

Part Two: Strategies to improve communication in intercultural settings

Many of these strategies also serve as good pastoral skills and can be employed in a variety of discussions and intercultural encounters. Put these tools to the test: Select any two strategies and put them into practice them in your next church meeting.

1. Be aware of differences, including status (authority), age, gender and social and economic background that may cause misunderstanding.
2. Make sure your expectations and reactions are clear. Ask about the expectations and reactions of your conversation partner or committee member(s).
3. Some people prefer to express opinions on contentious issues in small groups. For discussion and input on important and/or contentious issues, use small groups and have each group report their discussion.
4. Listen actively:
 - Avoid jumping to conclusions about the message being delivered after listening to the person for a few minutes.
 - Be patient and listen carefully to the message delivered at the end of the exchange as this may be a key point the person is trying to make.
5. Repeat, rephrase and illustrate messages and instructions. Avoid asking, "Do you understand?" Instead, write the message down or try to get the person to restate what you have said.
6. Expect delayed reactions:
 - It may take time for the person to think of appropriate words.
 - Avoid filling silence with chatter that may distract the person.
 - It is often easier for people to write than to say what they mean.
7. Tell personal stories instead of jokes.
 - Humour and jokes often rely on nuances of language.
 - Telling personal stories is usually an effective way to build rapport.
8. Avoid slang, jargon and colloquial expressions.
9. When using examples, relate to common experiences or specific situations—a general example from your own culture may not be understood.
10. Beware of acronyms
 - Many acronyms change in other languages (e.g. AIDS is SIDA in French)
 - The initials MP, OPEC may not make any sense to the listener, or worse, they may spell something very unpleasant.
 - They may cause the listener to lose confidence in the speaker.
11. Explore ways to communicate and relate using visual cues (pictures, charts, diagrams) and shared activities.

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