

# A Workshop Series for Faculty and Staff

## You are the Bridge- Closing Intercultural Gaps Effectively



Dr. Cal Downs will facilitate all sessions. He is an internationally known intercultural communication expert who has conducted training in over 20 countries. He is an author and retired Kansas University Professor. (Come to all three sessions, two or only one — depending on your schedule)

- Session I-Blueprint of a Bridge: Your Cultural Identity-Thurs. Sept. 18, 2:30-5:00pm
- Session II-Building the Bridge: Points of Contact—Thurs. Oct. 9 2:30-5:00pm
- Session III-Being the Bridge: Refining Your Skills -Thurs. Nov. 13, 2:30-5:00pm

ALL SESSIONS HELD IN  
WOODARD CONFERENCE CENTER

---

## **WORKBOOK SESSION I BLUEPRINT OF A BRIDGE: YOUR CULTURAL IDENTITY**

# **YOU ARE THE BRIDGE -- CLOSING INTERCULTURAL GAPS EFFECTIVELY**

**Facilitator  
Cal W. Downs, PhD**

## **YOU ARE THE BRIDGE -- CLOSING INTERCULTURAL GAPS EFFECTIVELY,**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The need to be culturally strategic continually grows. Since Park University has students from 112 countries, this training program for non-faculty staff to call attention to information that would assist them in their intercultural interactions. The following proposal is drafted on the basis provided in several meetings with Kimberly Connelly. I am impressed with what Park U. is seeking to accomplish and appreciate the opportunity to work with the Internationalization Task Force in accomplishing its goals.

#### *Cal Downs, PhD*

An international management consultant as well as being professor emeritus at the University of Kansas Communications Department, Cal Downs has more than 30 years experience as a trainer. He also has held senior positions in communications at the University of Maryland and Northwestern University.

Starting his career conducting cross-cultural training programs for the Agency for International Development in Washington, D.C., he has worked with many European, Australian and Asian companies across a wide range of managerial and cultural issues with special seminars in Russia, Italy, China, the Netherlands, and Australia. For many years he was a trainer in management communication at the University of Michigan Executive Training Center and the UCLA's Engineering Management Course. He enjoys developing questionnaires for Communication Management, Inc, and his COMSAT questionnaire is one of the most thoroughly researched in the world and is translated into several languages.

#### **General program objectives**

- To increase the communications effectiveness of employees in their dealings with customers and contacts from overseas countries
- To assess individual behavior style as it relates to working with overseas customers or contacts from different cultures and to appreciate the "dimensions of difference" between working and social outlooks in the US from those of other countries
- To examine the negative consequences of "cultural blindness" on current and potential working relationships
- To sensitize participants to how communication is culturally contextual and to give them some tools for making strategic decisions.
- To lay a foundation for on-going development for effectiveness in inter-cultural communications
- To examine oneself as a cultural being---as well as an individual within a culture.

#### **TRAINING METHODS**

The seminar will be highly interactive, combining

- a) theories about points of contact,
- b) cases and conversations and
- c) experiences from the participants.

Participants will be asked to prepare an assignment for sessions 2 and 3 to facilitate our maximum understanding.

### **BENEFITS TO THE ORGANIZATION**

\* **Increased Financial Stability for Park**

Organizations that manage cultural understanding and adapt effectively can expect to increase business through improved communications, reaching consensus on both sides and boosting executives' confidence in dealing with overseas business.

\* **Better Service to Overseas Customers/Clients**

Overseas customers/clients require the same quality of service provided to everyone. However, communications, delivery and/or implementation will require different approaches. Experts have shown that by managing cultural awareness effectively, organizations can meet the needs of a diverse customer/client thus providing better service.

\* **Reduced Conflict/Improved Morale**

Conflict occurs when two sides misunderstand each other's motives. This often happens within the same "transnational" company with its integrated management approach treating worldwide operations as an interdependent whole. Too often the differences in working practices are not understood or appreciated. The muscle of global resources must be combined with sensitivity to local practices, issues and opportunities.

