**BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

**JOB AID**

One way to improve your communication skills is to become aware of the barriers to communication and learn how to minimize or reduce their adverse effects :

**Information overload :**

* **Avoid presenting to much material :** keep the information to an amount that the person with whom your are speaking can easily absorb. Check for understanding and pause frequently, giving the person time to formulate clarifying questions and indicate to you that he/ she understands what you are saying.
* **Presenting information that is overly complex :** when feasible, practzice your message ahead of time, ensuring that you will deliver the message succinctly and coherently. If necessary back up your words with visuals, or send data or a summary report ahaed of time.
* **Presenting information too quickly** : deliver your message slowly, in an organized way, focusing on just a couple of points at a time.
* **Presenting at a level of difficulty that goes beyond the person’s understanding :** always know your audience. If you don’t, begin your message with a few overview comments and perhaps some questions to determine how much information the receiver already has on the subject.
* **Not giving the person sufficient time to process the information :** give your listeners an opportunity to ask questions and to provide their perspective before asking for a decision. When possible, try to hold off on a decision until all the necessary information is available, perhaps at another time.

**Trust & Credibility**

* Lack of trust is a huge barrier to effective communication (cf how to build trust)
* Lack of credibility : especially young professionals are faced with this challenge. (cf how to build trust). Most appropriate technique is to **PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE**, so that your message will be well received.

**Time :**

* **Lack of time-** poor communication often results from lack of time. Rushing to communicate often leads to errors, leaving out important details, or saying things you later regret. The best way to approach this problem is to develop a habit of focusing on just one communication at a time. Another communication problem is the increased expectation of speedy response. Tip : batch your communications or group your responses by category. For example set aside time each day for responding to and sending e-mail messages, and another time of the day for responding to or making phone calls.

**Filtering :**

* is the intentional manipulation of information to make it more favorable to the receiver. The way information is sent and the tone can greatly distort a message to serve an individual’s or a group’s needs. To resist filtering when you speak, present information based on the relevant facts. Deliver information sensitively but firmly and honestly. To prevent receiving filtered information, ask probing questions about a situation that is presented to you, focusing on results and outcomes, not just the facts that have been presented.

**Emotions**:

* Strong feeling such as fear, love, hate, happiness and anger can prevent you from being objective about a situation. To reduce the potential for miscommunication, consider the emotional state of both the sender and the receiver in all interactions with others. A good rule of thumb is to stop and think. This might seem simple, but it requires an amount of self-discipline. Assess the impact of what you are about to say on the other person.

**Message congruency :**

* The communication process is much more than just the spoken word. Studies have found that 93% of communication is transmitted through body language and through the tone of voice and only 7% through words alone. So, don’t send mixed messages !! The nonverbals must reinforce the message, not contradict it. Gestures, body language, tone of voice and words must be congruent.