

5 Steps to Avoid any Multi-Cultural Etiquette Conflict

The practice of Multi-Cultural Etiquette shows a respect for other cultures as equal to your own. This type of etiquette must sometimes be forced upon us, since, most times, we are not even aware that we are inclined to a cultural bias. The following are some tips to overcoming possible challenges of culture in the business environment.

- Be aware of xenophobia – cultural superiority. Ask yourself, “How do I feel about embracing or respecting the customs and habits of others?” Keep an open mind – Remember, culture is not about being right or wrong; it is about differences.
- Learn about the cultures – Actively participate in learning about other cultures; not just the way they conduct business, but general lifestyles. It may, in the end, affect the type of service or product that you market in a particular country.
- Learn a few words of the language – Make the effort to communicate in the native tongue of your business partners. They’ll be impressed by the effort. Special words of caution, however; pay attention to pronunciation of certain words. What may begin as a noble effort may end in insult.
- Find out what is acceptable business practice – While bearing gifts in one country may be favorable, in another it may land you in jail. It is in your best interest to find out what is considered cultural best practices. This also includes business attire.
- Be aware of taboos and avoid them – issues of gender, religion and food are sensitive issues in some countries. Spend time learning about the special and essential practices of your foreign counterparts.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that your foreign counterpart is comfortable, even if it means sacrificing your own comfort for a short period. On a very positive side, you might quite enjoy the novelty of experiencing new cultures.