

Swallow, Debby

Transferring knowledge across global teams

- Presentation 30 mins -

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Abstract

“Knowledge” has a cultural bias to such an extent that what is understood as knowledge in one culture is neither valued, recognised nor acted upon in another.” Debby Swallow

Cultures have a shared perception of knowledge and how that knowledge can and should be shared. In intercultural teams, often these ‘shared’ perceptions are fundamentally different in the logic of their structure and the meanings they bring to shared activity. This has real consequence for the knowledge transfer process that develops in organisations. It’s a wonder global teams ever achieve anything!

Unfortunately, knowledge is not a physical object that we can point at and say, “There it is - knowledge!” That’s the problem: how do we recognise it? How managers come to observe, understand, and grant it validity or not is culturally bound. So how can we transfer knowledge across global teams if what one person understands as knowledge is not recognised by another?

Knowledge (and the meaning and value given to it) is complex. Evidence shows that there are two main ways to disseminate knowledge and different cultures favour one way over the other. However, cultural preferences, operating across the dimensions advanced by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1999), can demonstrate the different understanding people give to knowledge and the values they ascribe to it. Using these dimensions, this presentation presents the perspectives held by each culture at the extremes of the seven dimensions and explores four types of knowledge values and knowledge cultures. All vary considerably in how they think and learn, and how they transfer knowledge.

Learning outcomes for participants

Participants will:

- Understand that cultures ‘see’ knowledge differently
- Discover how to share knowledge for business growth
- Be able to identify the ‘right’ kind of knowledge for each culture
- Identify appropriate knowledge sharing & transfer preferences

Profile

Dr Deborah Swallow is a professional conference speaker, author and consultant on Intercultural Communication and Cultural Diversity. Deborah has worked extensively around the world training diplomats, senior executives and business development advisors in cross cultural communication, global leadership, international management, and good governance. She is the Programme Director for Intercultural Communication at the Diplomatic Academy of London (University of Westminster) and is a visiting lecturer on MBA courses both in the UK and abroad on Comparative Management, Managing Knowledge Across Cultures and Knowledge Management. Deborah won Britain’s highest accolade for excellence in training - The UK National Training Award – (winning it as an individual) for her work with entrepreneurs.