

Cultural Awareness

- Today we are going to talk about recognizing different cultures in our daily interactions at work.
- Factoring in cultural context can help us to have more productive conversations and relate better to one another.
- Culture is hard to define. Broadly speaking, it's a unique pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that we pick up over time from our:
 - Family;
 - Education;
 - Work experience; and
 - Life experience
- Understanding the differences between yourself and others from different countries or backgrounds helps establish common ground, inclusion, and respect.
- This starts with empathy, flexibility, and open-mindedness, which can help avoid cultural misconceptions.
 - Misconceptions can result from verbal or nonverbal communications.
 - For example, gestures like the peace sign or giving someone a thumbs up can have completely different meanings in different cultures.
 - In European and American cultures, for example, giving someone a thumbs up is a sign of approval, but in Islamic and Asian cultures, it's a major insult.
 - Misconceptions can also come up with different communication styles.
 - For Example, South Korean culture can be formal so wearing formal business attire in South Korea is expected and viewed as proper etiquette and attending a business meeting without wearing a business suit can be seen as disrespectful and rude.
- So, when you see someone acting in a way that you view as strange or rude, instead of making an assumption to understand their behavior, you instead should pause and consider whether it could be a cultural issue.
- Building cultural awareness also takes some education.
 - Taking the time to learn about the different cultures, traditions, and working practices of the people you work with can help build your relationships with them.
 - This can be as simple as, for example, learning how to properly pronounce your new coworker's name so that you can address them correctly.

- Finally, if you accidentally offend someone be sure to apologize.