

Melissa Lamson on #BridgingCultures



**Global Knowledge
for Successful
Cross-Cultural
Business
Interaction**

Melissa Lamson

@melissa_lamson1

A Social Media-Enabled eBook Comprised of 140 Ahas

An Aha Amplifier™ Book

Melissa Lamson on #BridgingCultures

Global Knowledge for Successful Cross-Cultural
Business Interaction

By Melissa Lamson



**A Social Media-Enabled eBook
Comprised of 140 Ahas**

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Section I: What Is Culture & Why Is It Important?

Section I

What Is Culture & Why Is It Important?

What is culture and why is it important? Culture is made up of a group of people who share values, norms, perceptions, and assumptions in the way they think and communicate. It isn't only food, dress, and other customs, but culture influences the way people make decisions, negotiate, sell, buy, and interact in teams.

1

#BridgingCultures is crucial for business.
If you don't understand diverse worldviews,
you won't be successful.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

2

#InterculturalCommunication is the study
of how people from diverse cultures and
countries communicate.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

3

The elements of #Culture are norms, values,
perceptions, and assumptions.
@melissa_lamson1

4

Norms are what people in a specific group consider normal behavior.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

5

Values are beliefs that people hold based on what they've been taught by the people who raised them. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

6

Perceptions are how individuals and groups of people see the world. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

7

We'll assume we have the same understanding if we don't know that #Culture influences what we believe to be true. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

8

Three ways to approach Americans in business are: 1) Make small talk, 2) Find common ground & 3) Be positive.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

Section II: Cultural Dimensions at Work: Time & Communication

Section II

Cultural Dimensions at Work: Time & Communication

Ever wonder why people have different attitudes towards timelines, project plans, and deadlines? It's because culture plays a role. The way people communicate—being more direct or less direct—is also culturally determined. Have you ever been in the situation where you weren't sure if “Yes” meant “I agree” or “I'm listening”?

9

The cultural dimension that deals with “time” is called monochronic & polychronic.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

10

Those from monochronic cultures believe time can be controlled.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

11

Monochronic cultures prefer to be punctual, scheduled, and doing one thing at a time.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

12

A polychronic #Culture prefers to prioritize people over schedules; punctuality isn't as important & one can multi-task.
@melissa_lamson1

13

Those from polychronic cultures believe that time cannot be controlled.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

14

Germany is a good example of a monochronic #Culture. @melissa_lamson1

15

India is a good example of a polychronic #Culture. @melissa_lamson1

16

North Americans fall between the spectrum of monochronic and polychronic.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

17

In Germany, the word “No” doesn’t always mean “I don’t agree”; it can mean “I don’t see your point, convince me.”

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

18

In India, “yes” might mean “I hear you” &
“I understand, but I haven’t agreed yet.”
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

19

High context cultures are more indirect in their communication style.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

20

Cultures low in context prefer to communicate with facts and figures, verbally or written, and seek clarity.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

21

Low context cultures are more direct
and mean what they say.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

22

High context cultures prefer to create harmony through carefully choosing their words or non-verbal behaviors.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

23

Germany is a good example of a low context #Culture. @melissa_lamson1

24

Japan is a good example of a high context
#Culture. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

25

Brazil falls in the middle between low and
high context #Culture. @melissa_lamson1

Section III: Cultural Dimensions at Work: Thought Patterns & Hierarchy

Section III

Cultural Dimensions at Work: Thought Patterns & Hierarchy

People have learned to think differently—in some cases they are totally opposite from one another. This makes it challenging when solving a problem or broaching a new project. Understanding the role of a manager or project lead is also culturally biased. Some believe the manager should be more hierarchical, others more of a peer. It can be tricky when managing global teams.

26

Thought patterns are the way we've been trained to think. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

27

Thought patterns vary greatly from #Culture to culture, so be sure to stop and analyze another's way of thinking. @melissa_lamson1

28

The cultural dimension associated with thought patterns can be compared to inductive vs. deductive thinking.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

29

An inductive #Culture starts with a vision, then figures out how to do something. The idea is more important than the path.
@melissa_lamson1

30

Someone from an inductive #Culture is focused on results. @melissa_lamson1

31

Deductive cultures start with a plan or roadmap, and then define the vision or suggest an idea.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

32

Someone from a deductive #Culture is focused on the plan. @melissa_lamson1

33

Israelis are culturally very inductive.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

34

Germans are culturally very deductive.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

35

The Chinese are in the middle between
inductive and deductive #Culture.
@melissa_lamson1

36

Individualism vs. Collectivism is the cultural dimension associated with hierarchy. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

37

You can recognize a collectivistic #Culture because they often use “We” statements. @melissa_lamson1

38

An individualistic #Culture believes they have access to and can challenge authority.
@melissa_lamson1

39

Individualistic cultures will often use “I” statements. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

