

Cultivating Diversity to Maximise Innovation

Good morning everyone! It is lovely to be here with all of you as we discuss how to bring out the most innovative solutions on our teams by **cultivating the diversity of thinking styles and perspective differences**.

My experience is based on coaching expatriates while they create their own respectful team cultures that come together to solve complex problems on projects. My aim is to share with you what I've learned while working with hundreds of expatriates over the last 12 years and the lessons I've learned in my 30 year international life!



“Canadians are Polite”

When I first meet my expatriates, they tell me that they have either heard or been told that Canadians are polite. Their expectation from me is that I will tell them exactly what that means to everyone on their team. What does that look and sound like? What would you answer?

Is it that we as Canadians are apologetic? Is it that we do not like conflict or extreme positions during arguments? Is it that we

say please and thank you?

My answer to this question is that it depends! They need to learn how to do their own cultural due diligence in order to find out what this means to their team members.

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How do you Cultivate Diversity?

- Thinking style differences
- Differences in Values and Behavioral expectations for respectful interactions
- Amygdala response (what shuts people's brains down)

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So, what is a **cultural due diligence** and how can we **link it to cultivating diversity** on our teams?

Since time is limited, I will only focus on two aspects: Thinking style differences and how to use the Values Applied™ tool to uncover what key values mean to each member of the team.

Now for thinking style differences.

Here are the main steps in a due diligence:

1. Be aware of the different thinking styles through a cultural self-assessment.
2. Be able to recognise different thinking styles by listening to what team members say and how they organize their thoughts.
3. Value each style. Know that at different stages of a project different styles are more effective.

Now for the values and behaviours. What drives and triggers team members based on their behavioural expectations (for example, what does it mean to be treated respectfully in different contexts? What makes them feel safe? What behaviours are they looking for? What are the underlying values that drive these behaviours?)

Finally, the Amygdala response. How many of you have tried to look inside your own head and no matter how much you try to visualize your answer all you get is blankness. This is the amygdala response. It happens when you are stressed. We want to minimise this!

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Awareness of Perspective Differences

- Host office perspective
- Home office perspective
- Global perspective (headquarters)

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I'm also here to talk about **perspective differences** when an expatriate comes from another country to lead a team in a complex project.

The host office perspective is based on what the receiving team – let's say a Canadian team – believes is important for a project. The host office has processes, values, beliefs and behaviours that have evolved based on its unique circumstances and stakeholders both at the office and the greater national context.

The home office perspective is the office the expat just left – let's say it is a French office. The expat would have worked on a number of projects in France with a French team in an office that was not global headquarters. This expat would have developed a perspective that they believe to be true based on their experiences.

Now for the global headquarters perspective. They need to know that project participants in offices in different parts of the world understand that their projects impact global headquarters. They care about the results. For example, last week I was working in a mine in northern Ontario with a Brazilian couple. They had come from global headquarters. Their success will depend on how they will be able to bridge the Northern Ontario mining operations with global operations. They need to understand the different perspectives. They will need buy in. I will talk about this in more detail in a later slide.

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Common expat objectives

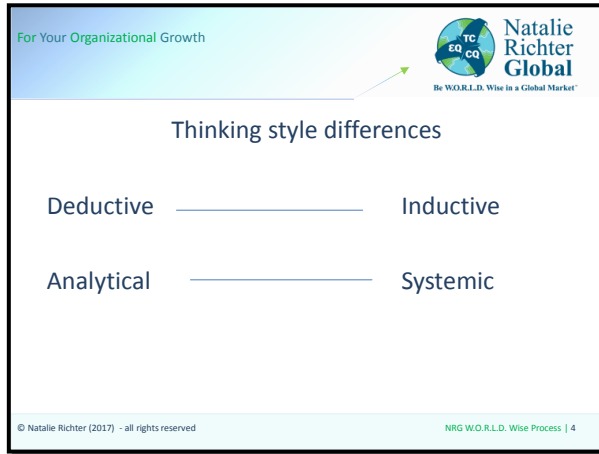
- Turning around poorly performing operations
- Increasing the market share
- Streamlining global operations
- Transferring technical knowledge
- Building up local leadership pipeline to take over operations once expat leaves
- Aligning corporate cultures after an acquisition

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What are **common expat objectives**?