• **Your Own Personal Growth**

• **Our goals is understanding (Adrian)**

1. **Information is when you can say it.**
2. **Knowledge is when you can do it.**
3. **Understanding is when you can teach it.**

# SESSION ONE

1. Please write out one question, which you would like to have answered over the three sessions that we have on intercultural communication.
- 
- 

## PRIMARY TOPICS

1. Cultural Identities Interacting
2. Points of Contact-- Understanding-Communication Across Cultures at Park
3. Refining Intercultural Interactions

## CULTURAL IDENTITIES INTERACTING

Students come to the USA, to Park, expecting to be educated and usually expecting to adapt to the culture here although many are unaware of what directions that will take. The staff is here to administer Park University and to help all students, including the foreign students, adapt to the organization. You may find that some Americans have difficulty adapting at Park and some foreign students adapt more easily than others. The goal should be to help them be successful in this environment. To do so, we have to identify what this environment is.

## INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION IS A JOINT PROCESS.

### EXERCISE 1: THE NATURE OF CULTURE

2. When you hear the word "culture," what definitions or images come to mind?  

---

---
3. Could you draw a picture of culture?
4. Cultures are by nature
  - A. Man-made
  - B. Designs for living although giving different answers to the same questions
  - C. Conventionalized and shared with the young
  - D. Subject to constant subtle changes
  - E. Means of integrating into a whole so that changes in a part affect the whole.
  - F. Expressions of a worldview
  - G. Process of homogenizing people with variable tolerances for individual differences.
5. Cultures are abstract and complex, constantly undergoing changes  
Hesselgrave lists their ingredients as being
  1. World Views---ways of perceiving the world
  2. Cognitive Processes---ways of thinking
  3. Linguistic Forms---ways of structuring a message
  4. Behavioral Patterns----ways of behaving
  5. Social Structures----ways of interacting
  6. Media Influences----ways of channeling the message
  7. Motivational Resources---ways of deciding.

**NOW WHAT IS THE NATURE OF USA CULTURE**

**1. If one is going to help someone else adapt to one's own culture, that person must understand his/her own culture. List the 6 most significant aspects of US culture from your perspective.**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

**2. List one descriptor for American culture for each of Hesselgrave's dimensions.**

## **EXERCISE 2: PERCEIVED CHARACTERISTICS OF USA CULTURE**

Free	Unfree; Too many laws; too regulated
Nation of laws	Legalistic
Innovative	Conservative; judgmental
Wealthy	Tolerates economic inequality
Fun loving	Simplistic; intolerance of complexities
Rules oriented	Lack of concern for people
Adventurous	Muscular missions to rest of world
Confident	Arrogant; Thinks better than it is; overconfident
Friendly	Superficial; insincere
Open	Disrespectful of foreigners; Feels God chose USA
Energetic	Ethnocentric; indifference to others
Competitive	Violent
Individualistic	Impersonal
Youth oriented	Inflexible; contentious; closed minded
Optimism; opportunities	inconsistent (does not live by its own ideals)
Generous	Self centered; interferes in other countries
Materialistic	Fearful for its future
Competitive; industrious	Overzealous big government
Patriotic	Corrupt
Emphasis on Words	De-emphasis of relationships
Religious	Polarized mechanized people
Free spirited	Unsophisticated
Politically stable; well established	Insistence on individual rights over community
Unity with Diversity	Obsession with Control*
Affluent	Expectation of an easy life; self-actualization;
happiness	Unhappy
Busy	Impersonal communication
Technologically advanced	Poorly educated
Egalitarian	Imperialistic
Militaristic	Exaggeration is acceptable
Orientation toward facts, and the best one way	Symbols are emphasized over substance
Emotion about symbols such as the flag	Undisciplined
Support for minorities and disabled	Loud; impolite
Reliance on government to solve problems	Unforgiving for mistakes
Achievement Oriented	isolated; live in a cocoon
Compassionate	
Scientific emphasis	

This list was derived from people's comments, *The Yin and Yang of American Culture*, and *The Post American World*.

