



TOOL 4: MANAGING DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE



INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed by **Vlerick Business School** and **Talentree** with the support of the European Social Fund and the Flemish Government to help organisations in creating a diverse and inclusive work environment. The content of this toolkit is based on learnings we gathered during a project focused on guiding newcomers and companies to fasten the job search and induction process on the work floor. The toolkit consists of 4 tools and is structured as follows:



Tool 1: Multicultural Diversity on The Agenda

By providing facts and figures about multicultural diversity and explaining how it leads to competitive advantage, this first tool helps organisations to build a business case in order to put diversity and inclusion on the agenda.



Tool 2: Building a Diverse organisation: Getting The Foundations Right

This second tool focuses on the critical success factors to build a diverse organisation, the steps towards creating an inclusive company and ways to bring unconscious bias to the forefront.



Tool 3: Recruiting for Diversity

This third tool helps companies to recruit more diverse talent. It focuses on how to set up an inclusive recruitment process and how to tackle bias in recruitment.



Tool 4: Managing Diversity in The Workplace

This fourth tool helps organisations to prepare and manage teams which are becoming more diverse. Next to this, it helps to understand how organisations can provide a great kick-off for the new (diverse) hires.

These 4 tools can be used together or as stand alone tools depending on the specific context of an organisation. Organisations that are just starting with their diversity and inclusion efforts and that are looking to build the business case will benefit from starting with tool 1. Organisations that are further along in their diversity and inclusion journey can jump toward the tool(s) that are most relevant for them. Based on these 4 tools also a training has been developed consisting of 4 modules and accompanying exercise leaflets, through which organisations can deliver an internal training on the 4 building blocks provided in this toolkit. The modules are designed in such a way companies can use them autonomously to set up their own diversity initiatives and workshops.

Although this toolkit is based on the insights with regard to multicultural diversity, many of the insights and exercises can be translated to diversity in general.

You can also download the powerpoint and leaflets made for this tool to roll out a training in your own team or company.

MAIN OBJECTIVE TOOL 4

This tool is the last tool in a series of 4 tools designed to help you create an inclusive and diverse work environment and to reap its benefits in the best possible way. This tool focuses on managing diversity in the workplace.

You'll learn:

- ✓ How to prepare and support diverse teams
- ✓ How to provide a great kick-off for new recruits



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1. PREPARING AND SUPPORTING DIVERSE TEAMS



An inclusive culture is not only limited to recruit new hires into the existing company culture. Instead, it has to **expand to incorporate the new perspectives** that diverse hires bring into the company. As such, a huge part of a successful onboarding depends on the existing team in order to integrate the new employee as good as possible*. **Success stories** with regard to the first diverse hires **are extremely important** to build ambassadors in the organisation, being the hire itself but also the team and line manager. These stakeholders might act in cross-departmental and management meetings as motivators for new initiatives in case of success but can also **add extra barriers in case of failures**.

Preparing and supporting your teams when they become more diverse is crucial. **Three things need to be taken into account:**

1. Creating a clear team context
2. Guiding effective communication
3. Building new competencies

Source: <https://www.lever.co/blog/a-step-by-step-guide-to-cultivating-diversity-and-inclusion-part-8-after-the-hire>

1.1. CREATE A CLEAR TEAM CONTEXT

TRANSLATING VALUES TO A CODE OF CONDUCT

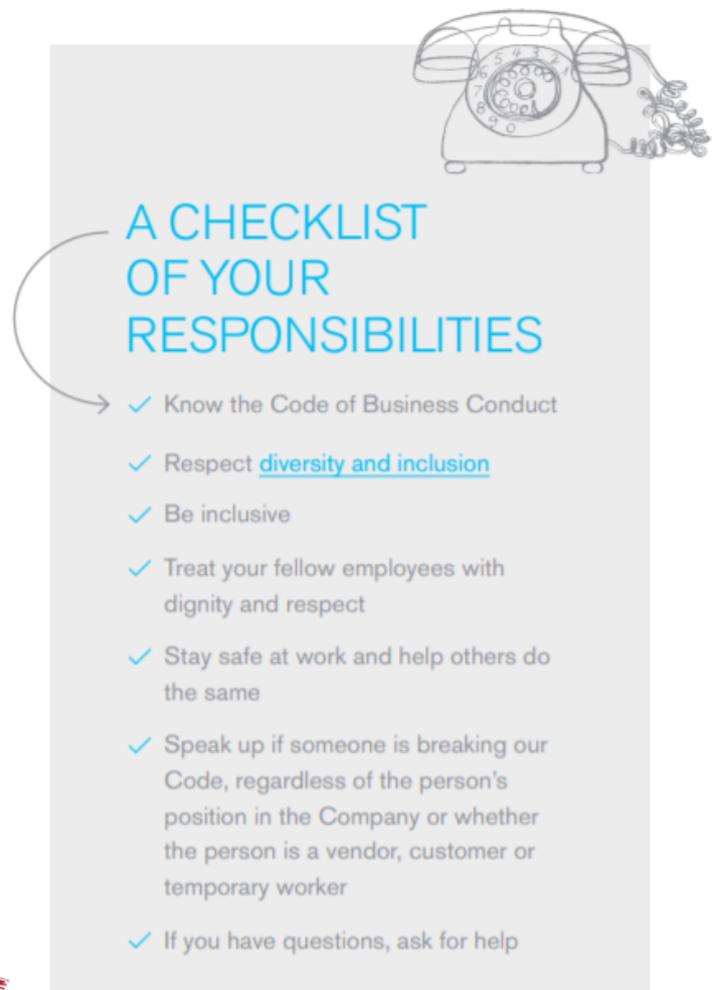
Bringing more diversity into your workforce will create **the need for a new framework**, empowering and helping employees to handle ethical dilemmas they encounter in their daily work. **A clear code of conduct** has value not only as an internal guideline but also as an external statement of corporate values and commitments*.

