corporation matches and reflects what you are offering. Your corporate “tone” may need adjustment depending on your audience.

• **Be as literal in your word choice as possible.** Your communication should be clear, accurate, and fresh. Stay clear of “catchy phrases” because they may not be clear or meaningful to others. In fact, what is “catchy” to you could be insulting to someone else.

I then take time to consider and evaluate my messages:

• **Get feedback from diverse sources.** Have other team members from a diversity of backgrounds read or listen to the communication. If your team members are not all that diverse, get opinions from other areas of the company.

• **Double check language accuracy.** Have numerous people check and recheck grammar, spelling, layout, and images. Make sure there are no errors. It is more than embarrassing to have your client point out the mistakes on your website. This happens more often than you can imagine.

• **Check that images reflect your intention to be inclusive.** Ensure that the images you use include a variety of people. Pay attention and include men, women, people with disabilities, and people from a variety of orientations and cultural backgrounds.
End of Chapter

Learning Outcomes in Review

**LO 4.1** Why do we need to study intercultural communication and workplace diversity? (pages x–x)
- Understand the impact of culture and diversity on communication. Culture describes learned and shared patterns in a society. People are shaped by the cultures they come from and they develop a set of assumptions about how to act based on those cultural influences.
- Know that each individual is unique. We work with individuals, not “members of groups.” Each person, including yourself, has at least three “stories” that create identity. Keep this in mind when assessing your audience and reflecting on your response to different cultural expectations.
- Develop a mindset of cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence combines awareness, flexibility, observation, and balance. Adaptability is a key skill to becoming culturally intelligent.

**LO 4.2** What do you need to know to improve your cultural intelligence? (pages x–x)
- Understand how cultures differ. Cultures do have different expectations and norms. Some have been identified and analyzed, as noted in this chapter. Understanding these specific areas will help you adapt to new situations with greater ease.
- Integrate communication style and culture: The Lewis model of cultural types. Examining the “national norms” of a variety of cultures has value in informing both your understanding of communications styles and your cultural intelligence.
- Be aware that common language does not equal common meaning or culture. All languages evolve and change over time. In many cases, new dialects and meanings have regional variations. Be aware of areas where meaning can be misinterpreted, even when all parties speak a common language.
- Develop strategies that help you communicate interculturally. In addition to becoming more culturally intelligent, a variety of additional strategies can help you succeed in a cross-cultural environment.

**LO 4.3** How can you make your communications inclusive? (pages x–x)
- Develop a mindset of inclusion. For many Canadian businesses and organizations, inclusiveness is a key value. This means that many leading Canadian employers take the recognition of diversity very seriously. Developing a similar mindset will help you adapt to the Canadian employment environment.
- Learn the art of respectful inquiry. There are strategies you can employ to ask directly for sensitive information, should you need it.
- Use ACE to navigate diverse and intercultural situations. Remember that ACE applies. Analyze your audience and your assumptions. Compose you message using language that is appropriate to the audience. Evaluate carefully to improve your intercultural and diversity skills and to eliminate areas of possible friction or misunderstanding.

**KEY TERMS**
culture p. xx
stereotype p. xx
ethnocentrism p. xx
First Nations p. xx
organizational culture p. xx
cultural intelligence p. xx
context p. xx
individualistic culture p. xx
collectivist culture p. xx
power distance p. xx
uncertainty avoidance p. xx
monochronic culture p. xx
polychronic culture p. xx
idiom p. xx
slang p. xx
jargon p. xx
diversity p. xx
inclusiveness p. xx
Métis p. xx
Inuit p. xx

**CASE STUDY**

Working as a Cross-Cultural Team

This case study will help you review the chapter material by applying it to a specific scenario.

The first three weeks of Brendan’s internship at Kramer & Kaplan Market Research in Calgary were great. He enjoyed brainstorming marketing ideas with his manager and designing a survey for an important client. However, the weeks that followed were pure misery. Brendan’s supervisor assigned him to join three other interns on a team to create a comprehensive online handbook for interns. Each summer the company hires seven interns at the Calgary location and seven more in the company’s programming and data processing department in New Delhi, India. Brendan will work on this project with one other intern from the Calgary office and two interns from New Delhi.