**1. There are three important questions.**

**a) What was your reaction in seeing this list of descriptors?**

---

---

**b) What is the most credible way to talk about your own culture to others who ask questions or make comments?**

---

---

**c) What is the most effective response when others say something negative about it?**

---

---

**2. My observation: Americans can analyze their own cultural problems internally, but they want to present a perfect picture to those outside and become downright defensive about it. Why?**

**EXERCISE 3: ADAPTATION TO USA CULTURE AT PARK**

**A. Organizational Cultures vary a lot even within a national culture. List the 5 most significant aspects of Park culture from your perspective. For example, how does the fact that it is an entrepreneurial organization influence its culture?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**B. From your experience what are the 5 greatest challenges for foreigners to adapt to life in the United States, particularly at Park?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**C. What strategies can you devise to assist in their adaptation?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**D. What strategies can you devise to assist you to adapt to them?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## **EXERCISE 4: CASES AND CONVERSATIONS**

### **PROCESS:**

- 1. OBSERVE**
- 2. DESCRIBE**
- 3. SUSPEND JUDGMENT or EVALUATIONS**
- 4. IDENTIFY CULTURAL PRINCIPLES**

### **A. CONFLICT (Description from the Park Survey)**

One conflict that I had was with a lady in the \_\_\_\_ Office, where she suspected and claimed that I stole or misplaced something. Her attitude was really bad, and she yelled at me in front of all the other staff. I am a foreign student who is just work-study from another office.... She might just want to express what she thought at the moment with no other meaning, but it was an insult for me. I regard myself as a quite easy-going person but that was an experience I could never forget, neither forgive. (Description from the Park Questionnaire)

### **B. ATTITUDE TOWARD AUTHORITY (Description from the Park Survey)**

International students often come from a culture where it is common practice to circumvent authority. My most negative and ineffective experiences have involved students asking me a question and then when they receive a negative reply trying to ask other people at the office hoping for a different reply. I have experiences this in both directions, both where I was the person originally giving the negative answer, and situations where I was the second or third person the student would ask, hoping that I would give them a different answer.

### **C. NORMATIVE BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM (Kimberly Connelly)**

A young man attending college for the first time in America is surprised by the freedom and “casual” atmosphere in the classroom. Students come and go out of the classroom whenever they want. Sometimes they go out and come back in after a few minutes. Sometimes they just leave altogether. Such behavior would never be allowed for students in his country. He asked other students about this, and they told him a) that it is perfectly normal behavior and b) that the professors do not object. During a final examination period, he has the flu. Nevertheless, he feels that he must take the examinations as a matter of discipline and pride. . In the middle of one of his tests, he feels as if he is going to throw up, so he quickly leaves the room. In less than five minutes, he returns to the classroom to complete his test. The professor scolds him and takes away his exam so that he cannot complete it. The student is shocked

**D. A WELCOME INVITATION TO DINNER (Kimberly Connelly and Cal Downs combined cases)**

Chunseng Yu is a first year university student in the USA. Sharing a dormitory room with an American student, he is impressed with how friendly and easy-going the Americans are. People at the University seem genuinely interested in him and his culture even though US newspaper articles and television reports about his country sometimes astound him. That is certainly not the country he knows, but he does not want to seem irritable or confrontive to his nice hosts. Basically, his experiences at the university have been very harmonious. When Chunseng's roommate invited him to go to a restaurant with him and his parents, Chunseng felt excited and honored to be welcomed by the family. The food was good, and he had a good time. However, at the end of the meal the parents told Chunseng that he owed them \$10.00 for his dinner. He had little money with him and felt ashamed and confused. People just would not do that in his country.

