



# Quick E-Tips



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Thank you for subscribing to this newsletter brought to you by International Advantage® - *Leading Across Cultures*. Every month we bring you tips to help your team and organization, especially those operating in culturally diverse environments, reach their business goals.

## Topic of the month: **Balancing Advocacy and Curiosity – A Case Study of Team Cohesion**

This week at a conference I met a lovely businessman, Claudio, originally from Uruguay. During the course of our discussion, he shared with me a brilliant example of how he used his knowledge of American culture (and process) to help solve a team dilemma.

Claudio is a business manager in a large, technology company, living in the U.S., who leads a diverse team of people, who also live in the U.S.

According to Claudio, conflicts within his team would arise every week because the members did not fluidly discuss and negotiate their ideas. In effect, they weren't talking to each other when there was a disagreement.

He noted that the individuals in the team had a tendency to present their ideas as "right", to be confident about their ideas and to have a strong position whenever they presented an opinion. (Indeed, in my experience, management executives in the U.S. across many industries reward this behavior because it appeals to our low tolerance of uncertainty.)

[Note: Claudio's observations correspond with studies done on American cultural norms, which include a propensity for competition, individualism, action orientation and a relatively high level of "macho" behavior – the latter being prevalent mostly among men. (And you thought "machismo" was only correlated with other nationalities, didn't you?!)]

So in response to these tendencies -- which can slow efficiency of a team when not balanced with other styles -- Claudio created a weekly meeting called "Team Forum", that allowed him to set a new expectation. In the "Forum" environment, members were asked to *\*discuss\** issues or ideas, not to solve them immediately. In essence, Claudio used a new team structure – named in a way that draws attention to his intention -- to help his team become more aware of an alternative communication style, to balance advocacy and curiosity and to fashion a more unified team.

Within the Team Forum environment, Claudio has been able to positively influence team dynamics and business results by modeling active listening and curiosity about others' ideas. The end result has been that team issues and interpersonal conflicts are solved more

quickly in this new structure, which helps everyone work more cooperatively on a day-to-day basis. Well done, Claudio!

*Do you have a similar or different experience? What has your strategy been in regards to introducing a new structure or style to your team? I would be interested to hear from you...*

*"Ciou for now"....LK*

## **What's News**

### **1. Free stuff for readers!**

This month I sent you an announcement about my presentation for the Project Management Institute (PMI - Phoenix Chapter). There were 91 people present to hear the topic entitled "International Project Management -- Leading Across Cultures". As a bonus to those who attended, I gave a handout of 18 ideas of how to leverage the diversity of a global team. But what about the rest of you? In exchange for the answer to the following question, I will be happy to send you a copy.

Qualifying Question: **What tip do you have about working with (or leading) culturally diverse teams?**

(I will honor any requests I get by Nov 8 and send it to you by Nov 12. I will feature my favorite submissions in future Quick E-tips -- with due credit to you!)

### **2. Announcement: Institute of Management Consultants - Arizona**

Please join us for our Nov 10, monthly breakfast meeting about concepts and approaches that will enable you to understand and address culture clash, measuring culture change progress and emerging trend of culture as a competitive advantage. The session is called: **Business Culture: From Nebulous to Tangible.**

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To your continued success around the globe,

*Lisa*

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