

Connecting Banks and Communities Through Cultural Agility

Workshop Facilitation & Discussion Guide

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Connections Exercise

Directions:

1. Look at the people in the room. Select the person who you know least well or perceive to have the least in common with you.
2. Your goal is to find connections. Some areas to explore:

Childhood	Hobbies/leisure activities
Hometown	Education and classes
Family situation	Jobs/work experience
Family memories	Books you've read
Music	Movies you've seen
Era when you grew up	Vacations
Marital status	Life's challenges
Children	Pet peeves
Volunteer work	Accomplishments
Values	Failures
Beliefs	Sports
Hopes and dreams	Others...

3. List your connections below.

The 6 “C” Model

- 1. Courage**
- 2. Conditions**
- 3. Connections**
- 4. Communication**
- 5. Commitment**
- 6. Continuation**

Facilitating the Connections Exercise & “6 C Model

Transition: Ask the class: “Why don’t we talk about these diversity differences more often at work?” If people are honest, they will usually say: “Because we are afraid of being insensitive, causing conflict, getting in over our heads, saying something wrong, etc. During our next exercise, we will show you how to have these difficult conversations more safely and effectively.

Set Up: Ask the class to stand up and look around the room. Tell them to select a person to be their partner who they know least well or with whom they appear to be most different. Tell the group that you will give them five minutes to try to find five areas of “connection” or similarity from the list of topics on the previous page. Encourage people not to pick the person that they are sitting next to or who is sitting at their table. Instead, urge them to walk around, mingle and find a partner that way.

Group Debrief: Ask the group:

1. How many of you enjoyed this exercise?
2. How many of you found five areas of connection?
3. How many of you found some connections that surprised you or that you found to be unusual?
4. What did you learn from this exercise?

Introduce the “6 C” Model

1. **Courage** – We’re sure that this exercise made some of you nervous when we first introduced it. It takes courage to walk up to someone new and start a conversation – particularly if there is some difference that might inhibit the interaction. But moving out of our “comfort zone” is often what’s required to establish connections across diversity-related differences.
2. **Conditions** – To establish connections it takes the right conditions. Your chances of having a successful conversation with someone visually different than yourself would dwindle to nothingness if you approached the first such person you saw on the street and said: “Can we talk?”
3. **Connections** – The American business culture is often so task-oriented that we don’t think about creating connections with diverse others. We get in relationship “ruts” with those who are most like ourselves because it is easy, convenient and comfortable. But, as the exercise shows, wonderful things can happen when we screw up our nerve and look beyond differences to establish connections. Note that in this exercise establishing “relationship” became your “task”. There’s a

lesson in that as more and more New Americans or immigrants are coming from relationship-oriented countries and cultures.

- 4. Communication** – Has to be mutual. Both parties have to be engaged, take turns, listen carefully and work at building trust and relationship – especially where diversity-related differences exist. Finding connections can be easy at first. But over time, communication must also address areas of possible difference or disagreement. Knowing that you can talk through differences effectively builds trust and confidence. Particularly where diversity-related differences exist, it becomes essential to discuss what difference a given difference makes in the worklife and day to day life of our colleagues.
- 5. Commitment**– Is the key. Both parties need to commit to building and maintaining the relationship especially when disagreements arise or where times get tough. This requires a commitment of time, energy and other resources.
- 6. Continuation**– Is also essential. If making a new connection is going to grow into a lasting relationship, the conversation can't just be a one-time event at a corporate training function. It must be continued through the efforts of both parties.

Take-away Points: Diversity-related differences can inhibit us from making deep connections with those that we perceive as different. But when we remember the 6 C's: courage, conditions, connections, communication, commitment and continuation we can find meaningful connections that can pave the way for lasting friendships. Failing to establish meaningful connections and relationships gives us no basis of trust or commitment to work through our differences or disagreements in the workplace. Conversely, when mutual trust, honesty and sincerity are present people can work through their differences in ways that can bring them closer together rather than further apart.