Planning the first meeting was difficult. Brendan lost two days of work trying to set a meeting time because there is a 12 1/2-hour time difference between Calgary and New Delhi: at 9 a.m. Central
Standard Time in Calgary it is 9:30 p.m. in New Delhi. Brendan suggested a 7 a.m. teleconference, but his Calgary teammate, Roberto, said he could not arrive in the office early for a meeting. Brendan suggested an 8:30 a.m. teleconference, which would be 9:00 p.m. in New Delhi. Both his New Delhi teammates, Maansi and Anant, were vague about whether they could stay late. Brendan begged Roberto to arrange to get to work early just one day so that the team could hold a kickoff meeting. Roberto admitted that he could easily get to the office early, but preferred to sleep later. “And anyway,” he admitted, “I didn’t sign up for human resources work when I accepted an internship in consumer research. How will this help me get a job?”

Finally, Brendan was able to convince Roberto to accommodate Maansi and Anant. The first meeting was scheduled for 7:30 a.m. Central Standard Time. The meeting seemed to begin well enough. Everyone arrived on time, the teleconferencing system worked, and the meeting started with friendly introductions. Within five minutes, though, Brendan knew the team was in trouble. When Anant introduced himself, he spoke so quickly that Brendan and Roberto missed everything he said. Brendan felt too embarrassed to ask him to repeat it, so Brendan remained quiet and pretended to understand. No one thought to make an agenda, so no one knew what the team was trying to accomplish. After a few moments of painful silence, Brendan said, “Well maybe we should just start sharing ideas about coming up with a plan for the online handbook.”

Anant jumped right in. Brendan still did not understand much of what he said, but heard the words “user interface,” “programming,” “database,” and “search functions.” Brendan and Roberto looked at each other in amazement. Why was Anant talking about computer programming? And why was he continuing to talk without stopping for five minutes? Would it be rude to interrupt? Finally, Roberto said, “Anant, it sounds like you have some good ideas, but we don’t understand. We thought our job was to plan an online handbook.” Anant replied, “That’s what I’m talking about.” Throughout all of this, Maansi remained silent. After the first meeting, Brendan felt like it was going to be a long five weeks until the end of his summer internship.

**Question 1:** What interpersonal, intercultural, and teamwork communication issues are emerging in this scenario? How many can you clearly define?

**Managing Cultural Diversity**

Brendan and Roberto ask for a meeting with their supervisor, Caitlin. They made a list of questions to be discussed:

- What does “a plan” mean? What would “a plan” include? What is the goal of the team?
- Is there some specific reason Brendan and Roberto were put on the team? Is there some specific reason Maansi and Anant are on the team?
- What should be the final deliverable this summer?

The meeting with Caitlin was very helpful. Through much questioning, clarifying, and paraphrasing, Brendan and Roberto identified four tasks for the summer:

- Evaluate the material in the current paper handbook
- Gather information from current interns in both locations
- Put together a content outline for the website
- Develop an easy-to-use structure for the website

By the second week of the project, the team was working efficiently, with all team members doing their tasks. Yet there was tension at every team meeting. Roberto appeared to be looking for the fastest way through the project, and he tended to be frustrated with Brendan’s attention to detail. Brendan was losing patience with Roberto, seeing him as capable of great work but lacking any commitment to quality. Meanwhile, Maansi and Anant continued to focus on the programming aspects of the online handbook and were not interested in talking about content.

To streamline communications while working with Anant and Maansi, Brendan set weekly meeting times on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 a.m. Central Standard Time, which worked out well for both the Canadian and Indian team members. Every meeting had an agenda, and team members exchanged important information in writing before and after the meeting. This eased the problem of understanding foreign accents. (Brendan was surprised to learn that Anant had as much difficulty understanding his Western Canadian accent as Brendan had understanding his Indian accent.)

Nonetheless, although some aspects improved, the team continued to have some difficulties working together. Anant and Maansi always seemed busy with several projects and did not treat this one with any urgency. They were indirect in presenting what they had accomplished, and Brendan was never confident about how far along they were. At one meeting, when Brendan asked Maansi to give them a virtual tour of their prototype website, she became silent. Brendan did not intend the question as a criticism but she seemed to have taken it that way. Anant, by contrast, was never silent, always trying to engage in an intellectual debate about various programming techniques and user interfaces. Trying to sort out intercultural communications has proved very challenging.

