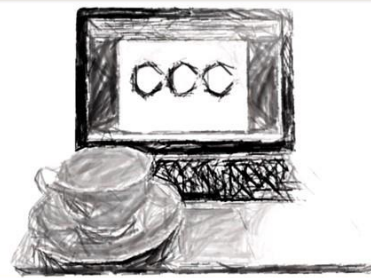




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CCCBreak 4: 06.11.2018. Burning Question: How do I reach through those who are convinced there is no such thing as national culture influence, only different personalities?

The contributor experienced this situation in France with mono-cultural teams of French and groups (with limited or no experience abroad). One participant went through the same experience in another country with multicultural teams.

Here is a summary of the contribution of the participants:

- Ask the participants; “where are you from in France?”. “Do you have the same cultures as people in... (Paris, Marseille, Lille, etc). This will remind them of the regional differences within a country, then help them to see the link with cross-border differences. (One can also add “do you think that the people in x country are aware of the regional differences in France?” How do you think they view you?)
- Bring in the complexity of all the cultures that influence us (religion, family, education, race, gender, etc).
- Take a helicopter view and mirror back to the group/team: “How come all of you agree, isn’t that a group behaviour?”
- In the case of a French group; ask “How would you describe the Anglo-Saxons?” “Is that a stereotype, a generalization, or an individual view of an individual person in the UK?”
- “Do you have friends in xxx country”? What is your experience when you go there? How do you perceive them?
- Share that individualism is a western concept. The fact that we say we are unique is an individualist view, and westerners feel uncomfortable saying that they are part of a group or a collective. Insisting that groups don’t exist is promoting discrimination and racism. Individualism/uniqueness is often seen from a white, western perspective. The fact is that we are socialized in groups, e.g. we learn what is right and wrong within each national culture (or within religious groups).
- Inform that we have been conditioned, e.g. by psychology to look for individual behaviour. And psychology is developed in individualist, western countries. We are reasoning from a standpoint of individualism. ‘The fish doesn’t know that he swims in water, he just is’. Concerning the French, they are also educated to comment and debate.
- It is not comfortable to realize that we are influenced by national culture, as we are conditioned to think “we are all unique” (and we are... just with a tad of cultural influence)

SIETAR Europa Cross Cultural Coffee Breaks

Summary

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