



## **Cultural Detective® Business Case Independent Intercultural Training Vendor Designs & Delivers Course for Short-Term Business Traveler Effectiveness**

### **Overview of Client:**

Client is a group of USA-based agriculture specialists who travel to many different countries to work with colleagues on a variety of issues. They typically travel for one to four weeks (sometimes more but not on long-term assignments) and interact with their foreign colleagues in meetings, negotiations, capacity building, and to gather information for their programs and projects.

Most had never had formal training on cross-cultural issues (even though some had been traveling for many years). While not making major blunders, some had run into situations where they felt uncomfortable and didn't know how to respond. Such situations ranged from normal social interactions to being put on the spot about foreign policy. They especially needed to learn how to interact more collaboratively with their international colleagues.

### **Stated Opportunity/Needs:**

The client called an independent cross-cultural training vendor and requested that the vendor design and deliver an intercultural effectiveness orientation for managers and staff who travel overseas for short periods of time. They requested that the course focus on no particular country or region of the world, but that it enhance general cross-cultural competence, with some comparisons of US culture to that of other countries and definite skill-building.

Desired outcomes from the course included that managers and staff develop new skills or improve their skills and strategies to enhance trust, create better agreements, and create more positive relationships/interactions between the US and the other government(s) when interacting with foreign colleagues, either in the US or in the host country.

Specifics mentioned included helping the managers and staff members respond effectively (or learn how to learn to do so in context) from a social and cultural protocol standpoint; learn basic concepts of cultural difference and how to look through a different lens; and look at how others see US Americans.

***Cultural Detective: Increase Productivity, Strengthen Relationships***

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### **The Process Used:**

The intercultural training vendor conducted interviews with the heads of the client's major agricultural programs and found the below needs (some of which were addressed in the course and others – like running meetings and how women are viewed – that were looked at only briefly or extrapolated from other course content):

- Become more comfortable in social interactions, like lunches and receptions
- Really see the value of building the relationship (contrasted with going straight to the task)
- Learn how to diplomatically work to consensus with people from different cultural backgrounds
- Basic social protocol, like business card use, eye contact, shaking hands, alcohol involved in relationship building (do's and don'ts)
- Understand how different cultures look at time (especially) and other cultural dimensions, e.g., direct-indirect communication, hierarchy-equality
- Resources on different countries/regions – what's important to learn and how to get that quickly
- How to conduct meetings in different cultures
- How to build trust
- How to listen beyond the obvious
- Understand how the US is viewed and how to handle rebuffs because of being US American
- How to work with interpreters
- How to respond with unexpected behaviors from people who are intrigued by you, e.g., Chinese touching blond-haired person for good luck, or height differences, or just being foreign!
- How women are viewed in different countries and how both male and female US travelers can work with that
- Another need emerged around language. In recent years, the international professional organizations that they are involved with have adopted English as their only official language, whereas previously both organizations included French and sometimes German translations. These changes have meant that they now have to communicate with non-native speakers of English without the benefit of translators. Sometimes communicating with other English speakers (e.g. from New Zealand, Australia, England, India, etc.) can also be a challenge because of different idioms.



### **Cultural Detective Solution:**

The course that the intercultural training vendor designed and delivered consisted of six modules.

In the first module, "Building Cross Cultural Capacity," participants worked from an understanding of culture in general to viewing various cultures through the *Cultural Detective* Values Lenses. Lenses for several countries of the world to which participants most often travel were used as a way to view differences between USA cultural values and those of other countries.

In the second module on "Discovering Personal Cultural Values," the Cultural Detective Self Discovery Lens was used so that each participant could develop a better understanding of their own values and beliefs. This helped provide a basis for considering how others view US Americans and for creating a deeper understanding of stereotypes and how to respond to them.

The third module, "Collaborating Across Cultures," consisted of the *Ecotonos* ([www.culturaldetective.com/relatedproducts](http://www.culturaldetective.com/relatedproducts)) cross-cultural collaboration simulation, to improve the ability to collaborate, make decisions and solve problems across cultures.

The fourth module was "Using English with Non-Native Speakers" and used the *Redundancia* exercise ([www.culturaldetective.com/relatedproducts](http://www.culturaldetective.com/relatedproducts)) as a springboard to enhance the discussion on this topic.

In the final two modules, "Planning for Interactions" and "Strategizing Effectiveness," participants integrated their learning and used the various resources and approaches discussed to plan for their personal effectiveness in upcoming cross-cultural interactions.



### **Cultural Detective Benefits and/or Measurable Results:**

The greatest benefit from the course was the awareness of cultural values, including that participants' values may be different from those of others, that others may perceive participants' values as negative, and that the participants are now able to see the values of others in a more objective way. The intercultural training vendor is confident that the client will use the Values Lens concept in an ongoing manner for planning, dialogue, conflict resolution, and debriefing/learning. Participants also greatly benefited from their new awareness of their own values. Beyond this, a specific skill participants most often mentioned as being valuable to them is recognizing the value of asking open-ended questions to learn more about others (ask vs. tell).

### **Client (Intercultural Training Vendor) Testimonial:**

Working with the *Cultural Detective* tools provided a framework that is both easy to learn and easy to apply for the class participants – as well as for me as an instructor!

Once the participants understood the steps in the *Cultural Detective* Approach and analyzed situations from that perspective, they could appreciate that they now have a tool they can use in observing **any** cross-cultural situation to be able to see it more objectively and empathetically. They don't need to learn a lot of "do's and don'ts," as those are impossible to remember for every culture and will vary, even within a culture.

Now the participants are equipped to be curious "Cultural Detectives" and interact more effectively with their colleagues and business partners, regardless of the country or culture involved. Participants were able to learn more about their own cultural values, something we often take for granted, and build from that foundation to see how people of other cultures might perceive them. From that foundation they can make more informed choices about how to proactively interact to build the stronger and longer lasting relationships that lead to better results.

The participants left the class excited to continue on their learning journey and to try out what they learned in their subsequent interactions.



As an instructor, I liked using the *Cultural Detective* tools because they are ready-made (I don't have to reinvent the wheel every time!) and easy-to-use. They open the door to further exploration and more customized approaches, depending on what the client needs.

Some comments from participants:

- "The examples and fun case studies made the learning much easier."
- "The Values Lenses are very beneficial because understanding a culture's core values makes meetings and interactions easier."
- "The Personal Value Lens [*Cultural Detective Self Discovery*] module was helpful in understanding how I, personally, process information and interactions."

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