**Question 2:** Review section 4.2 of this chapter. What specific factors may explain the cultural differences between the Canadian and Indian team members? Do any of these cultural factors apply when looking at Brendan and Roberto’s working relationship? What strategies can Brendan use to make the summer more pleasant and productive? List and describe as many as you can.

**Question 3:** If Maansi and Anant were asked to describe the intercultural challenges of working with Brendan and Roberto, what do you think they might say? Would it be valuable or productive for Brendan and Roberto to understand those challenges from Maansi and Anant’s perspective?

**Reaping the Benefits of Teamwork**

At the end of the summer internship, despite the conflicts and communication challenges, Brendan is surprised at everything the team has accomplished. Working as a team, they did all of the following tasks:

- Interviewed all the current interns and compiled the results into a report identifying the most important content for the handbook
- Developed a site map for the handbook
- Wrote content for two sections of the handbook
- Gathered inspirational quotations from senior management
- Programmed a prototype site
- Conducted a round of user testing
- Developed a list of necessary revisions

Brendan remembered two of Roberto’s comments from earlier in the summer. At one point Roberto complained, “It doesn’t sound like Maansi and Anant will be too helpful on this project. Maybe we should do it on our own.” It would have been easier to create the
content with just Brendan and Roberto, but so much less work would have been done: no site mapping, no programming, and no user testing. The team needed people with programming expertise to get that done. At another point Roberto asked, “How will this help me get a job?” The answer to that question is now obvious: everyone learned some strategies for working collaboratively with others while completing a complicated project. Compared to other interns who learned only technical skills in market research, Brendan has developed a transferrable set of skills that will be crucial on the job no matter what field Brendan enters.

**QUESTION 4:** Ultimately, this team was successful. How did Brendan demonstrate and strengthen his skills in intercultural communications to support his team’s success? Explain in detail.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the “three stories” that most people use to self-identify?
2. What is cultural intelligence?
3. What is a stereotype?
4. What is ethnocentrism?
5. Name one way that an individualistic culture differs from a collectivist culture.
6. What is organizational culture?
7. How would you know you are working in a high-context culture?
8. How would you know you are working in a low-context culture?
9. Give an example of uncertainty avoidance.
10. Give an example of an English phrase that has a different meaning depending on whether it is used in Canada or the United Kingdom.
11. What is the difference between the concept of “diversity” and the concept of “culture”?

## CRITICAL THINKING

1. Imagine you have been hired by a global company that is holding a two-week orientation for all new employees at the head office in Montreal. You have never visited the province of Quebec, and you wonder if the business culture is the same there. You will be staying in a hotel for two weeks, and you have been assigned to share a room with a new employee from Zurich, Switzerland.
   - What can you do in advance to find out about the business culture in the province of Quebec? What can you do in advance to find out about the business culture in the city of Montreal? Do you think some knowledge in advance would be useful? Why?
   - What can you do in advance to find out a little bit about the culture in Zurich? Do you think some knowledge in advance would be useful? Why?
   - Once you have identified some characteristics of these cultures, what can you do to ensure that you do not make too many assumptions, either about your roommate or your regional location?
2. Some Canadian companies appear to have no international business dealings. Do such companies need to be concerned with intercultural communications? Explain your answer, referring to at least three points from Chapter 4 as evidence.
3. Do you feel you have “three stories” that create your cultural self-identity? If yes, can you describe each of them? If no, can you define your own identity in another way?
4. Give an example of a “single story” perception others have had about you. Explain why you feel these assumptions were incorrect.
5. Give an example of a “single story” perception you may have about another student, a professor, or a member of your community. Explain why you suspect your assumptions are either incorrect or incomplete.
6. (For Domestic Students) Imagine you decide to go to school for a year in a country that you have never visited. What would be the hardest part of such a choice? List at least five difficulties you think you would encounter. In what ways would such a choice make you a stronger candidate for employment after you graduate?
7. (For International Students) What are the hardest adjustments for you as you attend school in Canada? List at least five difficulties. In what ways will success in this endeavour make you a stronger candidate for employment after you graduate?

## DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

1. **Exercise 1** Understand the impact of culture and diversity
   [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]

   Find a news article published in the last 12 months that reveals a communications misunderstanding between businesses or people related to culture or diversity. Bring it to class with your analysis of what occurred. How could the misunderstanding have been avoided? What could be done now, after the fact, to repair any damaged relationships?

   **Exercise 2** Know each individual is unique
   [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]

   Each student should answer these three questions individually:
   1. What characteristics, beliefs, or values do I have that I believe everyone shares?
2. How do I define myself culturally or socially? (You can have more than one such definition.)

3. What are my most important unique characteristics? (These could be hobbies, sports, skills, interests, elements of personal history, or any other attribute.)

Form groups of four or five students. Try to create a table of characteristics. It might look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Items in Common</th>
<th>Cultural/Social Characteristics</th>
<th>Unique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>A good job after graduation</td>
<td>Fifth-generation Canadian (British/Scottish/German)</td>
<td>Enjoys video games, lacrosse, and jazz/fusion music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami</td>
<td>Wants to travel</td>
<td>Third-generation Canadian (South Asian), gay</td>
<td>Enjoys hockey, Mexican food, and writing hip-hop music lyrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nik</td>
<td>Would like to be successful and rich</td>
<td>South Asian (international student)</td>
<td>Breeds tropical fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mai</td>
<td>Desires success as an entrepreneur and wants to be independent</td>
<td>Second-generation Canadian (Chinese), mobility impaired</td>
<td>Enjoys video games Collects samples of beach sand from places she has visited around the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a group, discuss the following:

- Are all your assumptions about “common” beliefs actually true?
- Are your assumptions about other cultures actually true?
- What did you learn about your classmates that surprised you?

Finally, describe how this deeper knowledge of this “audience” might influence your preparation for communicating in the future. Will you make more assumptions about the people receiving your business messages or fewer? How might this have an impact on your choices as a communicator? Explain.

EXERCISE 3 Cultural norms versus stereotypes [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]

(This exercise can be assigned as an individual or group exercise. It can also form the foundation of a classroom debate.)

a. Begin by creating your own definition for each of these terms:
   - Cultural norm
   - Stereotype

You may need to do some additional reading and research to inform your work.

b. Consider the following statements. Using your definitions from part (a), decide if the statement represents a verifiable cultural norm, a stereotype based on assumptions, or both. You may need to do some research for each statement. Be prepared to defend your answer in writing or in a presentation or debate.
   - Asians are terrible drivers.
   - The French will never be on time when they come for dinner.
   - Germans are so detail oriented. Everything must be written down and documented!
   - You can’t trust people from India. They say “yes” when they really mean “no.”
   - Americans are so loud and they never listen.
   - Arab businessmen won’t work with businesswomen.
   - Canadians are so polite. They always say “I’m sorry.”
   - Gay men want to be women.
   - Spaniards are so emotional!
   - Scottish people never spend money on anything.
   - Chinese women are so shy. They never make eye contact.
   - Canadians end every sentence with “eh.”

And a statement that may be both a stereotype and a cultural norm. How is this possible? Write one or two paragraphs to explain.

EXERCISE 4 Understand how cultures differ [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]

Step One: Select a country you have never visited. Research through published sources (not social media) the “business culture” of that country. Based on what you learn, write two paragraphs on how you would prepare for a business trip to that country.

Step Two: Find someone at your school or in your community who is from that country. Show them your written results. Ask them what you left out. Ask them how they would prepare for a business trip to that country.

Step Three: Rewrite your paragraphs with the new knowledge gained from your associate. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

EXERCISE 5 Planning a meeting [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]

Select a city in a country you have never visited. Assume you are planning your first face-to-face meeting in that city with a team of employees you have never met. The purpose of the meeting is to launch a new project that you will all be working on together.

You will need to research the best way to have this meeting to make it as successful as possible. You may research online and by interviewing people from this city or country. Consider the following questions within your research, and think about how each factor will affect your planning for the meeting:

- Have you selected a high-context or a low-context culture?
- Does this culture have an individualistic or a collectivist preference?
- Does this culture have a tendency to avoid uncertainty?
- Is this culture’s attitude toward power and distance a factor?
- How does this culture regard time?
- Does this culture tend to practise holistic or specific thinking?
- Does this culture accept certain kinds of physical touch in a professional context, or does it prefer less touch?