**D. RELATIONSHIPS/ SOCIALIZING (Storti))**

- David: Good to see you, Otto. How is Mrs. Von Klein?
- Otto: She is well, thank you. She had to host a reception at the embassy. What a nice party.
- David: There is another German I want you to meet.
- Otto: I see. What's the name?
- David: Hannah. She's the mother of that family Kate lived with last year on her high school exchange trip. They have a small farm in Bavaria.
- Otto: I see.
- David: Hannah couldn't afford to come to America so we helped out. We really wanted to meet her. •Anyway, now you won't have to speak English all night.
- Otto: I see.

**D. COMMUNICATION THROUGH PRESENTATION (Allyson Adrian)**

**MICHAEL:** So, Mohamed. I couldn't get a good reading on Mr. Malik's response. How did we do?

**MOHOMED:** Oh, Mr. Malik was impressed. Very Impressed. Your marked analysis was very thorough and your presentation was clear and precise. A very balanced, objective presentation.

**MICHAEL:** Well, the whole team really did our homework. The statistics really tell the story; they're very convincing. And I don't see how anyone could really buy in to them.

**MOHOMED:** Yes, there were many statistics.

**MICHAEL:** But I feel funny about this one. Something's missing. I could not read his responses. I'm not sure he's going to sign with us.

**MOHOMED:** I think he may have felt there was something missing, that we're not very eager for his business.

**MICHAEL:** I don't know what else I could have done. I analyzed everything backward and forwards for this presentation. If he doesn't buy it, I'm sorry. But the facts really speak for themselves in this case. You just cannot deny that.

#### **E. STUDY ABROAD SEX INCIDENT IN ITALY (original case by Cal W. Downs)**

**Betty was a junior study abroad student in Italy, her first foreign experience. She traveled in Europe at every opportunity, and it was on a Greek island that she lost her virginity. Back in Italy she was a good student, but she also was enjoying her new freedom of drinking, partying with other Americans, and some sex. Among her classmates was Ricardo, a handsome young man from South America who was an outstanding dancer projecting great sensuality with his moves.**

**One night Betty partied so much that she was completely drunk. Going back to her room early, she went to bed while her friends were still out. Ricardo knocked on her door, and was invited inside, where they had sex. Then he left. Later he returned to her door, knocked, and was invited inside where they had sex again. The next morning Betty knew that she had had sex, but she could not remember with whom. However, a friend had seen Ricardo leave her room.**

**A group of American female friends immediately charged him with rape and began to clamor for a charge against Ricardo. The administrators took Betty to a doctor who could find no evidence of bruising, damage, or force. Ricardo maintained that the sex was consensual and that she had invited him inside both times. Nevertheless, the women pursued their cause, got Betty's parents involved, and also solicited help from the administration of the American university. They wanted him charged and disciplined. Suddenly, Ricardo was isolated by both men and women students as the tension went on for days. However, under Italian law and ethics he could not be charged, and the local head of the Study Abroad program could not punish him. One professor saw what was happening and made opportunities to interact with him. Eventually, he finished the term there without charges.**

**Mary Smith from New Orleans: "I just don't understand how this could happen. It is such a miscarriage of justice."**

**Angelina, an Italian assistant officer manager: In Italy, we frown on drunkenness. And everyone knows that if you get drunk, you are responsible for what happens."**

**Mary: "Well, I think that is pretty a preposterous position. How can you, as a woman, even think like that?"**

## **E. Innocents Abroad – Harry and Sally in Saudi Arabia (Contributed by David Green)**

In 1980 Harry Jones and Sally Smith founded Diagnostica, Inc., to manufacture electronic health care equipment. Since then the growth of the company has far exceeded their expectations. By 1990, the Kentucky company had annual revenues of \$35 million and a nationwide sales force. Recently they got an opportunity to break into the lucrative international market when a Saudi government agency invited them to compete for a contract to supply the Saudi health care system with diagnostic equipment. At over \$30 million, the estimated value of the contract, this deal could help propel Diagnostica into the big league of electronic diagnostic equipment producers. Diagnostica submitted samples of its products along with proposed prices to the government agency. Harry and Sally were delighted a few weeks later when they learned that Diagnostica had been selected as one of the two finalists for the contract. In order to win the contract, they would now have to go to Riyadh, the desert capital of Saudi Arabia, to negotiate the contract terms.

