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CORPORATE TRIBALISM

EAST ASIAN & U.S. MAINSTREAM CULTURAL PATTERNS



DISCUSSION GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

VERSION 0916



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LEADER'S DISCUSSION GUIDE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this guide is to prepare leaders to facilitate group discussions that reinforce and build on the KMA "Corporate Tribalism" cultural diversity web-based training series.

Discussion group leaders help participants increase self-awareness and analyze workplace interactions with the goal of creating new strategies for effective communication. The discussion group objectives are:

- Identify cultural patterns of difference
- Acquire greater self-awareness of communication and cultural styles
- Determine specific strategies that enable multi-cultural flexibility
- Identify opportunities for change that will lead to greater employee satisfaction, development and retention.

KMA Approach

KMA brings more than 20 years of field-tested experience to their training. Understanding the importance of culture and the role it plays in everyday interactions is central to the KMA approach.

Leveraging extensive research, KMA leads organizations and individuals through a unique training process using multimedia, group facilitation and discussion.

"Corporate Tribalism"

The name Corporate Tribalism, given to KMA's training programs and book, has its roots in cultural anthropology. It's the essence of what makes KMA diversity training unique. We look at what individuals share culturally by virtue of being members of the same group or "tribe." Tribal affiliations - social, ethnic, class - impact everything from the way we see the world and others, to how we see ourselves.

Corporations have traditionally been places where people are expected to conform and de-emphasize their unique characteristics - and yet, what we've learned and teach is that recognizing tribal and cultural differences is the key to unlocking our collective ability to create and excel.



TRAINING DESIGN

This leader's discussion guide is divided into three discussion content areas:

- Communication Styles
- Attitudes Toward Authority
- Understanding Behavior

These content sections mirror the construction of the web-based training series and are used to examine specific cultural background areas. In this guide we examine and compare a specific traditional culture and U.S. Mainstream culture. Video vignettes that appear in the web-based modules are used as part of the group format to launch discussions.

Group discussion questions are posed after each video to elicit participant feedback. Discussion group leaders are encouraged to lead participants to a desired conclusion by posing questions and facilitating answers in a directed manner. Potential answers and leader's tips are provided throughout this guide to help support desired conclusions and ensure consistent training.

To ensure your discussion objectives, it's important that every participant completes the corresponding web-based training modules prior to the group discussion and finishes their participant worksheets and guides.

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS AND KEYS

Throughout this leader's guide, you will find grey callout boxes and icons. The following key explains what each icon represents:



To-do checklist for leaders



Ideas and suggestions for leading the learning session



Show video vignette



Discussion item or group activity



PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Prior to leading the discussion, make sure you:

- ☐ Distribute an e-mail reminder for attendees
- ☐ Review the web-based learning module and preview the DVD vignettes
- ☐ Check classroom A/V equipment and hang posters

Materials you should have to lead the discussion group:

- ☐ Vignette DVD and DVD player
- ☐ Participant Discussion workbooks
- ☐ Posters for class or meeting room

SAMPLE E-MAIL REMINDER:

Subject line: Corporate Tribalism Discussion Group

To:

Subject: Corporate Tribalism Discussion Group

Signature: None

Dear participant:

Please join me for an informal discussion on the "Corporate Tribalism" web-based training you recently completed. Our conversation will focus on Communication Styles of Hispanic/Latino (insert appropriate culture and content section) and U.S. Mainstream cultures.

Be sure to bring your web-based learning worksheet and questions or topics you want to discuss. We will meet (insert date/location/timing).

I look forward to sharing ideas and continuing the conversation.



EFFECTIVE WAYS TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS



Begin the meeting with a quick round of introductions (participant names and work functions). After establishing the ground rules, asking ice breaker questions will allow participants to speak up and become comfortable offering their ideas in the group forum.

GROUND RULES - "SPILLING THE MILK"

To support the training's interactive design, participants must feel comfortable sharing ideas in a non-threatening environment. It's important to review a number of ground rules:

- The discussion group setting is a "safe place" for difficult conversations.
- Participants are present because they want to learn.
- Creating change requires speaking your mind, disagreeing and even making mistakes. Experiences and conversations remain in the group.
- Your organization values this change, and as a result, there are no career-threatening mistakes.



Keep in mind: Members from traditional cultural groups may want to identify issues collectively rather than individually. Allow small group breakouts to accommodate this preference where possible.



ICE BREAKERS

As you start discussions, ask participants to think back to the culture quiz they took during the introduction module of the web-based training series. Depending on the frequency with which your group meets, you may want to vary the suggested ice breaker questions offered here.

- How many discovered they were more traditional in their answers? How many were more mainstream? Did anyone have a mix of mainstream and traditional answers?
- Were participants surprised by the quiz findings?
- Did participants see a link between their quiz answers and the styles of the people who raised them?