Write your recommendations for preparation for this meeting down. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

EXERCISE 6 Canadian expectations [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]

“Canadians tend to be somewhat individualistic, somewhat open to collectivism, relatively low context, and monochronic.” Would you...
agree? How do these characteristics complement each other? How might they contradict each other? Explain your reasoning.

EXERCISE 7 Time zones and dominant religions [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]
You work for a company in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the vice-president of purchasing is planning a series of teleconferences with suppliers in various parts of the world: China, Saudi Arabia, Israel, India, and Costa Rica. Each country is in a different time zone. The vice-president has asked you to help schedule these meetings. She would like each meeting to take place during the standard workweek for the country and she wants to avoid offending any participants by suggesting a meeting time that conflicts with any weekly or daily religious observations for the dominant religions in these countries: Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Christianity. Research the time zones, standard workweek, and days of religious observation in the various countries. Prepare a five-minute briefing for the vice-president, proposing a series of meeting times and supporting your proposal with your research.

EXERCISE 8 Nonverbal communication [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]
Nonverbal communication differs among cultures. For example, a degree of eye contact is important to establish credibility in Canada. However, people in Japan and other Asian cultures often show respect by avoiding direct eye contact. Research nonverbal communication in a country you have never visited. How does that country differ in their nonverbal communication from your cultural norms? Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

EXERCISE 9 English variations
The phrase “to table an idea” in a meeting has two completely different meanings, depending on whether you hear the phrase in the United Kingdom or in the United States. In the UK, this means to leave the idea for debate at another time. (In Canada, it is best to clarify with the speaker which meaning they are intending!) Find three other such examples of phrases or words in English that have different meanings depending on the region in which they are spoken. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

EXERCISE 10 Humour does not always travel well
Find an example of humour (a written joke, a story, a visual) that originates from a non-English-speaking source. For the purposes of this exercise, find an example that does not touch on religion, sexuality, or politics. Bring the example to class. Discuss in groups whether or not it is “funny.” If there are people in the group who find it humorous, ask them to explain why. If there are people who do not find it humorous, ask them to explain why. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

EXERCISE 11 Idiom [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]
Imagine you are talking to a group of international businesspeople, and in conversation you use one of the following idiomatic phrases (or another one of your choice):

- Hit the ground running
- He hasn’t got a leg to stand on

Your international visitors ask you to explain. How would you explain that phrase? What could you have said instead of that phrase to be more easily understood?

EXERCISE 12 Cultural variations [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]
You represent Vroom, an auto parts distributor in Canada. You are negotiating with Warrior Auto Parts, a manufacturer based in Kyoto, Japan. Before your first meeting, your supervisor instructed you to be very firm on two things:

- Vroom must approve all design specifications of parts before they are produced.
- Vroom must have final approval on quality assurance for raw materials used by Warrior to fabricate the parts.

With previous suppliers, Vroom has received inferior products, and your supervisor wants to make sure this does not happen again.

You are at your first meeting with the Warrior representative and it seems cordial and friendly. As directed by your supervisor, you are polite but firm in communicating Vroom’s expectations about design and materials. However, you sense that something is going wrong. It seems that the clearer you are on these points, the more distant and noncommittal your Japanese counterpart is. The partnership between your two companies is financially lucrative to the Japanese company, so you are confused. Why isn’t the Japanese representative showing more enthusiasm? You were instructed to “get a deal” at this meeting and you feel your opportunity slipping away. This causes you to put more energy and vigour into your negotiation. This does not seem to be working.

What is going wrong? What cultural variations may be having an impact on this negotiation? Be prepared to present your analysis to the class.

EXERCISE 13 The welcoming email [Related to the Culture feature on page xx]
Your CEO wants to write a friendly, welcoming email message to 12 employees recently transferred from Seoul, South Korea, to your location in Halifax, Nova Scotia. All the transferred employees speak English as an acquired language. Your CEO wants to get the tone and wording of this message exactly right. She asks you to review her first draft and provide her with feedback:

Welcome to beautiful Halifax! I wanted to reach out to you ASAP to let you know that “mi casa es su casa.” Whatever you need, don’t hesitate to ask. We are all family here. When the nor’easters blow, we’ll be here to lend a hand. We know you would feel the same if the shoe were on the other foot. Let’s meet for a coffee on Day One, at SunDial Coffee, which is kittycorner to our office building, at 9:30 a.m. We can have some face time and rub elbows with our newest family members!