Neither Harry nor Sally had been outside the United States before, so both were excited at the prospect of seeing the land of Lawrence of Arabia. Unfortunately for them, their knowledge of Saudi Arabia was limited to David Lean's epic film. Their plans were to fly out Monday morning, arrive in Riyadh Tuesday evening after a 20-hour flight, spend Wednesday through Friday negotiating, and return on Saturday.

Their trouble started in London, where they were to change planes. The flight from Washington, D.C., to London arrived on time, but departure of the connecting flight was delayed. Consequently, they didn't arrive in Riyadh until 4:00 A.M. Wednesday. It took them two and a half hours to get through customs and immigration procedures, which left them with just an hour to make the first meeting, scheduled for 7:30 A.M. Jet-lagged Harry and Sally decided to go straight to the government offices, as they would wait until that evening to check into their hotel. They quickly changed into their business suits in the airport restrooms (Sally putting on a new knee-length dress she had bought for the trip) and then they went outside into the 100° heat.

Harry hailed a cab outside the airport, and they jumped in. "Take us to the Ministry of Health, please," said Harry. The driver looked puzzled and raised his hands to show that he did not understand. "The Ministry of Health," repeated Harry with slow deliberation. The driver smiled, nodded, and drove off. Forty-five minutes later, they pulled up in front of an impressive, official-looking building. "Some place," said Sally, who was now perspiring heavily. (The taxi had no air-conditioning.) Harry paid the driver, and they entered the foyer of the Ministry of Defense. They didn't discover their mistake until they asked at the desk for Muhammad Oman, their Saudi contact. "We have no one of that name here," said the male receptionist, casting a disapproving eye at Sally.

Ten minutes later they were in another taxi, speeding across town to the Ministry of Health. They arrived by 8:00 A.M., thirty minutes late. "Great start,"

grunted Harry. "Harry Jones and Sally Smith to see Muhammad Oman," announced Harry to the male receptionist, but he picked up a telephone and spoke with someone in Arabic for about ten minutes. "The Sheikh will see you know, Mr. Jones," he said when he put down the phone. "The lady can wait in the reception room off to your left." "But I am scheduled to meet with Muhammad Oman as well!" gasped a puzzled Sally. "Sorry, Madam," replied the polite but firm receptionist. "Women are not allowed to participate in business meetings." Harry rolled his eyes as Sally sulked off to get a cab to the hotel.

Ten minutes later Harry finally met Muhammad Oman. Sheikh Oman, as every one called him, spoke impeccable English and was dressed in an elegant European manner. Thank God, thought Harry. "I'm sorry I'm so late. Our plane was delayed in London," Harry said. "It's of no concern," replied Muhammad Oman. "Would you like to join me in a cup of coffee before we begin our discussions?" "I'd rather not," replied Harry. "All that caffeine's not good for you." Sheikh Oman frowned and raised an eyebrow. "All right then," he said. "Let us begin."

The next four hours were difficult for Harry. He was tired and hungry, and what's more, Muhammad Oman never once gave him a direct answer to his questions. Harry, who prided himself on his forthright, direct manner, was stumped. The negotiations seemed to be going nowhere. Then at 1:00 in the afternoon Muhammad Oman called the meeting to a halt. "I think we need to discuss your offer among ourselves," said Oman. "Let us plan to meet again at 8:00 A.M. tomorrow."

What offer? Thought Harry as he hailed a cab. I never got that far.

On the way to the hotel Harry asked the diver to stop at a roadside food stand. He was damn hungry, having not eaten since dinner on the plane the previous evening. He bought something that looked vaguely like a cross between a burrito and a hot dog and wolfed it down. Not bad food, although a little spicy.

