

Diversity, Cultural Differences and Second Language Learners

i. Diversity

7 Cups is an international platform. We have listeners and members from all over the world. The different backgrounds provide a more diverse perspective and allow us to grow and learn. The following are some advantages of a diverse team.

- The different perspectives can drive innovation
- Allows us to reach and help more people situated outside of our country/culture.
- Covers different time zones and allows us to support people living in different timezones
- You get to learn about different cultures and practices which adds to your set of skills.
- A wider range of skill sets available for the team which can fuel creativity and productivity.

I can tell you, without diversity, creativity remains stagnant - Edward Enninful

ii. Cultural Differences

Clearly diversity has many benefits. Which makes it incredibly important for our leaders to be sensitive to cultural differences and see our diverse community as a strength. This begs the question, How can we be respectful of different cultures?

❑ Rise above the stereotypes

Sadly we live in a world where certain countries and cultures are associated with certain traits. These stereotypes are often outdated and do not apply to all individuals belonging to the specific culture/country.

❑ Be respectful of individual beliefs

Cultural differences can cause us to support different causes and have contradicting beliefs. Know that it is okay for someone to think differently. If there exists a contradiction in terms of individual beliefs when it comes to a task, work together to reach a mutual agreement or delegate the task to someone who feels comfortable doing so. For example person A may be uncomfortable hosting a Christmas themed event, then you can always find person B who is comfortable with the idea or reconsider the theme.

❑ Be mindful of schedules and availability

People from different cultures have different celebrations. This means some of us celebrate Christmas while others may celebrate Diwali or Eid. This calls for

consideration of schedule, be mindful of when your team member needs a break and who can support the team and pitch in for the person on break. Bonus points for wishing them a happy celebration day!

❑ **Consider time zones**

When scheduling anything time-bound consider the differences in time zones. Your evening can be someone's early morning. Be mindful of these differences when you are scheduling a meeting or a chat. Always provide different time and day options to the team and go with what works for the majority. You can also consider forum communication to rise above the time zone differences in a big team. Try different things and see what works for your team.

"We need to give each other the space to grow, to be ourselves, to exercise our diversity. We need to give each other space so that we may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy, healing, and inclusion."—Max de Pree

iii. Second Language Learners

A lot of 7 Cups members and listeners have learned English as a second language. A small portion may still be learning the language whilst using the platform. This means as leaders we have to be mindful of the language competence of our team members. When communicating with someone who is from a non-English speaking country or has shared their language hurdles, you can be mindful of the following:

- Use simpler language, substitute big words for their simpler synonyms.
- Provide context whenever possible
- Rephrase your message if the person seems a bit confused
- Be mindful of the differences between American and British English. Second language learners have either learned the British or American English and are often not aware of the slang words or common non-formal terms present in the other form of English.
- Be forgiving of the tone of the message. Expressing the right tone through text communication can be difficult for a second language learner so don't be quick to judge.
- Provide constructive feedback to the learner if they are making the same mistake consistently and it's affecting the quality of their work. Choose the right words in providing feedback and pinpoint exactly what they can improve on. For example, saying 'You are bad at English' is not helpful

but saying ‘I noticed that you forget to add a period at the end of your sentences’ that helps the person work on the error.

Do you know what a foreign accent is? It's a sign of bravery. – Amy Chua