What would your feedback be to your well-meaning CEO? Could you rewrite this message to be more appropriate to the audience?

How can you make your communications inclusive? (pages x-x)

EXERCISE 14 Accommodations
Constance is a member of your team, and she has a hearing impairment. Occasionally she misses key items at meetings. Suggest at
least three things that you and the rest of the team can do to make it easier for Constance to get more out of team meetings. Suggest at least three things Constance can do to help herself get all the information she needs during meetings.

EXERCISE 15 First Nations: Expanding your knowledge
Research First Nations bands (i.e., councils) in the province where you attend school. Try to find answers to the following questions:

- How many distinct First Nations communities can you find in your province? Of these, how many were you aware of before this research?
- Some of these communities have websites where they post mission and vision statements, policies, bylaws, and other information. Can you describe what is distinct about how these communities refer to themselves, the Canadian government, and the land they live on? What can you learn from this?
- If you were planning to hire a First Nations employee or to engage in a business relationship with an Indigenous-owned business, how would you find out about your audience and their communications preferences?

EXERCISE 16 First Nations: Communications styles
Research First Nations bands (i.e., councils) in the province where you attend school. Locate a First Nations council near your school that has an economic development officer. Invite the chief or the economic development officer to your class to speak with you about the communications styles they have experienced and that they prefer.

EXERCISE 17 Accessibility for people with disabilities
You are a customer service manager for a company with 100 employees located in Ottawa, Ontario. Your company’s website administrator, Keith, seems distressed. Apparently your company must make major changes to its website to be deemed “accessible” to Ontarians with disabilities. You wonder what this means, so you type “Ontario,” “website,” “accessible,” and “disabilities” into Google.

- What do you find?
- Which companies must make adjustments to their websites?
- Can you define the “target audience” for these revisions?
- Do other provinces in Canada have similar regulations about accessibility?

Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

EXERCISE 18 What’s in a name?
In March 2015, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) published a policy paper on LGBTQ+ students. The report is based on input from university students in five universities in Ontario and was produced by the students who are part of OUSA. Here is an excerpt from the executive summary of that report:

Names and perceptions can have significant impacts on a student’s sense of comfort in certain situations as well as a student’s overall sense of self. For students undergoing a sex or gender transition, identity and identifying records assume both a practical and symbolic significance. However, some universities do not have reliable processes for students to choose a preferred name or gender in their class listings, student cards, etc. Universities must adopt policies along these lines that allow the change to be reflected throughout all the services and staff that students might interact with. (Murphy, Hobbs, Rose, Madden, & Irwin, 2015, p. 5)

What advantage would it be to a business to offer employees the opportunity to choose preferred name and gender preferences as part of their employment record or agreement?

EXERCISE 19 Gender neutral?
In March 2015, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) published a policy paper on LGBTQ+ students. The report is based on input from university students in five universities in Ontario and was produced by the students who are part of OUSA.

Here is an excerpt from the executive summary of that report:

Lastly, universities need to turn to infrastructure to help improve the student experience for LGBTQ+ students . . . .

[Gender-neutral bathrooms are essential for the safety and human rights of students who identify as trans and non-binary. (Murphy et al., 2015, p. 4)]

What is a gender-neutral washroom? How would an organization effectively communicate the existence of a gender-neutral washroom to the entire organizational community? What challenges do you see in communicating this message? How would you overcome them?

EXERCISE 20 Honest reflection [Related to the Ethics feature on page xx]
Canada has a reputation for tolerance, courtesy, and respect. Nonetheless, many people face discriminatory and disrespectful behaviour. This can happen in the workplace, during hiring, or simply when out in public enjoying the freedoms that come with living in this country. Some believe that biased, hostile, or disrespectful behaviour against visible minorities, women, senior citizens, gay and lesbian people, transgendered people, people with disabilities, and others cannot be changed.

Find a current, relevant news story about bias or discrimination in Canada against one of the identified groups here. Or use your own experience. Describe a time when there was a serious miscommunication or similar incident based on assumptions someone else had about you. Write a summary of the news story or of your experience. Using what you have learned in Chapter 4, provide at least three strategies for addressing the situation in a positive manner. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.