

Overview:

This lesson plan will challenge participants to experience and adjust to different cultural communication patterns. This intercultural exercise simulates a business meeting, either in-person or virtual (see activity instructions below), of Widgetians who have traveled to Gizmoland. The two cultures are different and mostly ignorant about each other. This activity also simulates some of the intercultural barriers present in today's "global economy."

Background and Information:

This activity was closely adapted from Journey to Sharahad, copyright 1999 by Phil Darg, all rights reserved (available online). The reasons for adapting it were to remove explicit and easily inferred national and ethnic references, to simplify it a bit, and to add debriefing questions. In light of the copyright, this adaptation should not be published or distributed widely.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Role play intercultural communication barriers.
2. Infer ways in which cultures differ.

Time:

30 minutes

Group Size:

Entire group

Materials:

Copies of Gizmolandian and Widgetian Briefing Sheets—enough for each person to have one of whatever role they play (in [Downloads](#)).

Note: Participants should not see each other's sheets.

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**Cultural Self-Awareness:**

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).



Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

Other Skills:

Teamwork

In-Person Activity instructions:

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4 or 5. Each group should have 2 Widgetians and 2-3 Gizmolandians. Give participants a copy of the appropriate Briefing Sheet.
2. Separate participants by moving the Widgetians into another room or hallway. Allow both groups several minutes to read the information on the briefing sheet, then brief them both about their cultures by emphasizing goals, values, and behaviors as written up on the Briefing Sheets. Emphasize their different goals. The Gizmolandians' goal is to successfully exhibit Gizmolandian cultural ways. The Widgetians' goal is to find out the information they need and make a profitable deal quickly.
3. Bring the Widgetians back into the room and allow them to proceed with the negotiations in their own manner. Observe each set of participants and answer individual side questions as needed. You may also need to remind both sides that they have different cultural practices and should continue to show respect to each other until the end of the meeting (10-15 minutes) even if they cannot make an agreement.
4. Debrief with the following questions:
 - Did your group come to an agreement? If so, what was it, and how did you get there?
 - Widgetians: What kinds of cultural differences did you notice in your discussion with the Gizmolandians?
 - Gizmolandians: What kinds of cultural differences did you notice in your discussion with the Widgetians?
 - How did you feel playing your role?
 - What are some deeper values behind the behaviors you played or experienced?
 - What are "real world" implications of this exercise?

Virtual Activity Instructions:

1. Divide the group in two, and share the Gizmolandian Briefing Sheet with half the group and the Widgetian Briefing Sheet with the other half. It is important that they do not read each other's sheet. (This may be done before the virtual gathering.)
2. In the virtual setting, create breakout rooms with Gizmolandians in one and Widgetians in the other. Let each group read or review their Briefing Sheet then brief each group about their cultures. (A co-facilitator might do this with one group while you do it with the other, or you can visit both breakout rooms.) Repeat the highlighted goals, values, and behaviors as written up on the Briefing Sheets. Emphasize their different goals. **The Gizmolandians' goal is to successfully exhibit Gizmolandian cultural practices, which includes ensuring that the Widgetians feel cared for in many ways. The Widgetians' goal is to find out the information they need and make a profitable deal quickly.**



3. Bring the groups together and tell them you will send them into breakout rooms again, but this time with 2-3 members of each cultural group in each room. Remind both sides that they have different cultural practices and should continue to show respect to each other until the end of the meeting (10-15 minutes) even if they cannot make an agreement.
4. Debrief with the following questions:
 - Did your group come to an agreement? If so, what was it, and how did you get there?
 - Widgetians: What kinds of cultural differences did you notice in your discussion with the Gizmolandians?
 - Gizmolandians: What kinds of cultural differences did you notice in your discussion with the Widgetians?
 - How did you feel playing your role?
 - What are some deeper values behind the behaviors you played or experienced?
 - What are "real world" implications of this exercise?

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Sharahad](#)