How to build a strong code of conduct:

- ✓ Clarify your organisation's mission values and principles
- ✓ Link your values to concrete standards of professional conduct
- ✓ Make it concise and concrete
- ✓ Involve different stakeholders and check against real ethical dilemmas

A code of conduct **will help to:**

- ✓ Have benchmarks against which individual and organisational performance can be measured
- ✓ Give employees a central guide and reference to support day-to-day decision making.
- ✓ Encourage discussions of ethics and compliance



A CHECKLIST OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- ✓ Know the Code of Business Conduct
- ✓ Respect [diversity and inclusion](#)
- ✓ Be inclusive
- ✓ Treat your fellow employees with dignity and respect
- ✓ Stay safe at work and help others do the same
- ✓ Speak up if someone is breaking our Code, regardless of the person's position in the Company or whether the person is a vendor, customer or temporary worker
- ✓ If you have questions, ask for help

*A nice example of a comprehensive and concrete code of conduct by Johnson & Johnson***

Source: <https://www.ethics.org/resources/free-toolkit/code-of-conduct/>**https://www.jnj.com/_document?id=00000159-69fe-dba3-afdb-79ffcdd60000

Exercise: Ethical dilemmas on the work floor

1. Define 5 dilemmas you encountered by bringing in more diversity in your team(s).
2. Discuss these dilemmas with different stakeholders, looking at them from a different perspective.
3. Create a guideline on how to handle these and future related dilemmas, linked to your company values.

Case Nursing Home

A nursing home started hiring nurses with a Muslim background. This brought up questions on wearing hijabs/burqas, serving alcohol and pork meat and female leadership. Leadership and the team discussed these questions from an ethical and practical perspective and developed clear guidelines that are used on the work floor but also as a checklist during applications:

- Dress code: A uniform with mid-long sleeves is foreseen with a focus on not to restrict mobility and avoiding risk of infection + hair should be tied back and can be covered by a tight headscarf with a focus on hygiene.
- All meals including alcohol are served with focus on the request of the patient.
- Colleagues greet each other respectfully (by shaking hands or bowing).
- Men and women are treated equally and respectfully.

Case Celebration time

A group of employees checked with HR whether they could work on a religious local holiday (e.g. Christmas) and save these days for their own religious festivities. When discussing the topic it also became clear that these colleagues pitied that the company only celebrated these local habits (e.g. Christmas party). The company created a new holiday policy where the official (legal) holidays remained the same, but gave employees the opportunity to take the shift on these days and offering recuperation days on other religious festivity days. It was clear that continuity of the business activities was key and that shifts were scheduled with mutual respect for everyone. Additionally, the parties in the company shifted over different religious/cultural important days. This had a positive impact on the team spirit to have people taking over shifts at days that others wanted to celebrate with their family. People were proud to share their cultural heritage and loved celebrating together.

1.1. CREATE A CLEAR TEAM CONTEXT

COMMUNITY BUILDING

At their core, **diversity and inclusion initiatives should acknowledge and support employee identity in the workplace**. Creating safe spaces like affinity groups or business resource groups (based on sexual orientation, race, class, nationality and other forms of identity) allow employees to raise and navigate issues they may not feel comfortable exploring in general spaces. Some companies, however, step away from these affinity groups and try out alternative ways. A management consulting company, for instance, replaced 'affinity groups' by 'inclusion councils' which are composed of individuals from a range of demographic groups.

Companies also benefit from **creating opportunities** to meet with senior leaders, invitations to solve business problems, or access to an anonymous platform through which people can report identity-related issues. A business resource group for newly-hired people of colour, for instance, might teach the employer a great deal about how to recruit and retain these employees and simultaneously offer them opportunities for mentoring and support*.

Although affinity groups are relevant, it is important to make sure that **majority- and minority groups stay connected**. Some companies working with locals and expats, for example, reported that the expat community in their company also met outside working hours to build their social life. This started to impact internal professional dynamics (e.g., expats forming a separate group), so effort was made to **reconnect the expats and locals** by openly discussing this challenge and providing additional teambuilding for all employees.



Source: <https://qz.com/work/1160644/if-you-really-want-a-diverse-workplace-you-have-to-build-safe-spaces/>

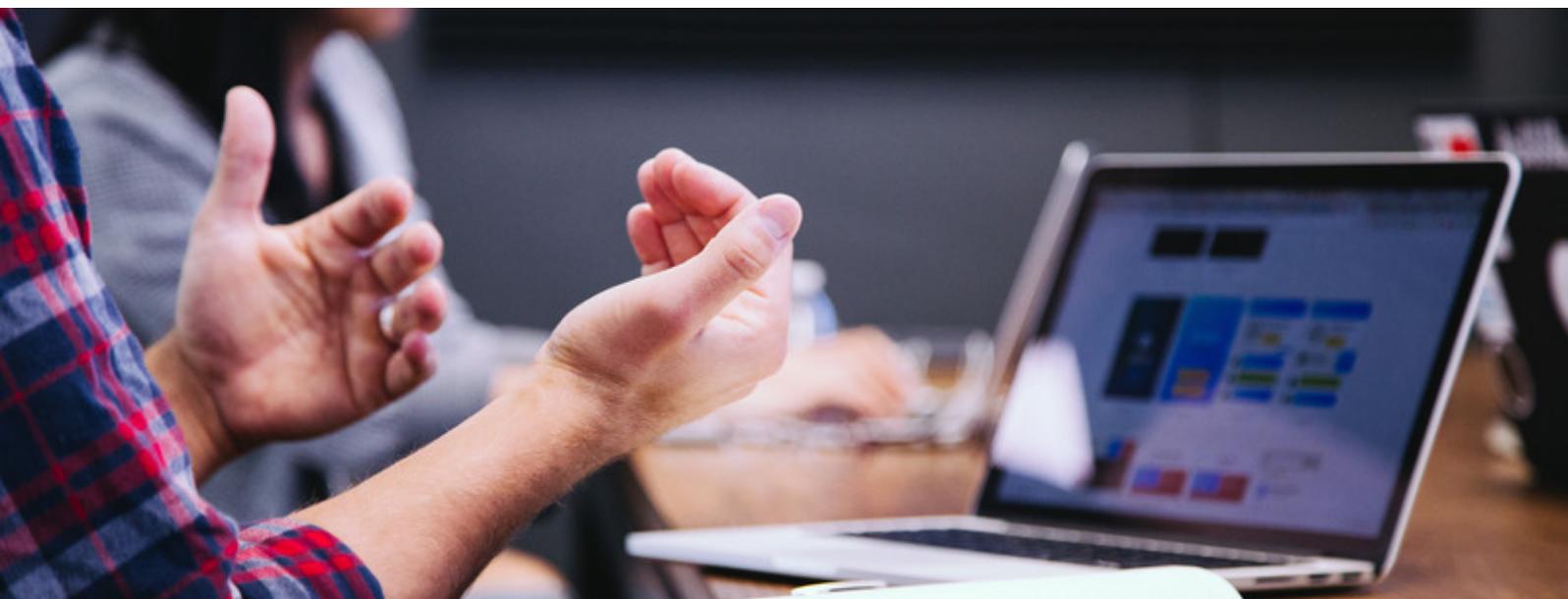
1.2. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication in the workplace is essential - it underlies productivity and the quality of workplace relationships and it forges organisational success. Building a more diverse workforce requires a focus on effective communication amongst employees, both in terms of understanding how employees perceive communication and in terms of language.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A JOINT CORPORATE LANGUAGE

