

To summarize, great business communication brings an opportunity for outstanding employee and customer engagement. It creates clarity, more significant outputs, and growth in revenue and profit.

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## **Cross-cultural negotiations in the context of humor**

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“No amount of skill will ensure the success  
of a joke or humorous anecdote if the content  
and style are culturally inappropriate.”

*Dean Foster [1]*

Communication is a process of exchanging information between a source and a recipient. It has to be mutually understandable and requires appropriate language skills. Language is used as a tool to exchange and understand information. But if you know foreign languages it doesn't mean you can successfully collaborate across borders. Cross-cultural communication also requires mutual respect and cultural awareness and strong cross-cultural communication skills.

Taking into account all the above, I assume that one of the important aspects of culture which will help cross-cultural communication is the right use of humor.

Humor determines who we are and how we think of ourselves, and as a result how we interact with others. A sense of humor has been an essential part of humankind and society throughout the ages. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines humor as “the quality of something that makes it funny or amusing” [3].

In cross cultural communication humor is often used as a powerful speech act for breaking the ice, building relationships or smoothing over a difficult situation. However, it should be noted that there is no universal humor for all cultures. Every culture enjoys some kind of its own humor (provocative, barbed in Australia, sarcastic in the United States). But, humor has difficulty crossing cultural boundaries because what is humorous in one country is often not humorous in another. The idea of “funny” is highly personal, contextual and culture specific. As a result many

jokes, sarcastic or ironical remarks which may be deeply tied to culture are often unperceived, misunderstood or offensive.

Some cultures do not welcome humor at business meetings (for example, Germans, Japanese), while others begin a conversation with a joke (Americans). For this reason there are no uniform patterns or rules of humor for all cultures. But there are some tips how to joke successfully without unnecessary embarrassment and embarrassing situations:

- Avoid **making comparisons** between the country you are in and other countries.

- Even if people in the culture are **self-deprecating**, this is not an invitation to join in. Most people can laugh at themselves, but feel quite different when someone is laughing at them.

- Run your jokes past a **counterpart** from that culture, as what may seem hilarious to you could be seen as confusing at best, and at worst, insulting to others.

In conclusion, what is funny in one culture might not be this way in another. Humor might be misunderstood and interpreted in different ways. While humor is a good icebreaker, it can backfire when the cross-cultural group misses its meaning. When in doubt, avoid using humor when communicating with people from different cultures.

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