
ACTIVITY 14.3 | Tips for Effective Cross-Cultural Coaching

As you read these tips, place a checkmark by any that you do regularly.

- _____ 1. **Have an Appreciation for Different Cultures.** Select a coach who does not have an ax to grind about globalization, immigration, the younger generation, or any label or category. A coach has to be appreciative of and accepting of all backgrounds to even begin the coaching process.

 - _____ 2. **Provide Support.** It is important to encourage risk-taking, assertiveness, and the ability to sell oneself or one's ideas if you coach people who want to succeed in U.S. businesses. By offering support and encouragement, as well as a good explanation about why this matters through values the coachee understands, you can help increase a person's confidence, visibility, and, ultimately, promotability. It is also important to note that being supportive means that you have an ethical responsibility to ask some tough questions. Support means holding your client accountable and, on occasion, being a full-length mirror. Balancing empathy and honesty are doable and both are aspects of support.

 - _____ 3. **Give Helpful and Usable Feedback.** Imagine that, as a coach, you function like a digital camera taking pictures frequently. You make it your business to give your coachee usable information based on behaviors you see firsthand. These behaviors focus on skills such as giving presentations, leading meetings, or representing the company at a public function. But the feedback doesn't have to be only skill-based. You may also give the coachee useful information about cultural norms that he violated or common organizational practices that are career derailers if broken. Be careful of how you give the feedback. Chapter 6 gives you hints on how to do so effectively.

 - _____ 4. **Teach the Importance of Cause and Effect.** Doing this makes accountability both real and practical. In cultures where external locus of control is a strong concept, it is more difficult to teach the idea that what you do has consequences and your behavior triggers them. It is helpful not only to teach cause and effect, but also to help create more options so people rarely feel backed into corners and almost always see alternatives. In terms of professional growth and maturation, always looking for options is a critical concept.

 - _____ 5. **Point Out the Big (or Whole) Picture.** Perspective is a healthy coping strategy. The coaching journey should help coachees see that taking a risk may not always work out as initially imagined, and that's all right; gains can always be had from the learning and the results. Helping the coachee keep an eye on the big picture fosters a method of thinking that will serve an employee well over the long haul. While the details of each task or job responsibility matter, so does the learning gained and applied from every experience.

 - _____ 6. **Tailor the Teaching of Promotable Skills.** A topnotch coach is primarily an excellent teacher, and as with any good teaching, excellent coaching necessitates understanding the learner. People in different cultures and with different personalities and abilities think and learn differently. Is one culture's learning style more didactic? Is another's more hands-on? How much participation might an employee be used to? The sensitivity required in teaching skills needed, both individually and culturally, includes knowledge of cultural norms and customs, and also an understanding of the subtle but significant nuances of the protégé's acculturation. How much adaptation would be required to get this individual ready to make a presentation? What might be a comfortable way for her to present ideas by herself when all the work she has ever done has been as a team member? Where might the self-advocacy required for promotion cross the line and become personally and culturally diminishing?

 - _____ 7. **Create a Collaborative Partnership.** As a coach, you can be a person's professional confidante. As a partner or collaborator, you can help an employee define his or her goals. If he or she wants to become a mid-level manager, start pointing out how mid-level managers dress. Ask him or her to look at differences in dress at each level of the organization. Focus on certain behaviors and customs such as how people introduce one another, or whether first names or surnames are used when addressing colleagues. The learning exercise in Activity 14.5 is an example of the kind of worksheet you can give your apprentice as you try to coach him or her up the organization. It's sort of an "everything you wanted to know about promotion in this organization but were afraid to ask." Give the employee you are coaching worksheets like these, focusing on all the norms the protégé needs to learn. Set up appointments to discuss any observations and what the learning means to your particular student.
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