A lot of companies have English as their corporate language. Nevertheless doing local business also requires proficiency in local languages, leading to a **mix of languages** being used within the organisation. Some companies who were used to communicate entirely in the local language are now required to use English as a joint language due to globalisation. Apart from the corporate language, take the following into consideration:

- Make sure **all internal documents are available in a joint language**, including the file names and the shared servers.
- Agree on a **joint language for internal e-mail communication**. This way e-mails can easily be forwarded or all colleagues can follow the communication history when added in the conversation.
- Do not underestimate **the importance of joint informal communication** like humour in the office, a talk at the coffee machine or lunch. Not understanding these informal talks might make people feel excluded from the team.
- **Avoid jargon and metaphors**: within a company culture, employees build up a specific jargon. This might add complexity for newcomers entering the organisation. Make sure to be aware of using specific terminology, try to avoid it or explain when necessary. Using metaphors also may be problematic with people from other cultures, since they don't necessarily translate well from country to country. For instance, the instruction "Make a pitch of the company" is more difficult than saying "Prepare a 3 minute argumentation on why the company should be our product/service." A South-American applicant who received the first question during the application process for a job (and who also got the job in the end) asked the assessor: "What do you mean by peach?".



Your
turn

Exercise: Lunchtime case

Ghada, a 30 years old Syrian woman, joined the administrative cell of an international pharmaceutical company 2 months ago. She works as administrative assistant for the Belgian division of the company. The administrative team consists of 4 other assistants who have been working together for a long time and form a close group. The team likes to have lunch together in the company restaurant, where they jauntily discuss the novelties of the day. However, Ghada does not join her colleagues for lunch. As she doesn't really master the Dutch language, she doesn't understand what they're talking about and can't participate in the conversations. She would love to join her team members and get to know them better, but doesn't dare to. Her modest character holds Ghada back from asking her colleagues to talk in English instead of Dutch. She thinks that would be quite an impolite request as she does not want to force people to adapt to her individual needs. The administrative team, on the other hand, thinks Ghada is acting rude and uninterested. They interpret her behaviour as a clear sign of a lack of effort to integrate and decide to speak to their supervisor about Ghada's "inappropriate behaviour".

- What would you do if you were the supervisor of the administrative unit?
- What would you do if you were Ghada?

CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION

Learning to collaborate effectively with people from other cultures is a **vital skill** when you are working in a multicultural environment. People from diverse backgrounds often have different ways of thinking and communicating. Gaining insights into the differences between cultures helps team members to understand how culture shapes the way people behave and communicate and how misunderstandings might arise when we misinterpret different cultural behaviours. Cross-cultural awareness and communication training can provide employees with the knowledge, skills and expertise to collaborate effectively across cultures and promote acceptance and respect for diversity. **Three models** that are frequently taught are the models of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Lewis.

