Awareness and Adapting to Work in the Middle East

WORKSHOP DURATION:

One day (6 contact hours)

WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION:

Today's business environment is truly global: Because of the ease of travel, sharing of new technologies and economic incentives, people come together from many different parts of the world and join their efforts to achieve business objectives.

Yet, these very differences that can enrich the business environment and inject fresh new perspectives into the business dynamic, are also the differences which can cause divisions and tensions between fellow employees.

Unless people learn to appreciate cultural differences and to improve their tolerance for people who are "different", the whole business environment will be poorer. At worst, cultural insensitivity can derail projects and impact very negatively on worker productivity and the profitability of a business endeavour.

This workshop deals with the cultural awareness that is required by all people working in environments where several different nationalities and language groups exist, and where there are varieties of different cultures represented.

It includes the cultural awareness required for serving (internal and external) customers and working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

The workshop is intended for both supervisors and non-supervisory personnel.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

This workshop aims to increase levels of appreciation for, and sensitivity towards, cultural differences in the workplace and beyond. It will emphasise factors which are particularly relevant to cultural sensitivity in the **Middle East**.

All those who attend will leave the workshop with a raised sensitivity for cultural differences in the Middle East, and will have a better appreciation for the value of diversity in the workplace.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

The workshop is pitched at a level which will benefit anyone who is currently working in a culturally diverse work environment. No prior training is required for attendance, but all delegates should have an adequate grasp of the English language to gain benefit from this training.

In particular, it is suggested that this workshop should be directed towards those whose jobs require cultural sensitivity in order to enhance their success at work, including:-

- Project Team Leaders and team members
- Project admin. support staff
- All internal support staff (eg: IT, Logistics, etc)
- Contract Managers
- Engineering Professionals who work with contractors
- Procurement staff
- Negotiators
- Public Relations personnel
- Customer Service personnel
- Call Centre personnel
- Sales and Marketing personnel
- Human Resources personnel
- Supervisors and Managers

WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY:

The workshop is interactive, allowing for lively participation and sharing of experience during sessions. There will be several short lectures, followed by case studies, group discussions and practical assignments.

A special feature of this workshop is the co-presentation by both a local businessperson and an expatriate. Yasmeen Redha is a Bahraini national with well-developed insight into the Middle Eastern business environment. Yasmeen has worked with some of the largest and most high profile organisations in the GCC, including both government and private enterprises. John Blacklaws has worked as an expatriate in the Middle East for 8 years and has developed a keen appreciation of local business nuances and protocols.

TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

1. **Introduction to Cross-Cultural Appreciation**
   - ❑ how cultural differences may arise
     - race
     - language
     - religion
     - education levels
     - special needs
     - disabilities
     - family structure
     - gender
     - age
     - sexual preferences
   - ❑ how cultural diversity contributes to differing values, beliefs, attitudes and customs
   - ❑ the significance of cultural values and customs
   - ❑ the value of diversity in the workplace
   - ❑ the need for tolerance and respect in the workplace

2. **Cultural Variety in the Middle East**
   - ❑ cultural profile of various groups working in the Middle East
     - local Arab tribes/groups

- Asians
- Europeans
- North Americans
- Africans
- Australasians
- why there is such diversity in the Middle East
- what each culture expects from others
- their beliefs/religion
- their social habits
- their celebrations and festivals
- their food preferences and dietary needs
- their customs
- their work ethic
- their languages and communication patterns

3. **Communication with customers & colleagues from diverse backgrounds**
   - taking into consideration cultural differences in all verbal and non-verbal communication
   - overcoming language barriers in order to:
     - meet and greet/farewell customers
     - give simple directions
     - give simple instructions
     - answer simple enquiries
     - prepare for, serve and assist customers
     - describe goods and services
   - using communication techniques to ensure correct understanding
     - eye contact
     - testing understanding
     - language speed
     - voice clarity
     - active listening
     - questioning techniques
     - body language / non-verbal gestures
     - language targeted to audience
     - courtesy
     - tone of voice
   - barriers to communication:
     - negative subtext
     - ethnocentrism
     - bias and stereotyping
     - lack of empathy
     - gender issues

4. **Sources of Information to Assist with Cross-Cultural Appreciation**
   - interpreter services
   - diplomatic services
   - local cultural organisations
   - appropriate government agencies
   - educational institutions
   - media
   - libraries
   - the internet

- ❑ unions
- ❑ personal experience or observation
- ❑ industry journals
- ❑ seminars and training WORKSHOPs

5. How Differences Arise
- ❑ language spoken
- ❑ forms of address
- ❑ levels of formality/informality
- ❑ non-verbal behaviour, understandings and interpretations
- ❑ work ethics
- ❑ personal grooming
- ❑ dress
- ❑ conversation topics
- ❑ family and social obligations and status
- ❑ observance of special religious, feast or other celebratory days
- ❑ customs, beliefs and values
- ❑ special needs
- ❑ product preferences

6. Issues which may cause conflict or misunderstanding in the workplace
- ❑ speaking too quickly/quietly
- ❑ no visual clues
- ❑ poor observation
- ❑ poor communication style
- ❑ intolerance
- ❑ prejudice
- ❑ inadequate language skills
- ❑ not clarifying or asking questions
- ❑ inappropriate body language
- ❑ poor understanding of other cultures

7. Practical Conflict Resolution Techniques
- ❑ framing the problem
- ❑ identifying the cause of conflict
- ❑ problem-solving
- ❑ win-win

8. The Legal Environment
- ❑ local Islamic law
- ❑ labour law

9. Individual Strategies for Improving Cross-Cultural Appreciation
- ❑ learning basics of another language
- ❑ developing an understanding and tolerance of cultural diversity
- ❑ overcoming prejudice and assumptions

- ❑ utilising non-verbal communication skills
- ❑ actively seeking to breakdown barriers
- ❑ the importance of professionalism

10. Summary and Personal Commitments

CONTACT DETAILS:

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