40

Collectivistic cultures believe they cannot challenge authority and to do so would be disrespectful. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

41

Individualistic managers assume their subordinates will come to them if they have problems that need solving. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

42

Collectivistic managers assume they should go to their subordinates to see if they've problems that need solving. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

43

Collectivistic managers get proactively involved with their subordinates.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

44

Individualistic employees may feel micro-managed by a collectivistic manager's approach. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

45

North Americans are more culturally individualistic. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

46

Northern & Central Europeans generally behave more individualistically.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

47

Southern Europeans behave in a more culturally collectivistic manner.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

48

South Americans are more culturally collectivistic, but vary from country to country in how much so.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

49

The most important thing a manager must remember working across countries is meeting the needs of a different #Culture.

@melissa_lamson1

50

People from Africa are generally more collectivistic in nature, and are therefore more hierarchical.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

51

People from Asian countries are generally more collectivistic in nature, and are therefore more hierarchical. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

52

Central Americans are generally more collectivistic, and are therefore more hierarchical. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

Section IV: Practical Tips for Bridging Cultures

Section IV

Practical Tips for Bridging Cultures

There are lots of simple tips and tricks to ensure successful cross-cultural communication.

Relationships are built on trust and trust starts with caring. If leaders care enough to learn a few words of the local language and a few simple behaviors that a particular culture deems polite and appropriate, successful global business interaction will follow.

53

In Japan, the packaging and presentation of a gift is, in many cases, more important than the gift itself. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

54

Bringing a gift to a Chinese business partner is a great way to start and maintain a good relationship. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

55

A good way to build trust with a European business counterpart is to always do what you say you're going to do.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

56

In France, golf is popular, but the best way to establish a good working relationship is coffee, lunch, or dinner.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

57

In some cultures, giving a “bribe” is normal, either part of marketing or considered a “handling fee.” @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

58

To be successful in South Africa, connect to local governments and show interest in the societal infrastructure.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

59

Brazilians will say the most important value in business is “friendliness.”

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

60

“Masculine” in cultural theory means ego-oriented & placing value on money & more traditional male/female roles.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

61

If a #Culture is “feminine,” it is relationship-oriented, places value on quality of life & shares male/female roles. @melissa_lamson1

62

Chinese #Culture is considered “masculine,”
because its society holds more traditional
male/female roles. @melissa_lamson1

63

Swedish #Culture is considered feminine, because it is one of the few cultures that most values work/life balance.

@melissa_lamson1

64

American #Culture is considered masculine, because of its emphasis on ego and materialism. @melissa_lamson1

65

France leans towards feminine, because of
the value placed on quality of life.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

66

In India, women adorn themselves in
preparation to meet their future husbands.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

67

Reconciliation in South Africa is a term used to describe how black and white relations in the past are forgiven.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

68

Last names are used for business in Bulgaria. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

69

School children in Sweden all have gender equity training. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

70

In Finnish #Culture, one speaks only when one has something of value to say.

@melissa_lamson1

71

Italians are more high context, which means they create meaning through symbols and gestures. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

72

A lot of movement with the face is distracting for Germans, and they may view it as unserious or even clown-like.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

73

Facial effect and being animated is considered positive in the US, especially the raising of eyebrows and smiling.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

Section V: Doing Business across Cultures

Section V

Doing Business across Cultures

Studies say up to 70 percent of a person's behavior is linked to cultural values.¹ Needless to say, cultural differences impact business interactions. The next time you make a business trip abroad be prepared with culturally appropriate presentation, negotiation, sales, and decision-making skills. It could make or break your next deal!

1. Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business* (3rd edition) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012).

74

When doing business with those from the Middle East, one is likely to drink quite a bit of tea. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

75

There needs to be a winner and a loser when negotiating in China (or at least a perceived one). @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

76

A good small talk topic in China is family.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

77

Germans speak about current events.
See “No Such Thing As Small Talk.”
<http://amzn.to/1qrx79F>
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

78

Weather is a perfect small talk topic in the UK. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

79

Hierarchy, titles, and even age are important to most Asian cultures.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

80

In the US, informality in business is highly valued (first names, a relaxed attitude, etc.).

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

81

In the US, urgency is seen as motivating, whereas in Europe, it's seen as negative pressure. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

82

In the US and India, optimism is valued in business, whereas in Europe, it's better to be cautious. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

83

In the US, assertive and confident behavior
is seen as an important quality of a leader.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

84

Reliability is the value Germans say is most important to them.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

85

Germans are the most risk-avoidant #Culture in the world, and believe a plan shouldn't change. @melissa_lamson1

86

In Germany, socializing is done
after the work is completed.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

87

Austrians don't like to be confused with
Germans. Canadians don't like to be
confused with people from the US.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

88

Clear instructions are important when managing Indian counterparts - you may need to walk through specific steps.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

89

Successes and deals are important
to celebrate in India.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

90

In India, people will bring their family
members to work, and eat in the cafeteria
together. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

91

It's important to ask Indian and Chinese colleagues to participate in meetings, otherwise they may not speak up.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

92

A process of rubbing coins on the skin to pull illness out of someone is called coining (Vietnam, Laos, etc.).