The Hofstede model of national culture

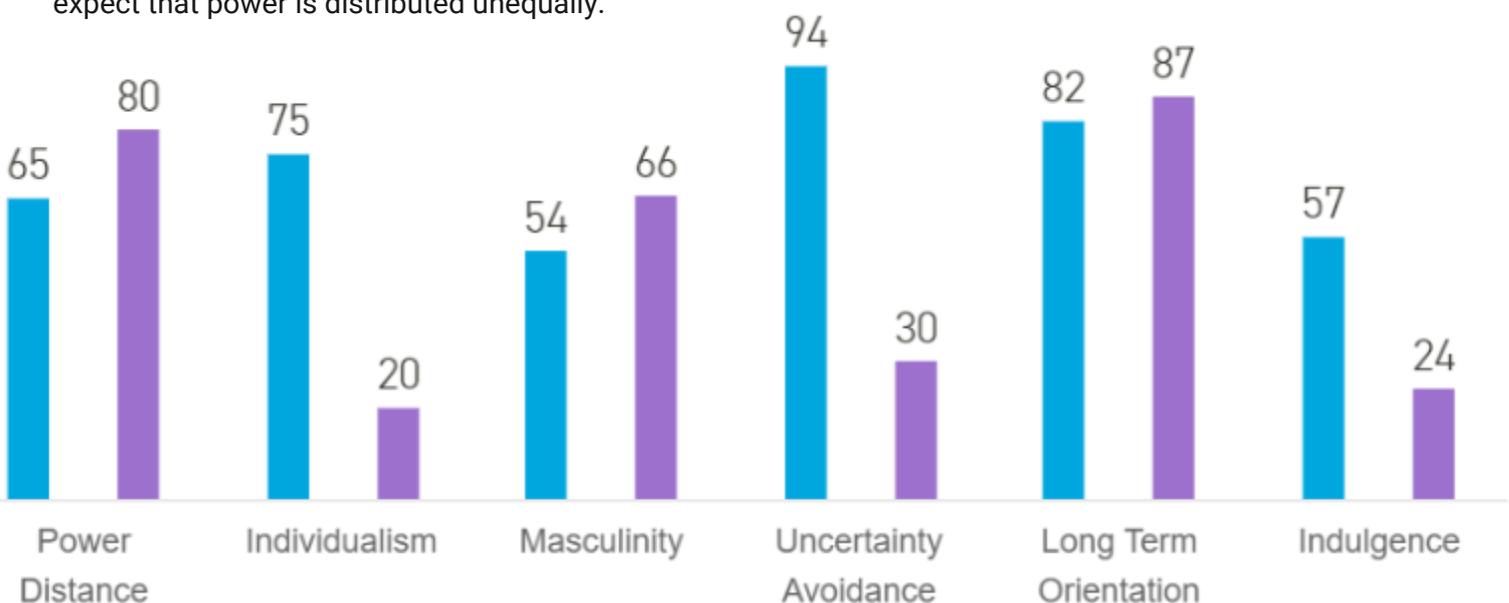
According to the model of Hofstede, culture is defined as ‘the collective mental programming of the human mind which distinguishes one group of people from another’. The model consists of **six dimensions**, which represent **independent preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguishes countries** (rather than individuals) from each other*:

- **Power distance:** the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

- **Collectivism vs. individualism:** the relative importance of individual versus group interests.
- **Femininity vs. masculinity:** what values are considered more important in a society. Wijzigen naar “the extent to which a society stress achievement (masculinity) or nurture (femininity)”.
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity.
- **Long-term versus short-term orientation:** the extent to which a culture is focused on the future or rather on the past and present.
- **Indulgence versus restraint:** the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised.

Interested to learn more?

- Check the series of 10-minute videos with PowerPoint presentations created by Geert Hofstede. There is an introduction video and one video per dimension of the national culture.
- You can use the country comparison tool by Hofstede (<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>) to compare how countries score on the 6 cultural dimensions. For instance, below you see a comparison of Belgium (blue) versus China (purple):



Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/>

Trompenaars cultural dimensions: the 7 D model

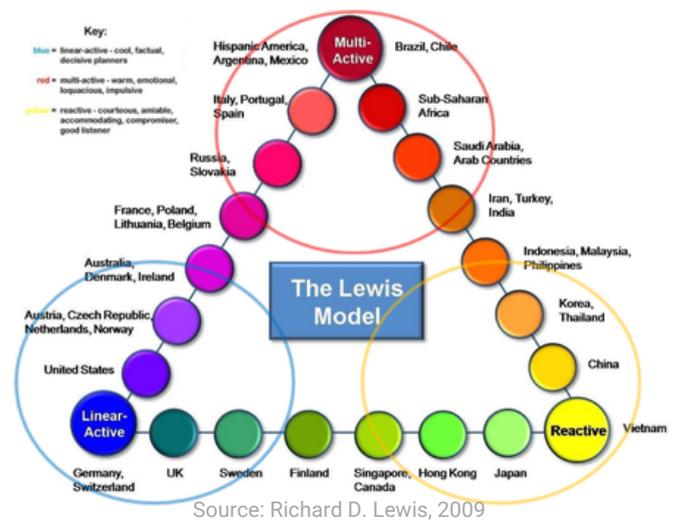
Trompenaars defines culture **as the way people solve problems**. Based on the solutions each culture chooses to certain problems, he defined **the following dimensions***:

- **Universalism vs. particularism:** the degree of importance of formal rules and procedures over circumstances and relationships.
- **Individualism vs. communitarianism:** this dimension is almost identical to Hofstede's individualism vs. collectivism dimension. Generally this dimension classifies countries according to the balance between the individual and group interests.
- **Specific vs. diffuse:** the extent to which the personal and professional life is integrated or separated.
- **Neutral vs. affective:** the extent to which emotions are displayed in the workplace. In neutral cultures emotions are usually displayed only at a minimum extent, while in affective cultures individuals feel comfortable to express their feelings and emotions in public.
- **Achievement vs. ascription:** this dimension is quite similar to power distance cultural dimension presented by Hofstede. It marks the level of tolerance of society towards the pattern of distribution of power and status amongst members of society.
- **Sequential time vs. synchronous time:** whether things get done one at a time or whether many things get done at once.
- **Internal direction vs. external direction:** the degree to which individuals believe they have control over external environment.

2. Multi-active. Multi-active cultures have people that are much more extrovert, rely on their eloquence and ability to persuade and use human force as an inspirational factor. They often complete human transactions emotionally. Such people are great networkers, working according to people-time rather than clock-time.

3. Reactive. People in reactive or listening cultures rarely initiate action or discussion. They prefer to first listen to and establish the other's position. Only at a later stage will they react to it and formulate their own position in the discussion***.

While the three types of cultures are distinctive, each possesses behavioural elements from the other two categories. It is a question of **which one is dominant**. Many individuals deviate from the national type in a work situation, for example engineers and accountants tend to be linear, sales people multi-active, lawyers and doctors reactive****.



Lewis Cultural Types Model

The Lewis model triangulates countries and their culture between **3 clear categories**. These categories are not based on nationality or religion but on behaviour:

1. Linear-active. People in linear-active cultures are people who carefully plan and manage their actions. They do things one at a time, according to schedule, and so are very accurate and efficient in their work. They like working with others who focus on the task and who appreciate structure and reason**.

