

## **Exercise Topic 4.2: Values at Work - by Culturewise Ltd.**

### Key objectives:

- To enable learners to identify some of their own work-related values and attitudes
- To provide learners with a vocabulary and model with which to describe cultural influences on workplace behaviour

Timeframe: 45 minutes

Materials: Values at Work Checklist

### **Background rationale:**

Cultural conflicts and misunderstandings can arise when individuals with opposing values come into contact.

The Values at Work checklist introduces an extensive range of dimensions along which work-related values vary, and explores the contrasting values that reside at each pole of each dimension.

This activity invites learners to reflect on some of their own cultural values and asks them to explore the potential impact of cultural differences as they work in a new country or culture.

### **Procedure:**

1. Give a copy of the Values at Work checklist to the learner.
2. Allow a few minutes for the learner to complete the handout.
3. The learner will have probably identified important cultural differences between his or her own approach and that of another culture or country of interest. Discuss some of the following questions with the learner:
  - How might these differences become apparent in the working environment?
  - How might people from a different country or culture perceive your approach at work?
  - What challenge do these differences present?
  - In what ways might you adapt your behaviour to manage and overcome these cultural differences?

## **The Values at Work Checklist**

Research suggests that the way in which each of us thinks and acts at work can be influenced by the attitudes and values in the cultures to which we belong.

When we come into contact with people from different cultural backgrounds, we can sometimes encounter workplace behaviour that does not match our assumptions and expectations. We can sometimes even misinterpret other people's workplace behaviour and make incorrect assumptions based on our own cultural background. This can result in confusion, misunderstandings and even conflict.

The checklist been designed to help you identify some of the ways in which your cultural background has had an impact on your workplace behaviour.

On the following pages you will find several statements asking about the way in which you prefer to communicate and the way in which you prefer to learn, think and apply knowledge.

1. Read each description in order.
2. Decide which behaviour is closest to your own. If you identify with both statements, choose the one you identify with more often, or in more situations.
3. Mark a score indicating how strongly you tend to exhibit this behaviour.
4. When you have completed this activity, decide how you think people in a different culture of interest to you would probably respond to the statements.
5. Where you have identified important cultural differences between you approach and that of people in the culture or country of interest to you, consider...
  - Are these differences important?
  - How might these differences become apparent in the working environment?
  - How might people from that country or culture perceive your approach?
  - What challenge do these differences present?
  - In what ways might you adapt your behaviour to manage and overcome these cultural differences?

<b>Direct</b> I prefer people to go directly to the point and not to spend time beating around the bush.	<b>Indirect</b> I think it is important to avoid conflict even if it means only hinting at difficult issues.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5
<b>Being frank</b> It is important to be frank, open and honest at all times, even at the risk of causing others to lose face and experience shame.	<b>Saving face</b> It is important that nothing I do causes others to lose face, even if this means that I have to find other ways of transmitting important information.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5
<b>Theory</b> I prefer to learn by receiving and absorbing information from an expert source	<b>Practise</b> I prefer to learn by exploring, practising and experimenting with new ideas.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5
<b>Deal</b> When I have a job to do, I prefer to focus on the task: walking straight into the situation, sorting things out and moving on.	<b>Relationship</b> When I have a job to do, I prefer to focus on the people: spending time getting to know those I will work with.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5
<b>Prompt</b> I prefer people to stick strictly to measurable and structured deadlines. Being on time is the key to efficiency.	<b>Flexible</b> I prefer people to take a flexible approach to timekeeping. Being flexible about deadlines is the key to efficiency.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5
<b>Teacher</b> I prefer to give out precise and detailed instructions to people I work with. It is important that people do what they are told.	<b>Facilitator</b> I prefer to guide people towards making as many of their own decisions as possible. It is important people take the initiative at work.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5
<b>Informal</b> I prefer to talk with people in an informal way, regardless of who they are or what position they hold.	<b>Formal</b> I prefer to show the proper level of respect for position and status by using formal titles, surnames or polite forms of address.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5
<b>Logic</b> I prefer to stick to logic and facts when I am arguing a case. In business, emotions should be controlled as much as possible.	<b>Feeling</b> I prefer to display emotions and warmth when I am arguing a case. In business, emotions should be listened to and respected.
5    4    3    2    1	1    2    3    4    5