

## 10 Commandments of Intercultural Mediation

Intercultural mediation is a relatively underexplored aspect. However, due to globalisation, more people are working in international and diverse environments. Therefore, there is an increased need for awareness and education surrounding the area of intercultural mediation and intercultural relationships. The academic Martin Hahn has done extensive research into intercultural communication. In order to establish strong interactions across cultural borders, Hahn formulated his 'Ten Commandments of Intercultural Communication' in 2006:

- I. Be aware of differing social values;
- II. Be aware of differing status symbols and how to demonstrate them;
- III. Be aware of decision-making customs: not all people like to make decisions quickly and efficiently;
- IV. Be aware of concepts of time: not all people like to see time as money;
- V. Be aware of personal space: people from different cultures have different 'comfort zones';
- VI. Be aware of cultural context: people from certain cultures (called 'high-context cultures') rely less on verbal communication and more on the context of nonverbal actions and environmental settings to convey meaning. People from low-context cultures like the USA rely more on verbal communication and less on circumstances and implied meaning to convey meaning;
- VII. Be aware of body language: learn the basic differences in the way people supplement their words with body movement;
- VIII. Be aware of different etiquette rules or manners: what is polite in one culture may be considered rude in another;
- IX. Be aware of legal and ethical behaviour;
- X. Be aware of language barriers: English is the most prevalent language in international business, but it's a mistake to assume that everyone understands it.

These ten commandments would prove beneficial for any manager or employee who is working in an intercultural environment and would like to develop positive working relationships across cultural borders. Whilst it is impossible to be constantly mindful of all cultural differences, through education you can increase your awareness and enhance your ability to manage culturally diverse situations.

## Good Practice - Cronos Group

We would like to tell you a bit more about a company visit to Cronos that Obelisk attended.

### Meraki Academy

The Meraki Academy helps non-native speakers in their first steps towards a new job. The intensive 8 month training consists of a combination of the following:



- 1) **Technical training: front-end web development** › 3 days a week
- 2) **Dutch courses** › 2 days a week

Through this intensive programme, students are prepared to complete their studies and to launch their careers. After this training, the students are ready for the labour market. The training is differentiated according to the needs of companies and according to the needs of each individual. This means that the training is aimed at personal development.

### What are pitfalls of working with a diverse team?

- **Preconditions:** besides the fact that their search for work can be difficult, migrants sometimes carry a great burden from the past relating to migration, legalisation and personal trauma.
- **Language barrier:** even if migrants learn the language of the host nation, that language barrier will always be there. Even after years of experience, a non-native speaker will have a hard time understanding certain dialects.
- **Cultural differences:** differences such as other conceptions about hierarchy, a competition that lives in certain cultures, habits from certain cultures, praying at certain times can make for a difficult working environment.

### What are the advantages for Cronos?

- **Commitment:** motivated employees.
- **Niche market:** IT training tailored to the company, specific skills and theory that is not offered by any other training.
- **Social commitment:** working in a socially responsible way and the importance of giving these talented individuals a chance.
- **Relevance:** experience is a good start
- **Talent:** increase access to talent pool.

### How does Cronos approach integration on the work floor?

During the Meraki training there are also workshops about the culture here in Belgium. They also offer them to external companies and sub-companies.

As you have read, working with a diverse team has many advantages.

In addition to the benefits, there are also a number of challenges. We started working on these challenges during the pilot sessions of the InterMED training programme and Diversity Circles™.

Would you like to know more about participants' experiences of the training? Be sure to check out our [website](#) where these experiences will be shared.

## 1st round pilot experiences

The Intercultural Mediation pilot training was held in two phases, providing participants with the tools and insights to effectively manage the intercultural work situation and strategies to deal with cultural differences productively, and thus increase the efficiency of various teams.

The first phase occurred between March and December 2019 and reached 56 participants from the 5 countries of the partnership - Belgium, Italy, UK, Poland and Portugal. These participants were from a wide set of economic sectors, mainly managers and key people in the participating organisations.

In all the countries involved in the piloting and generally speaking, the InterMED training programme was understood to be tackling a subject that is often overlooked or not discussed in depth. The lack of discussion about this topic leads to cultural misunderstandings, and therefore the InterMED project has been a great success, as it tackles this subject.

There is a need for a training programme that supports managers to work with an intercultural workforce and to do so without being uncomfortable about what is acceptable. The participants were satisfied with the training programme as it broke down misconceptions around cultures and facilitated interesting, interactive and inclusive discussions.

The pilot has also given the partners a lot of knowledge on how to deal with diversity themselves.

The pilot was shaped into different training sessions where the InterMED pedagogic material was tested.

In Italy, the pilot explored the learning goals through presentations, interactive learning and discussions. The opportunity for discussion was highly successful, participants enjoyed the pilot experience, including the chance to share experiences and meet new people, and the group dynamics were excellent.

In the UK, the piloting opportunity was very well received, as commented by the facilitator. The participants shared experiences on the subject, and this helped to break down cultural misunderstandings, which also allowed for empathy with regards to individual needs. The facilitator guide was very useful and supported the creation of the lesson plans.

In Belgium, after some initial difficulties in the recruitment of enough participants, the pilot experience went very well, and Hofstede's model has been very well accepted for providing insight into the concept of culture. One of the lessons learnt and taken to the 2nd pilot sessions is to engage with other organisations regarding recruitment.

Another point is the need to make a good link with the type of leadership they radiate to their employees, from the beginning of the pilot experience.

In Poland, the pilot sessions were also very well accepted and the feedback provided was very positive. Several participants stated that the Hofstede model and the other theories used in the From Differences to Synergy session provided these insights in their work. Everyone thought that they could use these theories in their work. From facilitators to participants, everyone learnt a lot and benefited from the "ready to use" sessions and they hope to take advantage of the sessions when working with their employees.

In Portugal, the participants felt that the piloting was an extremely good and intense experience, which has provided precious added value to their work as leaders, managers, key-staff and co-workers. The Hofstede model on cultural dimensions was one of the most stressed topics. The pilot content helped them to understand the involvement of multiculturalism and to deconstruct misconceptions. Important in a world where the demand for cultures is increasingly connecting seeking good experience at all level in the global world. The businesses are global, and the approaches should also be global.

A thorough assessment of the impact of the training was put in place. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation forms at the end of each training day, focused on the accomplishment of expectations, and how they have learnt, what they found most useful about the sessions and how to improve the sessions and the correspondent pedagogic material. All dimensions of assessment have reached a very positive feedback.

Taking into account feedback from all participants in all partner countries can ensure an improved programme for the second pilot.

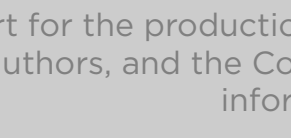
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 Intermed EU project



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