Source: *International Business Door Stuart Wall, Sonal Minocha, Bronwen Rees + <https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2017/10/trompenaars-cultural-dimensions/>, **<https://magnussonllc.wordpress.com/2011/01/19/the-lewis-model-cultural-dimensions/>, ***<https://www.crossculture.com/about-us/the-model/reactive/>, ****<https://www.crossculture.com/the-lewis-model-dimensions-of-behaviour/>

Exercise: Learn about your team members' business habits

Cultural awareness helps to strengthen collaboration between colleagues in a diverse team. An open discussion on the local business habits of team members already helps to understand why people act and communicate the way they do. You can use one of the cross-cultural models above as a starting point to discuss similarities and differences between the different cultures represented in your team. One way of facilitating a discussion is to make a list of do's and don'ts per country. Another way is to list the topics that you want to discuss and that are relevant for your work and map how each culture represented in your team deals with this.

Behaviours	Belgium	Netherlands	Japan
Way of greeting			
Informal communication			
Decision making			
Feedback giving			
Handling emotions			
Dealing with hierarchy			
...			

FEEDBACK CULTURE

Giving and receiving feedback is crucial for professional and personal development, but **the way we like to give and receive feedback depends on culture**. In some cultures, being direct in giving feedback is highly appreciated. In other cultures, it is considered polite to deal with feedback more indirectly. It is important to **create a feedback culture where everyone feels at ease**. For example, practice an open door policy with care*: Do not only wait until people come to you and give feedback but actively ask for feedback.

When giving feedback, **use methods that focus on behaviour to avoid interpretations** (often biased by your own background). Recommended methods are the Situation-Behaviour-Impact model developed by the Center for Creative Leadership** or the non-violent communication process developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg***.

Situation-Behaviour-Impact Model

The Situation-Behaviour-Impact Model (SBI) of Center for Creative Leadership, has **proven to reduce the anxiety of delivering feedback and also reduce the defensiveness of the recipient**. This 3-step process may feel awkward or too formal at first, but once managers get some practice, they find it is incredibly helpful.

S

Situation: describe the situation. Be specific about when and where it occurred.

Example: "This morning at the 11 a.m. team meeting ..."

B

Behaviour: describe the observable behaviour. Keep to the facts. Do not insert opinions or judgements, and do not assume you know what the other person was thinking.

Example: "You interrupted me while I was telling the team about the monthly budget" (instead of "You were rude.")

I

Impact: describe what you thought or felt in reaction to the behaviour.

Example: "I felt frustrated when you interrupted me because it broke my train of thought."



Source: <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/seven-ways-to-better-communicate-in-today-s-diverse-workplace-seven-tips-for-communicating-in-today-s-diverse-workplace>, <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/hr-pipeline-a-quick-win-to-improve-your-talent-development-process/>, <https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/>



Non-violent communication

The non-violent communication process as developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg **helps you understand that feedback is a reflection of the other person's perception of your actions.** The basis of the non-violent communication strategy is to focus on **4 components:**

- **Observation:** give the facts, state the behaviour someone showed that you want to address/give feedback on. Be as precise as possible.
- **Feelings:** tell the person how their actions made you feel and why.
- **Needs:** tell the person what you would need.
- **Request:** request what kind of behaviour you would like the person to show in the future. Be as clear and concrete as possible. Also use a positive tone to phrase your request.

Consider the following **concrete example**, which illustrates possible ways of giving feedback to someone who missed a deadline:

Last week you didn't meet your deadline on handing in the paperwork for project X (Observation). This made me feel really stressed because I was waiting for it to finish my own work (Feelings). It would have helped me if I knew before that you couldn't reach a deadline so I could have adapted the scheme or set priorities (Need). So, next time can you communicate earlier so we can follow up closely on the deadline (Request).

In some cultures, missing a deadlines gives the perception that the person must have had other priorities. In other cultures, missing a deadline could create the perception that you are a slow worker and an underperformer. When you are frustrated you might be inclined to give the following feedback: "You are not a trustworthy team member. You missed the deadline again." Or "You're under performing, I think you're a really slow worker. Next time you'll have to work faster." This type of feedback will trigger a negative response or feeling without learning impact or solution.



"Every two weeks, I have one-to-one feedback meetings with my leader and I have monthly meetings where VDAB is also there. Now, I am confident with the process, but it was difficult for me in the beginning to get used to the level of directness. The feedback here is much more direct than in Iraq! In Belgium, they are always looking for zero error performance. In Iraq, you can make 50% mistakes and more."

– Omar from Iraq

1.3. BUILD NEW COMPETENCES

The development of inclusive competences is important when your organisation is becoming more diverse. These competencies encompass new leadership skills (cfr. Tool 2 - Building a diverse organisation: getting the foundation right), handling unconscious bias, and cross-cultural awareness and communication skills to learn to collaborate effectively with people from other cultures.

One of the most common ways that companies attempt to build such competencies is through **formal training**. A recent publication in Harvard Business Review indicates that research on the effectiveness of such programs has yielded mixed results. This has led to some pessimism regarding diversity training, though a recent meta-analysis of over 40 years of diversity training evaluations showed that diversity training can work, especially when it 1) targets awareness and skill development and 2) occurs over a significant period of time.