Ice breaker note: Allow participants to share some of their personal views as you begin each meeting, but don't enlist a lengthy discussion at this point. Let participants know that the discussion is designed to review and further explore concepts and learning introduced in the web-based modules.

The ice breaker exercise transitions a discussion on addressing resistance. If needed, this should be done before discussing specific cultural archetypes

ADDRESSING RESISTANCE

ISSUE: CULTURAL PATTERNS DON'T FIT MY EXPERIENCE

The primary issue of concern that many participants have with cultural patterns is when they don't fit their social or cultural experience as a member of that group. (See: Bell Curve poster)

Remind participants:

Archetypical patterns don't have to represent 100% of a group to be culturally representative of the group. However, even those group members who are not in the center of the bell group – outliers – recognize that the pattern is true for many members of their group.

ISSUE: CULTURAL ARCHETYPING SEEMS LIKE A FORM OF STEREOTYPING

Conventional social etiquette makes many feel uncomfortable talking about group differences. Because generalizations are often associated with stereotypes, over time people have learned to avoid talking about differences.

Some may assert that differences don't exist or that people should be ashamed or defensive about differences (otherwise why would we be reluctant to discuss them?). If the result is that people don't acknowledge and discuss differences, it leads to numerous problems as illustrated in the web-based learning modules.

Remind participants:

Archetypes differ significantly from stereotypes. (See: Stereotype vs. Archetype poster)

- Archetypes are non-judgmental, research-based generalizations with the intent to include, not exclude
- Archetypes are representative of insiders' views
- Archetypes do not have to apply to all group members to be true for a majority
- Archetypes enable constructive discussions about group differences



COMMUNICATION STYLES

EAST ASIAN & U.S. MAINSTREAM PATTERNS





ARCHETYPES

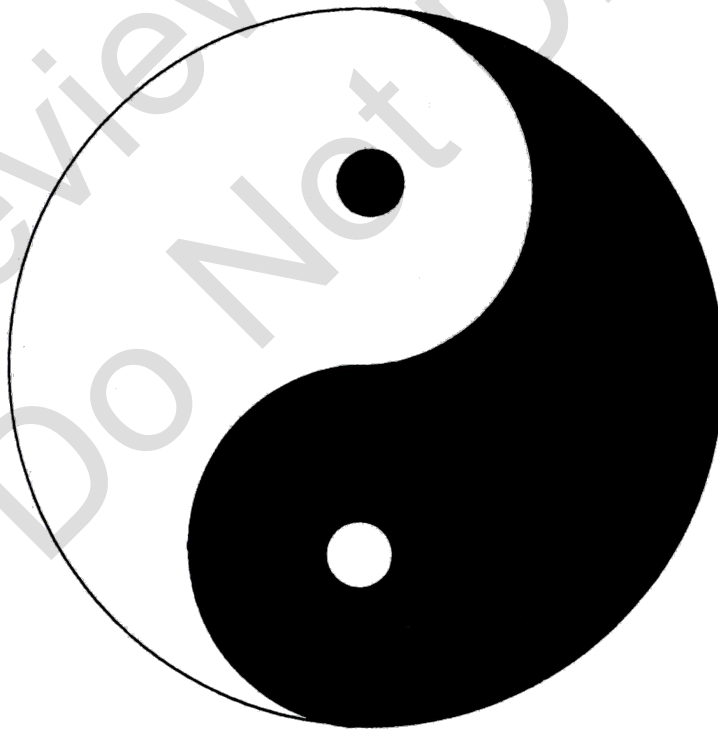
ARCHETYPES OF EAST ASIAN COMMUNICATION STYLES

3 "H" Model

This model includes Harmony, Hierarchy and Hard Work (or perfection). The concepts are interrelated and impact communication styles.

Harmony

Harmony is expressed as a balance between opposing forces. It often is symbolized by "yin" and "yang" which illustrates balance and harmony between opposites such as light and dark, soft and hard, or male and female. The forces also are complementary and contain a piece of each in the other, so that they are "both/and" versus "either/or."





Harmony influence from philosophy and religion

East Asian culture (native to: China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam) is strongly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism.

- The philosopher Confucius taught harmony among people, promoting moral virtues and the greater good over the desires of individuals.
- The Buddhist religion cultivates wisdom and promotes harmony within oneself.
- Taoism teaches the importance of harmony with nature.

Harmony in Social Situations

East Asians recognize a hierarchy in their social order that influences harmonious interactions between individuals. The relative rank of individuals, whether higher/lower status or equal status, impacts and dictates appropriate behavior. The value of maintaining harmony in social settings is illustrated in the following ways:

- Individuals strive to fit within in a group vs. standing out as an individual. Japanese have a saying, "The nail that stands out gets hammered back down."
- There is give-and-take to interactions represented by the saying, "I do for you and you do for me."
- When there is a difference of opinion, traditional East Asians may remain silent rather than openly challenge or disagree.
- In order to "save face" for oneself and others, an East Asian tries hard not to impose his or her will on another.



