Suggestions for Using
"Dimensions of Culture"

Objectives:
- Identify both U.S. American and other cultural norms
- Recognize the cultural roots of behaviors encountered at work
- Expand understanding and knowledge of different cultural norms

Intended Audience:
- Individuals wanting to increase their knowledge about different cultural norms
- Trainees in a diversity seminar
- Employees wanting to understand and deal more effectively with staff, customers, or clients from other cultures

Materials:
- Copies of the worksheet *Dimensions of Culture*

Processing the Activity:
- Give a lecture on the information on the preceding pages regarding different cultural norms in the 10 areas of programming. Give and solicit examples. Individuals make notes on the chart.
- Divide group into smaller groups, with each discussing one or two of the areas of programming and sharing differences and their impact in the workplace. Information is charted on a flip chart or board.
- Small groups report to the larger group, giving a recap of the points made in their discussion.

Questions for Discussion:
- What are mainstream norms in each area? Norms of other cultures?
- What are the norms in your organization?
- Which differences cause problems or misunderstanding?

Caveats, Considerations, and Variations:
- It may be difficult for individuals to see the cultural influence beneath the behaviors. You may need to help by giving additional examples or asking participants from other cultures to share examples.
- It is important to avoid giving the impression that people from other cultures are so different, and that other norms are so strange, that we cannot understand them. One way is to present sets of differences as a continuum, for example, conformity and individualism. Peer pressure and group solidarity are powerful shapers of behaviors in the United States, and in cultures that value conformity, individuals do have their own opinions and may want the freedom to do things their own way.

Suggestions for Using
"Dimensions of Culture" (continued)

- It is also important to avoid creating new stereotypes about different cultural groups. It can be insightful to have individuals from the same culture discuss how differently they interpret their own culture's norms. The group then sees that all those of a particular group (African Americans, Cambodians, Russians, Israelis, etc.) are not the same and that there are as many differences within a group as from group to group.

- This activity can also be expanded by having the group identify U.S. norms using popular sayings and aphorisms that express cultural values which express cultural values such as:
    » *Better late than never, but better never late.*
    » *A penny saved is a penny earned.*
    » *You are your brother's keeper.*