Research highlights how **changing a few aspects of diversity training can make your efforts much more impactful**. **Some important elements** to include in a diversity training are*:

- ✓ **Perspective-taking**: this is the process of mentally walking in someone else's shoes. The Harvard study shows that by writing a few sentences imagining the distinct challenges a marginalized minority might face – can improve pro-diversity attitudes and behavioural intentions toward these groups. These effects persisted even when outcomes were measured eight months after training. Even more exciting is the fact that perspective-taking was shown to be capable of producing crossover effects to other minority groups.
- ✓ **Goal-setting**: this can be successfully adapted by asking diversity training participants to set specific, measurable, and challenging (yet attainable) goals related to diversity in the workplace. For example, a trainee might set a goal to challenge inappropriate comments about marginalized groups when overhearing them in the future (in combination with receiving information about how to best handle such situations).
- ✓ **Include all levels within the company**. Every employee, regardless of their status in the company, can and should benefit from the sessions. Even the CEO needs to participate in the diversity training like everyone else. This does not only show others how serious the company is about the issue, it also acknowledges that bias is not always a conscious problem, and everyone can improve themselves with training**. Additionally, having an authority figure endorsing the importance of diversity initiatives can enhance the effect of training for individuals with resistance (linked to hierarchy and social dominance).
- ✓ **Link diversity training with your current processes**. As described in Tool 2 on how to set the foundation right, building a diversity and inclusion strategy works best when aligning with other strategic initiatives. Do not build diversity trainings on itself but incorporate them in your existing processes like onboarding, competence & leadership development, performance management, ...

Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/#International-Business-Door-Stuart-Wall-Sonal-Minocha-Bronwen-Rees>; © American Psychological Association. Final version published as: Bczukova, K., Spell, C. S., Perry, J. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2016). A meta-analytical integration of over 40 years of research on diversity training evaluation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 11, 1227-1274. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

2. A GREAT KICK-OFF FOR NEW RECRUITS

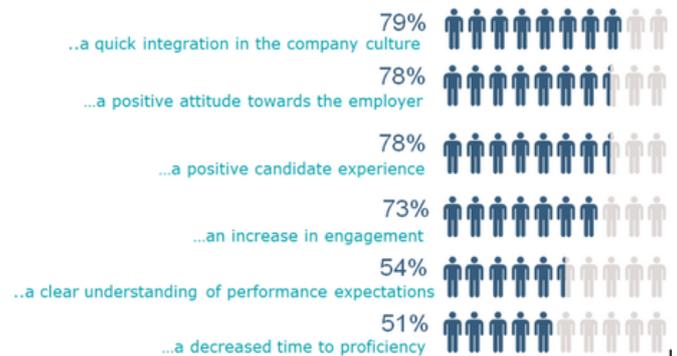


2.1. ONBOARDING IS KEY

Why is onboarding important?

An onboarding process is **essential for making employees feel included** in the organisation from day one. It sets the tone for a person's tenure at your company, laying the foundation for their organisational knowledge and working experience. Ensure you get the foundations right and business can reap the benefits of a diverse and international workforce*.

A recent study by Vlerick Business School and Talmundo** shows that pre- and onboarding leads to **significant positive outcomes**. Due to the onboarding employees experience:



Source: *<https://wavelength.asana.com/inclusive-onboarding-experience/>; **Buyens, D. & Vandenbroucke, A. (2018). The Power of Onboarding: What new hires want and what HR offers them. Unpublished manuscript, Vlerick Business School, Belgium

As already mentioned in this guide, it is important **not to assume that candidates with diverse backgrounds are aware of all 'normal/local' ways of doing business** and how to behave in your organisation. So make sure that you make implicit knowledge on how things are done explicit for new hires during the first days and weeks on the job. Some example of how newcomers experience the Belgian working context:



"Brazilians are more inclined to work. In Brazil, there are no labour organisations, you do not get paid for sick leave, whereas in Belgium, people get paid when they have a burnout, and you have strong labour organisations looking after the workers here." – Victor from Brazil

"I do have an impression that in general, there is a Belgian mentality that supports independency of employees more than guiding them. In the Middle East, most employees are guided on what they have to do. In Belgium, there is a big space of independency and creativity. In other parts of the world, your employer decides how your skills should develop. In Belgium, you decide that yourself." – Anas from Syria, lived in many places in the Middle East



"I heard that Belgian people are usually more distant and cold. However, this is not the case at the company where I work. Here, everyone is friendly and gentle. However, I will say that I miss the more spontaneous get-togethers we used to have in Belarus. Here, you always have to make appointments with people because they are so busy." – Nina from Belarus

"In Belgium, I find that there are more rules, more computer systems to navigate and in general some much more advanced systems than the ones from Iraq I am used to." – Hadeel from Iraq



Most important onboarding elements

- 1** **Share your company culture, strategic focus and code of conduct.** Make sure newcomers see the bigger pictures of where the organisation and team are heading and which values are key. A clear code of conduct as described above can help. Ideally this is done by senior leadership to already lower the threshold for future communication and connection.
- 2** Discuss personal performance expectations and development needs. Give newcomers a clear overview of their objectives for the first weeks and more long-term goals. Also discuss the competences that might need development and how to speed them up via learning-on-the-job and training.
- 3** "Self-confidence of international talent or talent from minority groups is often fragile. After looking for a job for quite some time or becoming part of a job market that you do not know inside out like you did at home, impacts your self-esteem. So make sure you empower and support these new hires and challenge them to use their additional talent, perspectives, ... Be careful not to pamper them since this might potentially reinforce their self-doubts. (Founder of job platform for international and multicultural talent).
- 4** Make sure all practical arrangements are made. Feeling welcome is subject to how well the organisation has prepared for your arrival. Newcomers might feel insecure or offended because practical things like keys, laptops, ... are not arranged in time (often due to complex internal processes). This also slows down their kick-off in the company, making them less efficient from the start. Minority groups who enter the organisation with some insecurity will be extra sensitive to this.
- 5** Facilitate interactions with different stakeholders. Quickly building an internal and external network is key for all newcomers. Make it a priority to introduce newcomers to all team members and stakeholders in other departments including senior leadership. Help to break the ice by organising individual or team meetings, organising a personal tour, asking colleagues to invite the newcomer to join at lunchtime, ...
- 6** Assign a mentor. Next to the supervisor it is important that newcomers have someone whom they can bother with informal and small questions. The mentor can also help to create an internal and external network. Moreover, the mentor can also be a sounding board for more personal challenges that impact the job like sick child care. See point 6.4 in this guide for more information on how to approach mentoring.
- 7** Give and ask feedback (check-ins): Regular follow-up moments by the supervisor are important to make sure everything is running well, that the newcomers feel at ease in the team, that performance expectations are set and they know how to reach them. Moreover, feedback from new hires can be refreshing to rethink your way of doing things in the company so handle them with care and listen intentionally.