Communication Styles

Reserved, non-confrontational, indirect and non-verbal more often than directly verbal.

- When a person speaks, he or she considers the wishes of the listener foremost.
- It's customary to "test the water" non-verbally (through what is often referred to as "stomach talk") as a respectful way of determining if someone else -- especially if they are busy with something -- is open to talking with you. This also presupposes that the person will not tell you if you are imposing upon them.
- For example, East Asians assume the traffic light is yellow until they are told it is red or green.

East Asian Cultural Issue

Being oriented to the "other" person is not the one-way street it implies, since we also function as "others" within this system at which time we want others to give us the same consideration that we give them. The East Asian etiquette system of "I do for you and you do for me" breaks down when one or the other party feels something is "owed" and the other party does not reciprocate.



Before playing the Communication Styles vignette, take a few minutes to remind participants of some key ideas presented in the web-based learning module.



ARCHETYPES

ARCHETYPES OF U.S. MAINSTREAM COMMUNICATION STYLES

Influence of Protestantism

Because the U.S. was colonized primarily by Protestant Anglo Saxon men, they were the most influential in shaping and defining U.S. Mainstream cultural characteristics and core values, which also is reflected in U.S. Mainstream corporations.

- Protestantism is individualistic, self-reliant and legalistic.
(reference poster of lines/circles diagram)
- Behavior is individualistic and rule-based as opposed to positional and role-driven.

Value of the Individual

U.S. Mainstream culture places a very high value on individuals and self-achievement.

- Individuals strive to stand out rather than stand within a group.
- Self-reliance in interactions is represented especially by white men by the saying, "I do for me and you do for you."

Communication Styles

Visible, verbal and assertive.

- When a person speaks, he assumes the listener will assert himself or say if he or she feels imposed upon.
- For example, U.S. Mainstream Anglos (especially white men) assume the traffic light is green until they are told it's red.



U.S. Mainstream White Male Cultural Issue

White men show consideration for others by not intruding on each other's space and otherwise respecting the rights of individuals to decide things for themselves. The etiquette rule in this culture — "I do for me and you do for you" — entitles individuals to be for themselves without being viewed as "selfish."

Violations occur within this system when the right of individuals to choose for themselves is not sufficiently respected, like others doing for you what you would rather be doing for yourself.



After reviewing the communication points, play the East Asian – U.S. Mainstream Communication Styles vignette: "Saving Face - Seeking Harmony." Ask participants to keep the archetypes in mind as they watch the video.



COMMUNICATION STYLES VIGNETTE

"Saving Face - Seeking Harmony"

A U.S. Mainstream Anglo supervisor provides coaching on a production line to various employees. He approaches a first generation Chinese employee to discuss a problem with a multi-step operation.

Supervisor: Lin, you got the first part right. You got the cleaning right and the adjustment is perfect. But this has to be placed just right before you close it. Do you understand?

Lin: Yes. (Lin looks at the floor as she speaks)

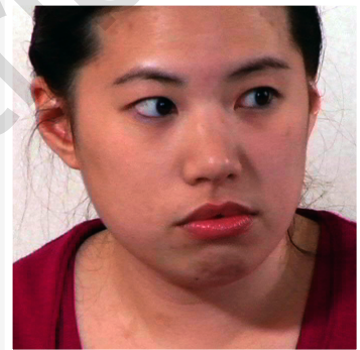
(video transitions to show passage of time)

Supervisor: Hey, Lin, I noticed you're still having a problem with the final placement. It's got to be perfect before you close it. Do you understand?

Lin: Yes. (Lin avoids eye contact with manager)

(video transitions to show passage of time)

Supervisor picks up incomplete piece and his internal voice is heard, "This still isn't right. It's clear Lin isn't getting it, but why does she say she understands when she clearly doesn't?"





GROUP DISCUSSION



Discussion management points:

- *The first set of analysis questions are designed to reinforce key information. Be quick to address and correct any misconceptions or inaccuracies that may undermine the learning of the group at large.*
- *If necessary, remind participants that patterns/archetypes are based on research and are not stereotypes.*
- *If necessary, remind participants that patterns do not have to apply to everyone within a group to be representative of the group.*

OPENING POINT

To better understand what is going on in this scenario from a cultural perspective, we need to look at each person and examine how they are acting, what they are saying and why.



LET'S BEGIN BY LOOKING AT THE SCENE FROM LIN'S PERSPECTIVE

(Possible participant answers in italics)

Why doesn't Lin admit she doesn't understand the process to her manager?

