



One-day Workshop WIA-E Rome Local Group “Cross-cultural communication and Management”

12th July 2019, Telespazio S.p.A., Roma

Cultural diversity is a key issue for modern management activities. Nowadays, many cultural factors significantly affect communication, managerial and professional styles. In this context, WIA-E Rome Local Group has selected and funded the one-day workshop “Cross-cultural communication and Management” proposed by Rome Business School, an international training and research institute of excellence in Rome. The Head of Executive Education Gerlie Saura and the multipreneur Natalie De Broux from Rome Business School warmly welcomed the participants during the breakfast refreshment.



Cristina Valente and Annamaria Nassisi, leader and co-leader of Rome Local Group, gave an introductory speech to the participants. They pointed out that WIA-E is envisioning and supporting an inclusive representation of diversity in the aerospace sector and stressed the importance of diversity as a strength and an added value.



As the brilliant lecturer Natalie De Broux said, the event aimed at promoting a cross-cultural approach leading to appreciate and integrate diversity both in professional and in personal life. In particular, the main objectives of the course comprehended: learning to manage the cultural richness of an international environment, avoiding stereotypes and judging attitudes and sharing advises and practices to openly work with people from other cultures.

Before the beginning of the course, the lecturer invited the attendees to choose a picture representing the concept of “culture”. The participants were then asked to divide in small groups to discuss their thoughts and to present themselves to the others. Few minutes later, one member of each group shared to the class the results of their brainstorming. Interesting and thoughtful comments were exposed. According to





the group presentation, culture could be associated to different images: the **sea**, as we can easily see what is on the surface, but there is always something deeper that we cannot understand at a first glance, a **calendar**, as culture is a reality that is constantly changing and evolving, a **bridge**, as it is something that unites individuals from across the world and also **food**, that is a peculiar characteristics of different groups of people and a way to socialize and connect.

Natalie appreciated their opinions and then took the floor to introduce more formal definitions of the term “culture”. According to G. Hofstede, culture is like the “colour of the eye, you cannot change or hide it, and although you cannot see it yourself, it is always visible to other people when you interact with them”. Indeed, a “group’s culture is the set of unique characteristics that distinguishes its members from another group” (P. Rosinski). Another interesting matter of reflection was the sentence “Culture is not a question of personality type, it’s more about how we expect people to behave in social context”. However, especially when working, everyone should remember that we meet a person, not a culture, and that the company habits could be very different from the culture of the country. Therefore, it is of vital importance to understand and respect others’ manners to obtain a fruitful and cooperative working environment.

Natalie then asked to the participants to think about a particular “Cultural Shock” they experienced in their everyday lives. The class was divided in small groups again and everyone had the opportunity to share his/her story. After having acknowledged several cultural differences, the lectures illustrated the steps to achieve unity through diversity, proactively looking for gems in different cultures by stressing the importance of saying “and” instead of “or”.



After the first part of the course, the attendees had lunch in the company’s canteen, enjoying a nice meal and keeping on commenting the concepts exposed during the workshop.

The second part of the lecture focussed on a group exercise giving an insight on how trust is essential for multicultural management and how it is important to achieve a balance between communication and listening capabilities. Each group was given some written cards reporting habits of orators and listeners from different countries. Some



members of the group impersonated the speakers, the others the audience. The objective of the exercise was to individuate some practical expedients to communicate efficiently and clearly in a multicultural environment, trying to respect others' manners while reaching a good compromise.

After that, Natalie highlighted that inter-cultural communication is heavily influenced by stereotypes and judgemental attitudes, thus resulting in biases when approaching a different culture. In this regard, she introduced a tool to facilitate relationships in a multi-cultural environment: the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF,

<http://www.cofassessment.net/>).

The COF is an integrative framework designed to assess and compare cultures. It includes a range of cultural dimensions/orientations grouped in seven categories of practical importance to leaders, professional coaches and anyone striving to unleash human potential in organizations: sense of power and responsibility, time management approaches, definitions of identity and purpose, organizational arrangements, notions of territory and boundaries, communication patterns, and modes of thinking.



Natalie explained that a cultural orientation is an inclination to think, feel or act in a way that is culturally determined. She remarked that COF could be very useful to give a systematic approach for clarifying the nature of cultural differences, to provide a common vocabulary and to achieve cultural synergy.

In the last part of the lecture, Natalie gave some advices on how to prepare a business presentation for an



internationally mixed audience, among them: speak clearly and in a way that is easy to follow you for everyone, use "International English" and dress according to the audience.

She concluded the event with the inspiring sentence: *"There are no strangers; there are only friends we never met before"*.

To express their gratitude towards Gerlie Saura and Natalie De Broux, the women of the Rome LG donated them two bunches of flowers.



At the end, very elegant certificates of attendance signed from Dean of Rome Business Schools were handed in to all the participants with a nice ceremony



The Rome Local Group is very delighted to have perceived a great enthusiasm about the topic and above all to have improved its ability of respectfully connecting with different cultures.

Magic atmosphere has been established from the beginning with a natural collaboration within the rotating group formed during the workshop.





A special thanks also to our Rome LG Core member Maria Messina that was the promoter of the course and she proposed the Rome Business School.



We want remember the commemoration of the WIA-E 10 years with the Natalie sentence

“There are no strangers; there are only friends we never met before”

We are proud to continue our work with women and men without any gender, generation and geographic diversity

WIA Europe Rome Local Group