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

93

Cultures that are more fatalistic
(cultural theory: fatalism) don't believe
much in preventative healthcare.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

94

The newest country established is South Sudan. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

95

People may not look at you while you're presenting in Japan - make sure you have handouts. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

96

Allow people in the US to interact while you make your presentation.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

97

Keep presentations short and sweet in Brazil. @melissa_lamson1

98

Make sure you have lots of data and facts when presenting an idea to German business partners.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

99

It's important to create a win-win situation
when negotiating in the US.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

100

Negotiating in the Middle East starts with
very high and very low numbers, then
bartering brings it to the middle.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

101

Negotiating a number with Europeans starts with a reasonable amount in the middle, then moves a little to the right or left. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

102

The fastest growing economy right now is Qatar. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

103

One of the biggest growth markets right now is Mexico. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

104

Brazilians are tired of only being associated with the beach, football, and samba.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

105

Emails in the US are short and impersonal, and may not contain any etiquette at all (but are still considered polite).

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

106

Emails in Europe are more formal and contain proper etiquette, like starting one with “Thank you for your email.”

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

107

Emails in Asia are friendly, and they always contain a greeting - like “Dear” or “Hello.”

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

108

Agricultural societies are more flexible and multi-task when it comes to their time-orientation (polychronic).

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

109

Industrial societies are more sequential and structured in their orientation towards time (monochronic). @melissa_lamson1

110

Facial hair on men is considered a sign of strength in the Middle East. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

111

Education and “educated people” are highly valued in Europe.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

112

“Street smarts” - or more practical experience - is valued over academic titles in the US. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

113

Punctuality is expected and respected in
Russia. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

114

Business meetings in Russia are long affairs, and they tend to run past predetermined times. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

115

An effective presentation in Russia starts with an overview and delves into details later. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

116

Decisions are made top down in Russia.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

117

Agreements in Russia are rarely reached
after only one set of negotiations.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

118

In Russia, sneezing and yawning is considered impolite. @melissa_lamson1

119

In China, slurping and loudly chewing
your food is considered polite.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

120

Smiling at others may raise suspicion in
Russia. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

121

Recommendations from a third party can help build trust with business partners in Turkey. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

122

A presentation in Turkey should contain many graphics and visuals (Turks are visual communicators). @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

123

Bargaining (price and cost) is appreciated in Turkey, and they expect that their counterpart will engage in it.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

124

Saying “No” in Turkey is a light upward nod of the head and a hissing of the teeth (like “tsk”). @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

125

Contracts in Slovakia are seen as statements of intent; when things change, partners are expected to accommodate. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

126

Speaking softly, slowly, and calmly is considered most appropriate in Slovakia.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

127

Speaking loudly is considered impolite in Slovakia. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

128

It's polite in Slovakia to shake hands,
have direct eye contact & give the correct
greeting for the time of day.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

129

Verbal agreements reached during business discussions are considered binding in Hungary. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

130

It is uncommon to have open disagreements in Hungary. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

131

Hungarians generally keep a large distance from other people, where Romanians have a smaller personal space. @melissa_lamson1

132

Latin Americans need less personal space. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

133

North Americans like more personal space.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

134

North Europeans like more personal space than Latin Americans, but less than North Americans. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

135

Southern Europeans like less personal space than North Europeans and North Americans. @melissa_lamson1 #Culture

136

In Southern Europe, people may touch you
or hold onto you when speaking with you.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

137

It is highly impolite to turn your
back on someone in Serbia.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

138

A thumbs up can mean “good job” in America, but be an insult in Turkey.

@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

139

Hard alcohol is important in cultures where business relationships are built on socializing & heavy drinking.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

140

Brazilians scored the highest in having a #GlobalMindset, according to a study by #ThunderbirdUniversity.
@melissa_lamson1 #Culture

About the Author



Melissa Lamson is a highly sought-after consultant who accelerates the goals of today's most successful business leaders by refining leadership skills, bridging cultures, and shaping global mindsets in organizations. Her expertise lies in helping companies work successfully across cultures, expand globally, improve time-to-market, and increase profits.

About the Aha Amplifier™



Books in the Aha Amplifier are social media enabled eBooks comprised of 140 Ahas.

The Aha Amplifier helps you increase your influence by amplifying quality “Aha” moments! Each Aha is sharable via Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google+, so you can easily share an important idea or statement with thousands (if not millions) of people. It’s a win-win-win: you benefit, your network benefits, the Aha author benefits.

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