

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS: SPECIALISTS' RANKING & RATIONALE

If we need to practice what we preach and wish to utilize effective intercultural communication skills, we might consider these. These skills first appeared in a ranking exercise in a book on International management by one of the early founders of SIETAR and one of its first presidents, Pierre Casse.

A. SELF-UNDERSTANDING

1. To be aware of one's own culture.	To be aware of the fact that every behavior is influenced by some basic cultural assumptions, values, and beliefs is critical.
2. To be aware of one's own limitations.	The awareness should be personalized in the sense that the communicator should know his/her construction of reality is highly dependent upon the nature and structure of his/her own psyche.

B. UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

3. To practice empathy.	<i>The ability to see the world as other people see it is a powerful tool, because it has been shown that people prefer to work with those who give the impression that they understand things from the other's viewpoints.</i>
4. To respect the other.	<i>Tolerance is indispensable for effective intercultural interactions and a valued attitude for communicators.</i>
5. To learn from Interactions.	<i>To learn how to learn is a key skill, for each situation is different and requires adaptations.</i>
6. To avoid attributions.	<i>To explain other people's behavior using one's frame of reference leads to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns.</i>
7. To be non-judgmental.	<i>To control one's own natural tendency to pass value judgments on other people is something that has to be learned.</i>
8. To avoid stereotypes.	<i>Generalizations lead to misinterpretations and ineffectiveness.</i>

C. INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

9. To be able to communicate.	<i>It is necessary to communicate effectively. This requires the use of basic skills such as asking open-ended questions, using silence, paraphrasing, and reflecting feelings.</i>
10. To relate to people.	<i>Doing business interculturally requires that both parties pay special attention to maintenance roles. Too much energy spent on the task side of the job can jeopardize the entire project.</i>
11. To listen and observe.	<i>Listening and observing other people's behavior, as well as one's own is highly useful.</i>
12. To be flexible.	<i>The intercultural communicator must cultivate and expand his/her range of options and choices in order to deal effectively with different situations.</i>
13. To adjust according to people's reactions.	<i>One must be able to use all of the resources available.</i>

D. GENERAL SKILLS

14. To tolerate ambiguity.	<i>A good tolerance of ambiguity helps the communicator cope with the unavoidable stresses of intercultural communication.</i>
15. To be persistent.	<i>To flee and withdraw while maybe justifiable in the short term, can in the long term create problems and deadlocks. There is a need to be patiently persistent.</i>