

Why is There Intercultural Conflict?

There is always conflict between people because we have different needs and wants. For example, you may want to see an action movie but your significant other wants to see a comedy or you may prefer eating at a Mexican restaurant while your spouse wants Chinese. However, you have known each other well for years and will work it out.

In the workplace there is always be conflict as well but it's usually more difficult to resolve than with personal relationships. There are differences between workers, between workers and supervisors, between departments, between companies, between companies and their customers, between companies and their governing bodies and on it goes. These relationships are usually not as deep or trusting as personal ones making resolving disputes more difficult and challenging.

Interestingly, most workplace conflict is totally unnecessary because they are usually the result of simple misunderstandings, miscommunications or small differences that could be easily resolved if the parties truly knew each other's motivations.

Unfortunately, at work there is rarely the opportunity to develop deep personal relationships and when you add the complexity of cross-cultural differences and the gulf can seem insurmountable. Culture brings unique perspectives on deadlines, conflict resolution, speaking one's mind, working as a team and much more.

However, with a little training and education people will recognize that they have a lot more in common than they have differences. When cross-cultural conflict is resolved and employees with diverse backgrounds and skills start to work together the potential and promise of diversity in the workplace can be fully realized. Contact us for a free consultation about how to harness the power of diversity in your company by calling (800) 417-7325.

About the author: Michael Soon Lee, DBA, is a cultural expert and author of eight books about overcoming cultural conflict including, "Cross-Cultural Selling for Dummies" and "Black Belt Negotiating". Dr. Lee has spoken to over 1,000 organizations around the world such as Coca-Cola, Chevron, Boeing, State Farm Insurance, and Charles Schwab.