Your
turn

Getting to know each other: “I Am, But I Am Not Exercise”

This inclusion activity suggested by MIT is a great way to break down misconceptions and stereotypes by allowing employees to report on how they identify themselves, while also allowing them to address the stereotypes behind these identifying factors. Here are the steps for the “I Am, But I Am Not”*:

- Each team member should fold a piece of paper in half to create two separate columns. In the first column, write down the heading ‘I Am’. In the second column, write down the heading ‘I Am Not’. In between these two columns, write down the word ‘But’. The final phrase will read “I am _____, but I am not _____.”
- Participants should fill out the first blank with some kind of common identifier, such as their race, religion, etc. and the second with a common stereotype about that group which is not true about them (whether the stereotype is positive or negative). For example “I am Asian, but I am not good at math.”
- Allow enough time for all participants to list at least 5 statements.
- Allow participants to share their statements with the team and have an open and respectful discourse on stereotypes.

LEARNING ON-THE-JOB

A low threshold way to introduce new types of talent in your company is to make use of different types of **internship and learning-on-the-job initiatives** sponsored by the public employment services and associations. These formulas offer **the following advantages:**

- Low risk experimenting with new types of hires with a period to assess competencies, learning curve and (company) culture fit.
- Learning by both sides: The employee gets local work experience and starts building a local network, which also aids in practicing the local language on the work floor + the organisation learns about the challenges and opportunities of introducing the new type of hires to be prepared for further action.
- In case of a fit, you have a very engaged hire on board!

Here you can find some **examples of learning-on-the job formulas:**

- An internship to get acquainted with the job (Beroepsinlevingsstage or BIS) by VDAB/Actiris: a paid internship.
- Individual profession training (Individuele beroepsopleiding or IBO) by VDAB/Actiris: limited fixed monthly fee for the first months of employment where the organisation provides an educational journey to further build the competencies of the newcomer for the job with the goal of hiring him/her. Additional (free) language coaching on the job is offered for non-native speakers.
- VDAB, Actiris and Forem offer financial benefits for certain type of employees (e.g. junior professionals, ...).
- Each industry has associations offering education and financial benefits.
- Employer associations offer learning circles on on-the-job learning like the WELT initiative from VOKA.

Source:*Harvard University (2013). Recruiting for Diversity. Retrieved from: https://hr.fas.harvard.edu/files/fas-hr/files/recruiting_for_diversity_9.17.13_0.pdf



2.2. EXTRA ATTENTION FOR RELOCATED TALENT

If your new hire recently relocated for the job or for family/personal reasons, there are a couple of things an organisation needs to take into account:

- ✓ **Administrative formalities:** Newcomers need to arrange quite some administrative formalities, such as their work permit, a new ID or driver's license, signing up for healthcare, etc. This might be a hassle when doing it for the first time, both for the employee and the employer. Making a checklist for new hires will bring them up to speed. Procedures for work permits have recently been streamlined. More information can be found on this website.
- ✓ **Partners/family:** Moving to a new country also means you need to start building a new social life. Take into account that newcomers have extra challenges for balancing their work and private life since they have no backup (like grandparents) for their family in case of sickness, ... Newcomers' partners also play an important role in the happiness of your newly moved employee. Supporting family matters by offering a good relocation package (including housing, schools, partner job search, ...) might have a positive impact on employee retention ensuring strong talents do not leave the company because their families do not feel at home in their new country. When dealing with this for the first time, an experienced relocation office could help you to build expertise, eventually leading your organisation to run this in-house. A strong relocation offer might also give you an additional boost in terms of employer branding for attracting international top-notch talent. Also take into account that your new employee builds his/her community at work but the spouse or partner of your new hire might struggle to feel at home. Organising events where partners are included might support them in building a new social network as well.





2.3. IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL LANGUAGE TRAINING

Belgium has 3 official languages: Dutch, French and German. Depending on the specific context of companies, a lot of vacancies require a reasonable proficiency in one or more of these three languages. Employers can **help new hires to learn the local language by providing language training externally or on the job:**

External language training

A first possibility is to support newcomers to find a suitable **external language course** which can help them lift their fluency in the local language to the next level. Companies might opt to provide **time during working hours** to engage in external language training or to (partly) subsidize the cost of language training outside the workplace. There are **different providers** that offer language training courses, for example:

- **Universities** (such as Linguapolis, University Language Centre) offer high-paced language training courses.
- **Public employment services** (such as VDAB, Forem or Actiris) offer different courses depending on the obtained level of proficiency.
- **The Berlitz language school**, which can be found in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Liège and Waterloo, offers a wide variety of courses individually or in group. They also offer online courses.
- **The adult education centers**, which can be found in most major cities in Flanders as well as in the Brussels area, offer courses depending on the proficiency level.
- **Duolingo** is an online language-learning platform. It's free, has an app and supports people to learn a language by using it 5 minutes a day at work.
- ...

These are just a few example of possible external language courses which might be helpful for new hires. It might be worthwhile to **make a list of possible options and discuss with employees what the best option is for them**. Depending on employee's preferences and job characteristics (e.g. for some positions it is impossible to be absent for a whole week), language training might take place in different formats. Think of immersion courses (very intensive group lessons, often organised at an external location), standard classroom settings (in group, during the day or in the evening), individual sessions face-to-face or virtually through video conferencing.

Language training on the work floor

Alternatively, companies can also invest in **language training on the work floor**. The Flemish employment service VDAB, for instance, developed the language course 'Dutch on the work floor'. The aim of this course is to give non-Dutch speakers in a predominantly Dutch-speaking environment enough understanding of the language to work effectively. Providing opportunities to learn the local language on the work floor is very valuable. **Highly-educated newcomers show a steep learning curve** when they get the chance to practice language on the work floor, and not only in classroom settings.