Harry found Sally in her room. She was not happy. She had tried to go swimming in the hotel pool, but had learned that "women's hour" is between 4:00 and 5:00 P.M. "I think I'll just stay in my room and watch CNN," said Sally. An exhausted Harry commiserated and went to his room to get an hour's sleep. He quickly fell asleep and did not wake until 11:00 that evening. I must have been really tired, thought Harry. He stood up, suddenly felt horribly sick, and proceeded to deposit his lunch all over the floor. Four hours later Harry was still feeling somewhat sick, and now he had another problem: he couldn't get back to sleep. Damn, he thought, it's three in the morning, and I have to be at the Ministry of Health by eight. I'm going to be in no shape to negotiate. He was right; he wasn't.

The negotiations on the second day were every bit as difficult as they were the first, plus Harry had to make frequent trips to the bathroom. "Look Muhammad," said an exasperated Harry after three hours of fruitless negotiations. "I think we need to set a deadline for finishing the negotiations on prices. Let's say by 3:00 this afternoon. And then we can move on to discuss the service agreements." Oman and his colleagues exchanged glances. Then Oman turned to Harry and said, "Mr. Jones, we do not think it is appropriate to fix a deadline. Please remember that we are the customers here." Harry realized that he had just

made a blunder, although he didn't know what kind of one. "Okay," he said, unsuccessfully stifling a yawn, "have it your way." They did. By 5:00 P.M. they had finally agreed on a price – one that was not favorable to Diagnostica. Harry was so tired that he just gave up fighting and agreed.

"Well," said Harry, "now that we have reached an agreement on price, perhaps we can tackle the service agreements tomorrow?" All of the Saudis looked shocked. "Mr. Jones, tomorrow is the Sabbath," Sheikh Oman said. "It is a day for Allah, not for business. We will meet again on Saturday." "Oh," said Harry, "but we are scheduled to fly back to the States on Saturday." "Then you had better change your arrangements, hadn't you, Mr. Jones?" replied an obviously irritated Muhammad Oman. Harry did, but it didn't help Diagnostica win the contract.

After two more days of negotiations, during which Sally grew increasing irritated at the "sexist attitudes of these people" and Harry never did manage to find his equilibrium, an assistant of Sheikh Oman politely informed Harry that the terms he had offered were not good enough and that the contract would be awarded to a company from England. Defeated and dejected, Harry and Sally finally left for home on Monday, but it took them two weeks to get there. Their plane was hijacked over Jordan by terrorists demanding the release of some colleagues being held in an Italian prison for a previous hijacking attempt. But that's another story.

**\*This account is only partly fiction. Some of the blunders made by Harry and Sally occurred to people known to the author on their first business trip abroad.**

**EXERCISE: ADAPTATION IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

**1. LANGUAGE**

**A. What do you know?**

---

---

**B. How does this affect you?**

---

---

**C. In what ways can you adapt? How willing are you to adapt?**

---

---

---

**2. RULES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

**A. What do you know?**

---

---

**B. How does this affect you?**

---

---

**C. In what ways can you adapt? How willing are you to adapt?**

---

---

---

**3. FORMALITY**

**A. What do you know?**

---

---

**B. How does this affect you?**

---

---

**C. In what ways can you adapt? How willing are you to adapt?**

---

---

**4. FEEDBACK AND EVALUATIONS**

**A. What do you know?**

---

---

**B. How does this affect you?**

---

---

**C. In what ways can you adapt? How willing are you to adapt?**

---

---

---

**5. CONTRACTS**

**A. What do you know?**

---

---

**B. How does this affect you?**

---

---

**C. In what ways can you adapt? How willing are you to adapt?**

---

---

---

**6. DEMONSTRATION OF COMPETENCE/KNOWLEDGE**

**A. What do you know?**

---

---

**B. How does this affect you?**

---

---

**C. In what ways can you adapt? How willing are you to adapt?**

---

---

1. *Know your own culture.*
2. *Seek to Understand Others.*
3. *Do not judge.*
4. *Respect the divine.*
5. *Practice kindness and politeness*
6. *Remember your responsibilities*
7. *Honor your family*
8. *Invest in human relationships*
9. *Use moderation*
10. *Learn and teach.*