

**TABLE 8.1 | The Impact of Cultural Norms on Meetings with Your Team**

| Cultural Norms                                    | Impact on Meetings  | What To Do   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Respect for authority</b>                      | This norm leads to an unwillingness to challenge ideas from those who are older or in a position of authority; inhibit solutions to problem-solving and can lead to a more formal climate.                            | State expectations emphasizing the need for participation because it will benefit the company. Loyalty is also a norm that you can use here. Show respect to the group's informal leader because of age, knowledge, title, and overall influence. Solicit this person's help and give leaders the same esteem groups do.               |
| <b>Emphasis on group over individual</b>          | This may lead some managers to assume people are unmotivated or lazy because they keep pace with the team rather than seek individual glory or promotion.   | The group is your best cultural ally. Use it! Stress teamwork, harmony, and collaboration. Structure group tasks and focus on group accomplishment.  |
| <b>Fear of shame and loss-of-face</b>             | Because people are afraid to lose face or make mistakes, there might be less willingness to take risks or share unconventional ideas.   | Talk about the importance of taking intelligent risks and reinforce this even when the group makes mistakes. Avoid finger pointing or blaming. Make the group motto be "We're all in this together." Encourage their risk-taking and reward their efforts.   |
| <b>More contextual, less direct communication</b> | It is harder in less direct cultures to figure out what is really on someone's mind. This can result in miscommunication, both in and out of meetings.  | Develop a good, trusting relationship over time. It will take time to understand the subtle nuance as well as to get people to open up. You may never get straight talk the way Americans give it. But you can pay attention to the subtle nonverbal cues. With trust and a good relationship, you'll develop understanding over time. |
| <b>Value placed on harmony and collaboration</b>  | This norm can work to your advantage in having people create a positive working environment. The downside may be an unwillingness to discuss painful truths for the sake of harmony, even though it may be necessary. | Use the question-asking skills presented in the chapter on interviewing. In sensitive ways and an unthreatening tone, seek information that may be necessary, and do so through the informal system. Remember to use the group; that provides safety and minimizes the sting.  |

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**TABLE 8.1 | The Impact of Cultural Norms on Meetings with Your Team (continued)**

| Cultural Norms  | Impact on Meetings   | What To Do  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Family as the first priority</b>   | There are times when people, particularly from Mexico and Central America, may need to leave to take care of family priorities. They may miss meetings, and more important, the assignments that result from them. Deadlines may not be met. | Work with people to find the middle ground. No one wants to be insensitive in times of family emergency. There are always tradeoffs. Explain them. The group may pick up a person's slack for a short time. If a pattern develops that permanently inhibits workflow, some choices will have to be made.                                |
| <b>Time consciousness: some cultures hold tighter timelines than the dominant culture, and some cultures hold looser timelines.</b> | The rules need to be the same for everyone or there will be disgruntlement. Be careful not to interpret some flexibility regarding time as indications of laziness or lack of caring.  | Make clear what the meeting norms and expectations are. Once you decide how strict or loose you are going to be regarding timelines, reinforce your "rules." Position being on time as showing respect to other members of the group.   |
| <b>Problem-solving that is less linear and analytical</b>   | You sometimes may feel like you aren't getting anywhere, because again, U.S.-American directness likes to go straight for the solution. But lateral, intuitive thinking adds its own unique contribution to the process.                     | Learn to value and use different ways of thinking. This difference is truly one of the biggest gifts from diversity. Don't immediately discount nonlinear methods.  |
| <b>Goal setting and planning influenced by fatalism</b>   | The external locus of control mentality mentioned earlier may create the appearance in some cultures that people are less driven or motivated. Again, it's probably cultural. Belief in God's will is a powerful shaper for some.            | Help your workgroup experience the direct connection between the responsibility they accept and the results they get. This will be a whole new way of viewing the world for those whose life experience has not shown them that they have much influence over their own world. Patience, respect, and positive reinforcement will help. |