CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Tips for communicating with people from other cultures

OUR MULTICULTURAL CITY

Our city is home to a diverse range of cultures with almost one third of our residents born overseas and nearly half of our residents having at least one parent born overseas.

Our cultural diversity is of great value to our city and everyone has the right to express their own culture and beliefs.

Over 12 per cent of residents speak a language other than English at home, with the most common being: Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Cantonese.

Our city is a popular international holiday destination with over one million international visitors each year. We also have a high number of international students adding to our diversity.

For more statistics visit our community profile at profile.id.com.au/gold-coast

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Avoid cultural misunderstanding

Cultural differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings in the community or the workplace. Misunderstandings can occur around the simplest things, such as:

- food
- language
- greetings
- gestures
- facial expressions
- eye contact
- touching

Communication tips

It is important to recognise difficulties that people may have when understanding you and your message. When communicating with anyone, regardless of their cultural background, remember to be clear and concise. Other useful tips include:

- speak slowly
- use short, simple sentences
- paraphrase
- avoid slang, jargon, jokes, irony or sarcasm
- demonstrate when giving explanations
- give instructions in the order they are to be carried out
- avoid double negatives
- show understanding and patience
- avoid raising your voice
- ask open questions so the person can relay the message back to you. This allows you to hear whether they have understood your message correctly.

Cultural differences

Cultural differences in the workplace can include:

- perception of authority
- understanding of teamwork
- understanding the importance of time
- attitude to rules
- discussion or meeting styles
- expectations about employee rights, wages, awards and entitlements
- workplace health and safety requirements
- conflicts of interest.

Language can be influenced by culture

Words and body language can mean different things in different cultures. When interacting with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, consider how your words and actions can be interpreted. Areas in which cultural differences are highlighted include:

- patterns of conversation – taking turns to speak, silence, how much and what we say, attentiveness and listening
- functions – apologising, inviting, complimenting, requesting
- expressiveness – facial expressions, gestures and body language
- personal space – how far or close we stand or sit when talking to others.

Translating and interpreting

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National), an initiative of the Department of Home Affairs, is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This free service is available if you have an enquiry regarding the City of Gold Coast’s services.

To contact TIS National, please telephone 13 1450 and ask for an interpreter in the language you need.