Why focus on Australian workplace culture?

Globalisation has seen increased recognition of the importance of understanding the links between culture and business success.

Your increased understanding will assist you with:

- Transition into the Australian workplace
- Development of strategies to improve your effectiveness in the workplace
- Improving your employment prospects

Employment challenges facing people from multicultural backgrounds can include:

- Understanding of Australian workplace culture
- Communication skills – verbal & written
- Limited Australian contacts and networks
- Visa restrictions
- Understanding Australian job search techniques
- Lack of local work experience
- Perception of returning home
What is business culture?

- Business etiquette
- Organisational culture
- Policies and procedures
- Value and patterns of behaviour
- Ethics

Discussion

What are some distinctive aspects of AUSTRALIAN social & business culture?

What are some distinctive aspects of other countries social & business culture?

Cultural differences

**Australian Culture**
- Less obvious hierarchy
- Appearance of friendly / relaxed
- Time – meeting deadlines
- Value initiative
- Team focussed
- Multicultural
- Workplace rights and laws
- Strong OHS emphasis
- Focus on policies & procedures
- Interested in environmental issues
- Work / life balance – in some orgs.
- Coffee
- Sport / BBQs / holiday focussed
- Others?

**International / Asian Culture**
- More hierarchy – respect for manager/seniors – juniors keep quiet
- Less female equality?
- More individually focussed
- Time is more elastic
- More community spirit
- More community / spirit
- Other?

Understanding culture in the work place is vital!

“We have a lot of international students in the workplace. Their technical skills are first class. But I often find I have to go around and fix up problems caused by differences in communication or lack of cultural understanding.”

Senior Health Worker
Victorian Hospital

“I often see Australian employees taking the time to talk to the security guard, the cleaner and the tea lady, much more than you would in my country! Even top management will make sure they ask about families and get involved if there is an issue.”

Indian Student
The Australian workplace – we are different!

“At my work there is a lot of joking and laughter, which I find to be quite disruptive. But I realise the other staff members don’t think it’s a problem, so I have had to change my thinking a bit.”

Indian Migrant

“I was raised in India where it was unacceptable to question the directions of someone more senior. It was normal to follow directions without question. It’s very different here.”

Malaysian Migrant

“I come from South Africa. It’s always ‘Yes Sir’ to the boss. At home people give orders and others accept. ….. Australians don’t like anything that sounds like an order. They don’t give them and they certainly don’t take them well. It’s not that there isn’t hierarchy in Australia, but it’s less obvious.”

South African Migrant – Now Australian Manager

Key differences between Australian and other workplaces

- Hierarchy and leadership styles
- Expectations of employees
- Communication styles
- Equal employment opportunity (EEO)
- Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S)
- Focus on policies & procedures

Expectations of employees

Australian Government has identified 8 key employability skills:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving
- Initiative and Enterprise
- Planning and Organising
- Self-management
- Learning
- Technology
Australian culture

Workplace communication tips

- Value sincerity and authenticity – don't like pretentiousness / showing off
- Try to be polite, relaxed and friendly
- Join in the jokes and laughs
- Join in social activities – eg Friday drinks (you don't have to drink alcohol)
- Talk about what you did on the weekend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aussie Rules football</th>
<th>Sport</th>
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<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>Weather</td>
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<td>Cooking</td>
<td>Movies / TV</td>
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<td>Current events</td>
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Language Variations

Accent
- Can appear even with close geographic areas
- Do Australians have much variation?

Dialect
- Variations of a language specific to a culture.
- Sometimes considered different languages entirely

Argot
- Private, particular to a group
- Lol, wtf, brb, aam, fml

Slang
- Marking social or linguistic identity
- Slang evolves rapidly (as in "dude")

Brandling
- Goes beyond ordinary linguistic boundaries.
- Reliant on global media.

Hand Gestures

Eye Contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Convention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>A lot of eye contact: too little could be disrespectful, but unrelated men and women may avoid eye contact with each other as this could be seen as flirtatious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>The speaker makes eye contact but periodically looks away to avoid 'staring'; a speaker who does not make eye contact may be seen as untrustworthy. A listener is expected to look at the speaker: not to do so is seen as disrespectful, or implies the person is not listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>Direct eye contact can be seen as aggressive and disrespectful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese and Chinese</td>
<td>Direct eye contact for more than a couple of seconds is disrespectful, especially towards people seen as social 'superiors'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Caribbean</td>
<td>The speaker looks at the listener and the listener looks away; looking at the speaker may imply challenge and disrespect.</td>
</tr>
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Men and women are treated equally

Australia has laws protecting all people from discrimination and harassment in relation to:

- Race
- Religion
- Political beliefs
- Sexual preference
- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Carer or parental status
- Physical features

Be aware of your own behaviour and your rights

**Discrimination**
- Unfair treatment based on prejudices

**Sexual harassment**
- Unwanted attention / sexual advances
- Sexual jokes, offensive phone calls and emails, displays of obscene or pornographic photos, pictures, posters, screen savers and internet sites
- Making promises or threats in return for sexual favours

**Victimisation / bullying**
- Repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward an employee

Useful links

**Fair Work Ombudsman**

**Job Watch**
[www.jobwatch.org.au](http://www.jobwatch.org.au)

Fair Work Ombudsman ‘You Tube’ videos to understand workplace rights in 14 languages!
[www.youtube.com/fairworkgovau](http://www.youtube.com/fairworkgovau)
Conclusion: Preparing for Intercultural Employment

On the CV:
- Emphasise intercultural experience
- Identify what you can contribute.
- In the interview
  - Be conscious of cultural norms
  - Give examples of dealing with cultural conflict
  - Don’t over-think it.

Questions and Comments?