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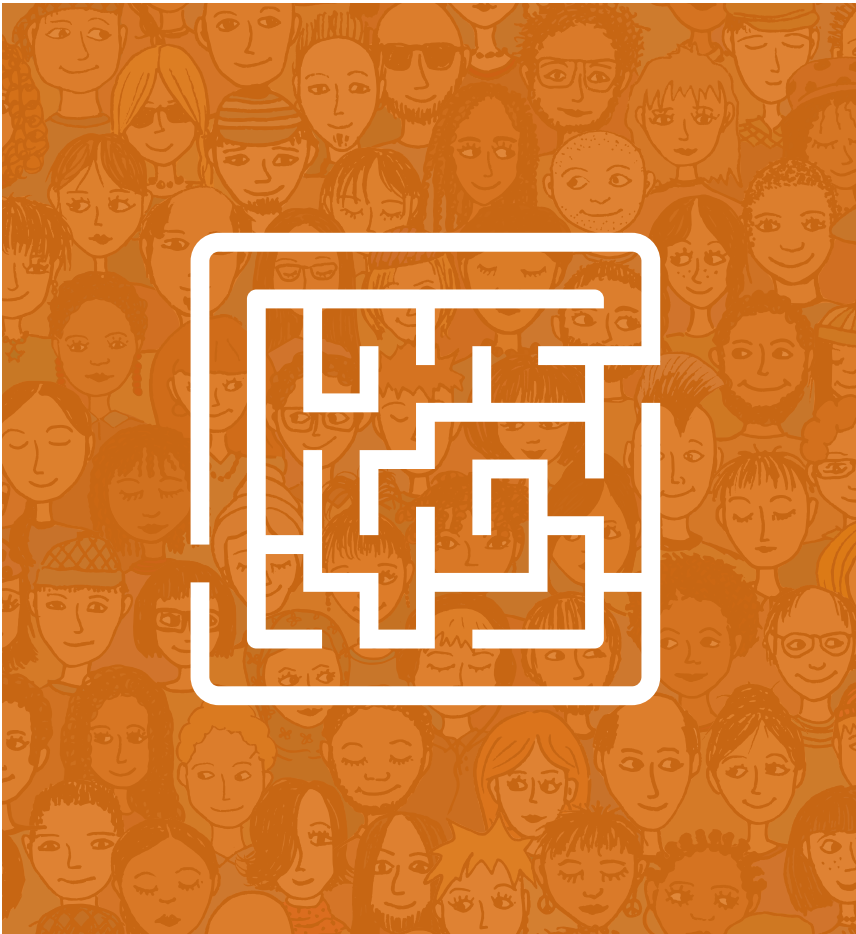
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Tackling Culturally Diverse Situations with Ease



by Dr. Michele A. L. Villagran

"In a world where crossing boundaries is routine, CQ becomes a vitally important aptitude and skill . . ."

— P. Christopher Earley and Elaine Mosakowski, *Harvard Business Review*

It is not enough to be simply "aware" anymore. We must go beyond our own self-awareness and our awareness of others to really understand how we work and interact effectively in culturally diverse situations, whether domestic or global. As law firms and corporate entities operate in an ever-changing, global environment, we need to be prepared to handle any diverse situation. As our workforces become more diverse, we face the challenge of how to successfully manage increasingly diverse interactions. To address this concern, organizations are applying the framework of cultural intelligence, or CQ.

What Is Cultural Intelligence?

Why are some individuals better able to work across cultures than others? CQ is an individual's ability to adapt and function effectively in new cultural contexts. This includes ethnic, national, generational and organizational cultures. Cultural intelligence is a form of intelligence we all possess, and our cultural intelligence quotient may vary depending on how successful we are when dealing with unfamiliar cultural settings.

How Is CQ Measured?

The concept of CQ was first introduced by P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang in 2003 and includes four dimensions: drive, knowledge, strategy and action. Each relates to cultural challenges:

- » **Drive:** How motivated are you to work with others in new or unfamiliar cultural settings? Without confidence and motivation, there is a higher rate of failure to succeed in multicultural situations.
- » **Knowledge:** How much knowledge do you have of other cultures? Are you aware of both similarities and differences? This cognition is critical for being effective in everyday business interactions.
- » **Strategy:** How do you make sense of cultural differences when involved in a situation? This is a metacognition factor for understanding your own judgments and planning accordingly.
- » **Action:** Do you modify your behavior to different cultures? This behavioral factor requires one to be flexible with actions and responses, yet remain true to their own character.

Research has shown that a combination of these four factors leads to effectiveness in adapting to different cultures. Knowledge alone does not guarantee effective behavior. Being aware is merely the first step — going beyond this awareness is where the strategy and application are critical.

What Are the Benefits of Cultural Intelligence?

The benefits of high cultural intelligence far outweigh the disadvantages. Research conducted at the Cultural Intelligence Center has shown that individuals are more professionally and personally effective in multicultural situations when they enhance their understanding of CQ and make cultural intelligence a priority. High cultural intelligence has proven to produce results that include greater personal well-being, more effective cross-cultural adjustment and higher work performance. With companies that have adopted cultural intelligence, profitability has also increased.

How Is Cultural Intelligence Being Applied?

More leaders are seeing the benefits of assessing and developing their cultural intelligence. Since law firms and corporations are more global today than ever before, it is critical to have the skills to lead and handle multicultural situations.

Cultural intelligence does not come from instinct or experience alone. It is a malleable intelligence that anyone can develop and improve upon. The application of cultural intelligence goes beyond mere diversity and inclusion training or supplementing such training. Corporations, nonprofits, academia and other organizations have applied cultural intelligence to:

- » Improve the success of international negotiations and market entry
- » Prepare employees for assignments and make better decisions on who to send overseas
- » Coach, mentor and develop leaders and senior management
- » Understand the mindset of global partners, clients and vendors
- » Improve performance and teamwork of multinational teams
- » Train professionals prior to international assignments

- » Provide a fresh approach to diversity and inclusion training, focusing on potential rather than compliance
- » Assess candidates to hire and promote (and include in performance reviews)
- » Update professional development plans

Workplaces are becoming more diverse than ever with a range of cultures, including ethnic, national, generational, and organizational, both at home and globally. Cultural intelligence emphasizes performance and outcomes, and individuals with higher cultural IQs are better negotiators, decision-makers and leaders. **P2P**



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How To Get Started with Cultural Intelligence

Here are some tips to get started on your cultural intelligence journey:

- ✓ Observe an individual while keeping the four factors in mind
- ✓ Interact with unfamiliar cultural settings to explore the use of cultural intelligence
- ✓ Study different cultures and learn about their values and perspectives
- ✓ Complete an online assessment that provides an overall cultural intelligence score and scores for each of the four factors
- ✓ Host training and workshops on cultural intelligence, and make it a priority



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