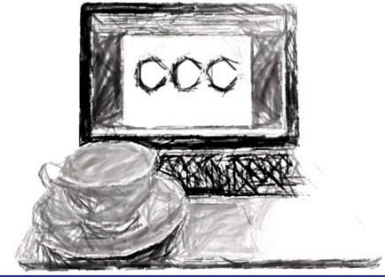




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CCC-Break 11: 12.12.2019. Burning Question: What tools can work in intercultural mediation?

The topic of cross-cultural negotiations and facilitating mediation between different clients across cultures was the focus of the cross-cultural coffee break. The goal of the discussion was to share what tools, approaches, and variety of methods can assist us during these mediation sessions. In particular, we debated if brokering deals across cultures lead to worse outcomes than conducting mediations in the same culture. If appropriately planned, we all agreed that mediation can be successful.

Before launching into an international mediation, we discussed various challenges that we can face, which include:

- lingua Franca challenges- not be able to speak the local language or have a good command of English
- time factors and cultural flexibility for mediation process
- understanding our biases and perceptions
- varying communication styles and negotiation approaches across cultures
- actual physical setup and setting where the mediation is to take place
- not following the cultural norms and views of interventions across cultures (Eastern vs. Western mediation models and variations)
- 3rd party neutrality role or arbitration roles
- parties in the mediation- determining power structures and reaching the actual decisionmakers

With these factors in mind, our group agreed that it is essential to possibly pre-survey the parties beforehand. To help with the preparation in advance of the mediation, one may need to visit the parties personally with a 1:1 visit. Building rapport early on was determined as critical to the mediation process. Determining how to build dialogue and establish empathy in the early phases of the mediation was highlighted a key factor of importance. Several tools to help resolve cultural differences that mentioned included:

- Self-discovery and awareness tools (i.e., Cultural Detective games)
- Using metaphors and images to define the mediation according to that culture
- Kate Berardo's "A 360-degree view on cultural dilemmas."
- Cross-Country Mapping Tools- Hofstede Insight

- Using polarity maps and synergy matrices
- Building emotional rapport between parties and using icebreakers “What advice did your grandparents give you?”
- Use of “clean language” – focusing on positive usage of words for a good outcome.

To conduct successful cross-culture mediations, we need to apply diverse strategies to deal with cultural complexities. We all agreed that it is not only important to understand the values of all the parties involved in the mediation, but critical we try to find common ground throughout the mediation process. Not only do we need to understand the culture we are dealing with but also the personalities and power positions of the parties. We have to be flexible and be able to take differences in communication into account (especially the non-native speakers). Building trust while considering cultural differences and variances is important (i.e., such as eating with the parties, finding the right location, and physical settings for the negotiation).

We ended on debating the challenges of resolving conflicts virtually. Is it possible to effectively have mediations online without face-to-face communication, and what tools are available to assist us with these efforts? Due to time pressures, we could not exhaust this exciting question! This question would be an excellent topic for a future CCC in 2020!

Recommended book to read:

Ho, David (2019). “Rewriting Cultural Psychology: Transcend Your Ethnic Roots and Redefine Your Identity.” BrownWalker Press.

Thanks for this summary of our CCC Break discussion to:



Contributor: Eileen Petzold-Bradley, eileen@cultural-diplomat.com, or connect [LinkedIn](#)

SEU Moderator: Camilla Degerth, Camilla.degerth@gmail.com, or connect via: [LinkedIn](#)

SIETAR Europa Cross Cultural Coffee Breaks

Summary

Thanks for the intriguing discussions to our participants:

