Subtopics

Communication

Directness
Explain to your colleagues in which situations in your culture it is appropriate to communicate directly.

Work vs. Person
Describe to each other when your respective business cultures separate between the professional and the personal.

Small Talk
Explain to your colleagues when your culture engages is small talk.

Controversial Issues
Help your colleagues to understand which controversial topics can damage a working relationship.

Unsolicited Advice
Describe to your colleague when you would give unsolicited advice.

Agreements

Yes
Describe for your colleagues those situations in your culture where you feel comfortable entering into an agreement.

No
Describe for your colleagues those situations in your culture where you need to think very carefully before entering into an agreement.

Context
Explain to your colleagues how much context information you need in order to decide whether you can enter into an agreement.

Follow Up
Choose a typical agreement in your culture. Describe what the ideal level of follow-up is.

Deliverables
On time. Within budget. Top quality. In your work it is not easy to achieve all three. When is one of those three goals more important than the other two?

Persuasion

Objective
In your respective cultures, in what situations is linking messenger with message persuasive, and when is it persuasive to separate them?

Competent
Choose one critical problem currently facing your respective societies. Describe to each other both the problem and the opportunity embedded in it. Is it more problem than opportunity, or the other way around?

Analytical
Take one situation in your culture in which getting a message across persuasively is critical. Explain to your colleague how your culture strikes a balance between using analysis (theory, methodology) and using experience (facts, anecdotes).

Realistic
Choose a typical presentation, in a typical company, in your culture. The presenter has maximum ten slides. How many slides would be dedicated to explaining the context (past), to the current situation (present), and to the solution (future).

Persuasive
Explain to your colleague how in your business culture one knows when to guide the audience to a logical conclusion (the presenter's) versus when one asks the audience to make a choice.

Decision Making

Scope
When in your respective culture do people take a systematic or a particularistic approach to a situation? In other words, when does your culture prefer to build a system or keep it simple by breaking a situation down into its component parts (particulars)?

Process
Name one example from your culture where the decision making process is the key to making a good decision. Name an example where the opposite is true.

Resources
Name an example from your respective culture when a decision should be made conservatively (protect resources) and when a decision should be made aggressively (exploit an opportuntiy)?

Analysis
In your culture, how do people know what is too much or too little analysis? What criteria to they use?

Risk
How does your culture define risk? Describe a decision you made where you underestimated the risk and got burned. Now describe a decision where you overestimated the risk and missed an opportunity.

Leadership

Strategy
In your culture, what would be a typical example of a strategy (in politics, sports, personal life)? Explain it to your colleagues.

Tactics
Now take that strategy and describe what the tactics look like. Where is the line between strategy and tactics?

Strategy Formulation
Stay with that example. Who would typically be involved in the formulation of that strategy? Who, so to speak, is in the inner circle?

Strategy Modification
And when and how is that strategy modified? What if folks at the tactical level see the clear need to modify it. Do they modify it? And if so, how does that happen?

Lines of Communication
Again, staying with the example, what do lines of communication look like between the strategy and tactical levels? How do they communicate? How often? About what?

Feedback

Personal
In your culture, when is negative feedback taken personally? When is it not taken personally?

Praise
Can you remember when you received praise which really motivated you? Or when you praised someone and it had a motivating effect on them?

Critique
Voicing criticism is sensitive in any culture. In your culture, when is it absolutely necessary? How should it be communicated?

Discretion

When is it appropriate to criticize another person in the presence of other people? When is it helpful? When is it destructive?

Scores

Explain to your colleague the scoring system in two non-business contexts (i.e. education) of your culture. What is the logic behind the system?

Conflict

Escalation

Describe an example in your culture (non-business) when a conflict was escalated too quickly. When too late. What happened in each situation?

Hearing

Does your country's legal system allow for hearings? How are they conducted?

Evidence

When resolving a conflict in your society, what different kinds of evidence are there? Are some of them more important than others? Which ones? Why?

Time

Choose a popular team sport in your culture. When does a conflict within a team begin to threaten its cohesion?

Acceptance

Are so-called win-win resolutions to conflicts in your culture always helpful? When would they be harmful?

Product

Efficiency

In your culture's economy which products are known for being especially efficient? Which ones are inefficient? Why are they so?

Intelligence

How does your culture define an intelligent product? What's the most intelligent product you own? What makes it intelligent?

Reliability

Can a culture define the reliability of a person differently than the reliability of a product? If yes, how

so? If not, what would be an example of a difference which applies to a product as well as to a person?

Durability
What products in your culture have to be durable in order to succeed in the market? From which products do users not expect all that much durability?

Quality
Think of products you may have purchased over the last few years. Explain to your colleague the role quality played in your decisions. When was quality very important, when not so important?

Processes

Success Factor
How highly does your business culture rank the importance of internal processes - how the work is done - to a company's success? If high, why? If low, why? Name specific examples.

Deductive or Inductive
How are processes best developed, deductively or inductively?

Guaranty vs. Tool
Name one process in your society (non-business) which is an absolute must? Why is it so important? What does it guaranty?

Discipline or Flexibility
Take one of the most important processes in your private life. Identify one critical point along that process. Discuss when you handle that point with discipline (stick to the process) versus when you handle it with discretion (allow for deviation).

Power & Influence
In your society, which process leads to the most political debate? Why? Is it about what is best for society or is it about who has the say?

Customer

Serve vs. Consult
Describe for your colleagues two (non-business) examples: 1. When you were served in just the way you expected, and 2. When you were consulted, also in a very effective and professional way.

Expectations
Explain where you draw the line between the two, being served and being consulted. What are your expectations, and what are the expecations of the vendor, supplier, consultant.

Collaboration
Describe the ideal collaboration between two companies in your business culture. What are the key components? In other words, what are the questions, topics, areas where the collaboration absolutely has to work well?