

Working in Multicultural Teams

Working on teams with people from different cultural backgrounds is common in modern workplace environments. Let's explore the benefits and challenges associated with working on multicultural teams.

A. Read the scenario below. Then discuss the questions that follow with your team.

The global marketing campaign

A multinational tech company, "InnovateGlobal," is launching a new AI-powered translation tool. The marketing team includes:

- A Japanese product manager, Kenji, who values detailed planning and indirect communication.
- A Brazilian creative director, Isabella, who is highly expressive and prioritizes dynamic, visually driven campaigns.
- A German data analyst, Klaus, who focuses on quantitative results and clear, concise reporting.
- An Indian social media strategist, Priya, who is adept at navigating diverse online communities and understanding subtle cultural nuances in digital communication.

Challenges

- Kenji's meticulous planning clashes with Isabella's desire for rapid prototyping and spontaneous creative adjustments.
- Klaus's direct feedback is perceived as blunt by Isabella and Priya, leading to defensive reactions.

Discussion questions

1. What additional challenges might arise within this multicultural team? (there are many possible answers!)
2. What could this team do to prepare to work together successfully?
3. What advice would you give this team so they can work together well?
4. Have you had to work on a multicultural team? If so, what challenges did you face? How did you overcome them?

B. Useful language for navigating conflict and challenges at work

Read through the useful language below. Discuss any new vocabulary or grammatical structures. Then work with your team to fill in the missing language. There are many possible answers. Be prepared to share your ideas with the class.

Expressing concerns

- I'd like to address a concern I have regarding...
- There seems to be a discrepancy between... and...
- I've noticed a recurring issue with... that I'd like to discuss.
- I'm finding it challenging to... and I'd appreciate some guidance.

Initiating constructive dialogue

- Perhaps we could explore this from a different perspective.
- Let's try to find a mutually agreeable solution.
- I'm open to suggestions on how we can improve this situation.
- What are your thoughts on how we can move forward?

Responding to criticism or feedback

- Thank you for bringing that to my attention. I appreciate your feedback.
- I understand your perspective, and I'll take that into consideration.
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Expressing disagreement respectfully

- While I understand your point, I have a slightly different perspective.
- I respectfully disagree with that assessment.
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Suggesting solutions & compromise

- Perhaps we could consider a compromise where...
- How about we try... as a temporary solution?
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Seeking clarification & understanding

- Could you elaborate on what you mean by...?
- I'd like to ensure I understand your point correctly. Could you rephrase that?
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Managing emotions & maintaining professionalism

- I understand that this is a sensitive issue.
- Let's try to remain calm and focused on finding a solution.
- I appreciate your patience as we work through this.
- I'm committed to resolving this issue in a professional manner.

C. Role Play

Work with your team to role play a discussion among the characters from Part A. Use some of the useful language from Part B during your discussion.

Your team is planning the final details before launching the beta version of your new AI translation tool. You need to discuss:

- Overall advertising and marketing strategy
- How you will measure success or failure of your launch