2.4. MENTORING

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a **two-way relationship** in which a more experienced or knowledgeable person (the mentor) helps to guide a less experienced person (the mentee). Once the candidate is hired, mentoring can be used to stimulate integration.

Mentorship is **mainly relationship-oriented** as it focuses on experiences, feelings and personal challenges, rather than task-related issues. As a consequence, **it is important for a mentor to get to know the mentee on a personal level** (and the other way around). By asking about each other's backgrounds, personal interests, and ambitions, chances are higher to build a long-term, sustainable connection. Furthermore, if the new hire arrived in the new country very recently, he/she might benefit from some practical help outside of work: housing, registrations, insurances, obtaining a driver's license, interpretation of the first pay slip... the mentor can play an important role in this administrative tasks, either hands-on or by referring to relevant institutes.

Mentorship **can help decrease bias in organisations by exposing employees to more people who are less like them**. Important remark is that hierarchical relationships may not have the same effect as horizontal ones.

In fact, many assigned mentorship programmes are by nature hierarchical and may actually aggravate individuals' prejudices*. In other words, it is important to frame diverse mentorship programmes as mutual learning processes and not as "teacher-student" relationships.

“Now we have some international talents working for the company, we noticed that follow-up after hiring requires as much attention. That is why we ensure that every person that is hired through the Skills to Succeed initiative gets a mentor, who can probe for mood and questions or concerns on a regular basis and who can guide that person.”

-Magali, Corporate Citizenship Lead, Accenture

Two-way street

It is important to understand that mentoring is a two-way street where **both mentor and mentee can learn from each other**. Especially when mentor and mentee are different from each other in terms of professional background, gender, ethnicity,... a mentoring trajectory might be very interesting because they learn about each other's perspectives.

Source: <https://hbr.org/2018/07/the-other-diversity-dividend>





If managed successfully, these diverse mentorship programmes **send a strong positive signal throughout the company about diversity**. They help to establish connections between different groups of employees, build communication networks, and make it possible to spread different ideas across the company. Mentoring has proven to be a highly effective technique to allow employees to grow their network and improve careers in terms of promotion rates. In other words: If properly positioned and designed, a diversity-focused mentoring program can provide **outstanding results for both mentor, mentee and the organisation***.

” *An enriching experience that builds bridges between different cultures and ages: a win-win!* ”

- Eva, 55 years old, mentor at DUO

Matching mentor and mentee

A good fit between a mentor and mentee **is a key determinant of successful mentoring****. Some of your workers will be more receptive to adapting to a diverse work culture than others. These individuals could fill a valuable role as mentor. Pair them with workers from different cultures to provide training and help with assimilation into the work environment.

Still, matching mentors and mentees to each other **is not a simple process**. Use data to gain more insights in the characteristics of your (new)

population. One way to get information is creating a questionnaire that asks potential mentors and new hires about their career objectives, communication styles, and what they are looking for in a mentor or mentee. As such, a good match can be achieved, which leads to a successful relationship based on similar interests and complementary goals***.

Internal or cross-organisational mentorship programmes

Mentor and mentee can be two employees within the same organisation, but a mentor can also be linked to an external organisation or Ngo. Several institutes (like **Connect2Work** or **DUO**) have as their core business to link a mentor (often a volunteer) to a person of foreign origin who recently arrived in his/her new guest country (the mentee). In this setting, mentees are often still looking for a job. The mentor helps him/her to get to know the job market, to find the job search strategy, to write a CV and cover letter,... But also after the mentee found a job, **mentor and mentee stay in contact to exchange experiences**. Testimonials describe the process as enriching for both mentor and mentee.

Talent2Connect - a platform where different organisations from the private, public and social sectors join their forces to guide untapped talents to the right employment solutions - have made a clear overview of interesting mentoring projects per region.

Source: *<https://chronus.com/blog/mentoring-helps-diversity-in-organizations>+<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2019/01/23/improve-workplace-culture-with-a-strong-mentoring-program/#1c62264576b5>**<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0018726708098081>**<https://www.roberthalf.com/blog/management-tips/how-mentoring-relationships-help-strengthen-your-company>

3. TESTIMONIAL HELLO CUSTOMER

Leslie Cottenje, CEO, Hello Customer

Diversity, not a goal in itself

Diversity is not a topic on the strategic agenda of Hello Customer. However high on the agenda is our international growth where we see the world as our playground: building an international team fits these goals and also further builds our entrepreneurial company culture.

From a natural process to a strategic approach

Our first international hires were not planned to be international but based on strong match with the profiles and competences we were looking for. These talents also came through international and local networking rather than through the classic recruitment channels. The recruitment process is aligned with the process for local candidates: check of the track record and motivation. The first meeting is by Skype and if well, we will invite them over. We will also add an extra check on why they would like to live in Ghent since moving for your job has a big impact on your professional and private life. This should be a very conscious part of the decision process.

For our IT talents we recently decided to combine our local team with international IT sourcing in Morocco, Portugal and Warsaw.

The importance of a good onboarding process

We have a strong onboarding process for all new recruits, so no separate approach for internationals. Nevertheless we pay extra attention for the following:

- We stimulate internationals to **learn the local language(s)**. Although our corporate language is English, informal communication inside and especially outside the company is in Dutch. A fast-track in language helps to feel 'home' more quickly.
- We pay extra attention **not to treat internationals differently**. One experience learned us we were pampering a new talent who started with an internship too much, withholding her to stretch her wings. After an open talk, she received clear goals and freedom in her process and her self-confidence grew with great business results for her project.
- In **our company culture** health and well-being are high on the agenda. We provide some extra's like a healthy breakfast, a leisure area, fun activities after work... This also has a positive impact on our international team member, helping them to quickly connect and build a social link.



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