- *Lin feels ashamed to admit her ignorance.*
- *Lin also is uncomfortable admitting her confusion or asking a question as it might be seen as a challenge to her manager's position and a criticism that he isn't providing proper instructions. This also would jeopardize her sense of harmony.*

Is Lin's behavior offering any clues about her confusion (hint: non-verbals, indirectness)?

- *Lin's looking down when her manager addresses her is an important non-verbal clue that she's uncomfortable.*
- *Because the question is phrased so that she can only answer yes or no, she chooses "yes" but her looking away suggests something more is going on.*

Given Lin's value of harmony and her relationship with her manager, how might she try to solve her problem?

- *Lin may hope to figure it out on her own or seek help from one of her peers after the manager leaves.*



NEXT, LET'S LOOK AT THE SCENE FROM THE SUPERVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE

(Possible participant answers in italics)

Why is Lin's supervisor confused?

- *The supervisor sees himself as capable and ready to respond to any questions Lin might have about the process after laying out the initial steps and frameworks. He also is relying upon Lin's verbal responses as an indication of whether she "gets it" or not. He asks repeatedly if she understands, and each time Lin responds, "yes." From a U.S. Mainstream direct communication perspective, Lin gave all the signs that she understood.*

Why does the supervisor think correcting Lin in front of her peers is no big thing?

- *Because from the supervisor's perspective, publicly admitting you don't know something is (at least initially) not a reason for shame for Mainstream Anglos.*

What do you think the supervisor will assume about Lin based on this interaction?

- *Most likely Lin's supervisor will conclude she is either not capable of doing the job or, because she doesn't say she doesn't understand when she doesn't, that she is unable to stand up for herself and, generally, lacks self-confidence.*



Next, invite participants to work through some better solutions using their multicultural knowledge and shared responsibility awareness.



REWORKING THE SCENE WITH MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS

How could the Supervisor and Lin have approached the scenario differently understanding each other's cultural patterns?

SUPERVISOR

If the supervisor understood the importance of harmony and traditional roles for Lin, he would not have directly confronted her, especially publicly in front of her peers – where she is forced to “save face.” Also, Lin’s supervisor shouldn’t limit his questioning to obtain simple “yes” or “no” answers. He should be aware of the non-verbal cues Lin offers as well as the verbal ones.

It would have been far better for Lin if her supervisor, upon leaving, suggested one of her co-workers demonstrate the task, so there wouldn’t be a conflict across hierarchical lines thereby, enabling Lin to ask more clarifying questions. It is important for the supervisor not to be present when the instruction occurs.

LIN

If Lin had a better understanding of her supervisor’s cultural perspective, she would recognize that he is missing her non-verbal cues or indirect communication. She might also recognize that admitting she needs help would not be a big deal for her supervisor, as long as it wasn’t done excessively -- and especially if it avoided a problem in the final product.



STUMBLING BLOCKS

Even when we know what's required, we can still find it difficult to do.

Consider the possibilities for Lin and her supervisor to change their communication styles. What gets in the way of accommodating each other?

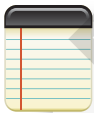
LIN

For East Asians, the value of harmony takes precedence over hierarchy and telling the truth. Consequently, Lin would be hard pressed to speak or act in a forthright manner (explaining or requesting) even if she knew that was what her boss expected that of her.

SUPERVISOR

U.S. Mainstream managers expect employees to figure things out as best they can and then ask for help if they need it. East Asian managers take it upon themselves to make sure employees know what they're doing giving thoroughly detailed and explicit instructions along the way.

If employees aren't "getting it," mainstream culture tends to blame the employee for either being incapable or not asking for the necessary help. East Asian managers blame the employee but also see themselves accountable for their employees' mistakes and generally for things that go wrong under their watch.



Next, lead the group through open-ended questions. This is an opportunity to further explore the communication patterns and apply them to current situations in the workplace.



BUILDING SOLUTIONS

GROUP FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

Take a quick pulse:

- With a show of hands, how many of you have had a misunderstanding with a supervisor or a person of higher rank at work?
- How many of you relied upon your boss to read your indirect or non-verbal cues?

Call on individuals or address the group with these questions:

Do you ever find that when you answer, “yes” there is more meaning to your answer than simply, “I understand,” or “I agree.” What other meaning can answering “yes” signal?

“I hear you.” “I want to please you.” “I don’t want to offend you.” or “I don’t want to admit ignorance.”

Can you think of situations in your workplace where indirect verbal or non-verbal communication has been an important factor? How did it play out?

Based on this discussion, are there things you might do differently going forward at work?

(Hint: Consider the impact of the supervisor correcting Lin in front of her peers?)

For both the supervisor and Lin, how might the situation been handled differently publicly (on line) or privately (offline)?