- ✓ Turning around poorly performing operations
- ✓ Increasing the market share
- ✓ Streamlining global operations
- ✓ Transferring technical knowledge
- ✓ Building up the local leadership pipeline to take over operations once the expat leaves
- ✓ Aligning corporate cultures after an acquisition.

As you can imagine, thinking style differences, values and what they mean to the project participants will play an important role in how these objectives are met.



Let's dive into **thinking style differences** more: As you can see there are two continuums. No one fits perfectly on one end of the spectrum or the other. It often depends. But I still want us to be clear on what these different styles mean when problem solving. It is only then that you can listen for thinking style differences.

Deductive problem solvers, process information by really drilling down by asking "why?" Why has something worked/not worked before? Why do we need to do this?

What underlying theories might help understand this problem?

Inductive problem solvers find best practices. They would ask themselves how has our competition dealt with this problem before? For example, in manufacturing could we use the Toyota Production System?

Analytical problem solvers focus on the details and work through the issue in a linear fashion. In other words, working through problems step by step in manageable chunks.

Systemic problem solvers focus on the big picture. How does this problem impact global stakeholders? How do we align what we do here with global headquarters?

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- Values Applied™ Tool
 - Behaviors
 - Why?
 - Underlying value(s)

Objective?

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Now that I've talked about how people process information and fine solutions, I want to talk about the role of **Values** and the expectations people have about how the team should behave in different contexts.

I created the **Values Applied™** Tool as a means of making team members aware of their own expectations. It is only by starting with thinking about your own behavioural expectations, why it is important for people to behave that way and what value drives these behaviours

that people can start listening for values on their own teams. It also helps individuals understand what drives and triggers them.

In other words, the overall objective is to raise awareness, have a transparent conversation and thoughtfully create a respectful team culture that is safe and leverages thinking style differences and respects people's values.

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Values pertaining to Work Interactions

- Professionalism/good work ethic
- Respect
- Quality of Work
- Loyalty
- Transparency

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Beyond the company values, what other **values impact work interactions** on projects?

- Professionalism/good work ethic
- Respect
- Quality of work
- Loyalty
- Transparency

What is most important when doing this exercise is understanding the project, the key phases and the participants. The

better the behavioural examples, the more people find that this exercise resonates and is valuable.

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While on assignment what does the *host office* team need from the *expat*?

- Listening to history
- Listening for values
- Valuing differences and bridging

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Going back to **differing perspectives** what does the host office team need from the expat?

- ✓ Listening to history
- ✓ Listening for values
- ✓ Valuing differences and bridging

Remember we talked about the history and how each host office is unique. What has worked or not worked in the past? It is important to acknowledge and celebrate successes. This is how change can come about.

This is also how expats can understand and cultivate the diversity of perspectives.

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While on assignment what does the *expat* need from *host office*?

- Buy in
 - Support
 - Insights
 - Expertise

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What is **Buy In**? It means that the host office really wants the expat there. They believe that they will add value rather than destroy what already exists.

Without buy in the expat will not receive the support they need from the host office. The insights they have about the context and history. The expat needs the team's expertise to solve the problem. Finally, they need the host team's engagement.

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Conclusion

- Values
- Thinking style differences
- Perspective differences

Diversity= Innovation

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To conclude: how do we **cultivate diversity?** We take the time to really understand what behaviours are expected, why and what values are linked to them. We understand and leverage thinking style differences and finally we understand that there are at least three perspective differences linked to expatriate assignments which need to be bridged.

It is by understanding, valuing and leveraging this diversity that we arrive at innovative solutions.

Thank you for your time and attention!