



# Quick E-Tips



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*We hope you enjoy this newsletter brought to you by International Advantage® LLC - 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.*

Last month I partnered with colleague, Abhay Padgaonkar, president of Innovative Solutions Consulting LLC, to write an article for the special “diversity edition” of the Phoenix Business Journal. Below is an (slightly modified) excerpt of our column which was published last month.

## Topic of the month:

### A Real-Life Diversity Dilemma: The Multi-Cultural Team

Novations Group, a global consulting organization based in Boston, asked more than 2,000 senior human resource and training executives to characterize their management’s attitude toward diversity. Less than half (or 48%) of senior management accepts the business case for diversity *and* does what is necessary to leverage inclusion with the organization. “Even though organizations are increasingly committed to corporate diversity, what many don’t seem to grasp is the broader need for inclusion,” said Novations CEO and President Mike Hyter.

Apparently, diversity is still a dirty word!

Here are three subtle and not-so-subtle dilemmas that can impair the effectiveness because of non-inclusion and how you can deal with them. *[Quick E-Tip readers, I include just one dilemma here.]*

*The leader of a multi-cultural team brings the group together to discuss how they will divvy up a new work project. Most members are equally qualified to perform the required roles, although some roles will garner more attention and visibility. Some are quick to express interest in a particular role and the others stay quiet. The leader recognizes what has happened, but does not want to open a can of worms. She divvies up the roles that were not spoken for, so everyone can get to work.*

Why worry? On the surface, this is a classic cross-cultural dilemma, where some members value individual initiative and competition and others value cooperation and group harmony. Those who favor group harmony are likely to deem the others as selfish and arrogant. Those who favor individual initiative wonder why the others don’t speak up for what they want. The result is that those who don’t speak up will feel disrespected and alienated. A lack of trust is clearly at play.

Possible approach:

1. Provide training to the multicultural team to raise awareness about cultural differences related to communication styles, language issues, decision making, and status. Cultural issues often look like interpersonal issues until you understand differences in cultural values. Set clear ground rules early in a team formation stage.

2. Depending on the general state of team relations, the leader might want to allow the team to work the issue through. He can point out what he sees going on by saying something like, "Some are expressing interest in certain roles and some are not." Then break down the large group into small groups to discuss what they are personally thinking and feeling. Each group selects a spokesperson who reports out the main ideas, allowing for team discussion. If that feels risky, the group can write the issues on sticky notes and post them on the wall. The leader reads them aloud and the issues are addressed as a group.

Intentionally or otherwise, when organizations don't field the whole team, how can they expect to win in this competitive, global marketplace? Diversity is, in part, a means to an end. The ultimate goal is the inclusion of everyone's hard work, knowledge, talent, and creativity—regardless of the myriad differences that divide us. Only when people are included can their contributions be maximized.

Have you ever seen anyone hitting a homerun or throw a no-hitter from the dugout?

<p><b>Tap our expertise!</b> Here are some relevant services we provide to clients, as it relates to this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assess your current communication processes and make recommendations based on your current strategy and resources</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate a brainstorming session with leaders about communication strategies based on organizational priorities (to increase retention, improve quality, gather process improvement ideas, etc.)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assess employee satisfaction (in Spanish or English) and provide recommendations based on gaps between what you have and what you want</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Assess current leaders in their cultural competence and provide resources where needed</li></ul>
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**On the Personal Side:**

What an enjoyable experience working with employees of U.S. Airways this month as they move through the stages of the merger with America West. I presented the topic "**Guiding Change in Organizations: How to Make it Easier for Yourself**". Organizer Sash Dahr said the group reported many "ah-hah moments" about how change can be made easier. As one participant in a thoughtful moment said to me at the end, "This changes everything!"

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*To your success around the globe,*

*Lisa*

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