



THE HEART OF INTERCULTURAL CONNECTION

How does connecting across cultures
lead to remarkable opportunities?



CONNECTION MATTERS.



Creating a bridge between cultures requires deep insight that doesn't usually come to us naturally. Because our firmly-held cultural values seem like the 'obvious' norm everyone else 'should' align to, working with people that use a different **cultural value** set usually results in an immediate or eventual clash. So often we miss the opportunity for surprising collaboration that lies waiting in our intercultural working relationships. The problem is that we simply fail to **connect**.

When organizations with a global reach are stuck in a never-ending cycle of competing cultural values, it can feel like steering a ship that no amount of money can turn. The only hope is an unconventional perspective that can turn liabilities into **competitive advantages**.

At **Vision Wheel**, we're all about brand-new perspectives; we know what it takes to cultivate connection differently. We believe that, for organizations with international stakes, there is a whole lot resting on getting day-to-day intercultural connection right.

Should we gravitate toward safety in our similarities or strength in our differences?



In our globalized world, technology affords us near instant connection with just about anyone that can access a radio wave or some Wi-Fi. And while that has provided the opportunity for us to be 'virtually' anywhere, has it really led to **stronger** cultural connections? Maybe not. Technology and accessibility are only a small part of the bigger equation. And this is a formula we can't afford to get wrong.

The good news is that the **upside** extends far beyond the bottom line. When an organization embraces intercultural connections and makes an intentional effort to foster these relationships by deepening understanding, it creates a ripple effect that moves beyond corporate walls into individuals' views of the world around them. Now this might sound idealistic, but the reality is that the most successful and respected organizations today are not only **considering** how to make this a priority. They're **doing it**, and are winning with consumers – big time.

Organizations who think **strategically** and **creatively** about intercultural connections know there are treasures to be found.

WHAT IS INTERCULTURAL CONNECTION?

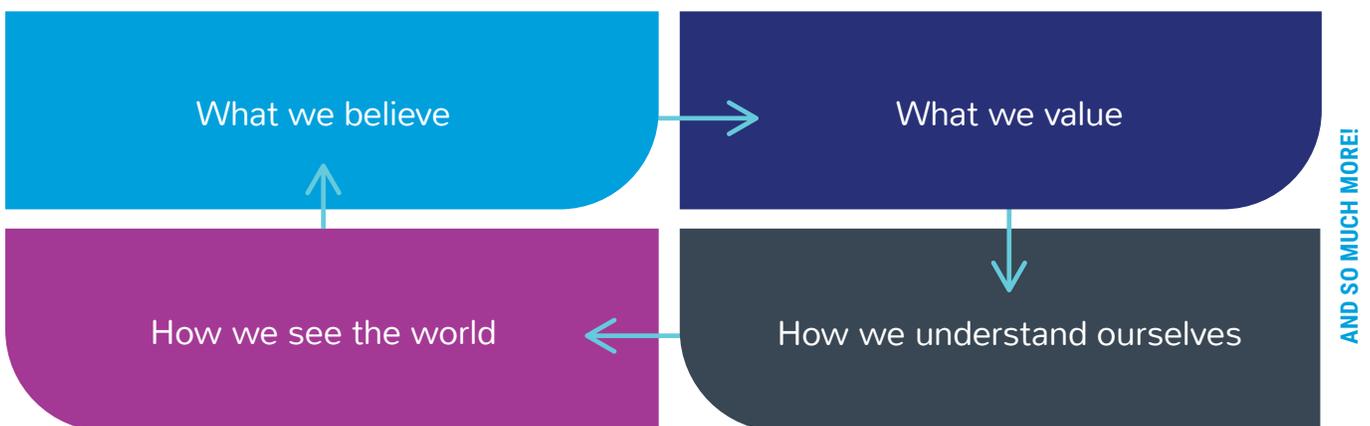
Intercultural connection is the bringing together of people through an increased understanding of one another's cultural norms. This **understanding** then results in a strategic adaptation of our **conversational approach**.

There are several levels of influence that permeate intercultural connections. It starts with individuals, who all hold different points of view. Then extends to teams of people, and next to the organization at large, who has a culture of its own. So, from the get-go, the complexity here is obvious. Different levels require different strategies, but there is a goldmine waiting to be tapped if an organization can raise the level of cultural **understanding** even just one layer at a time.



Behaviours and norms we have learnt from our culture, impact the way we see, the way we think and the way we act.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO CULTURE?

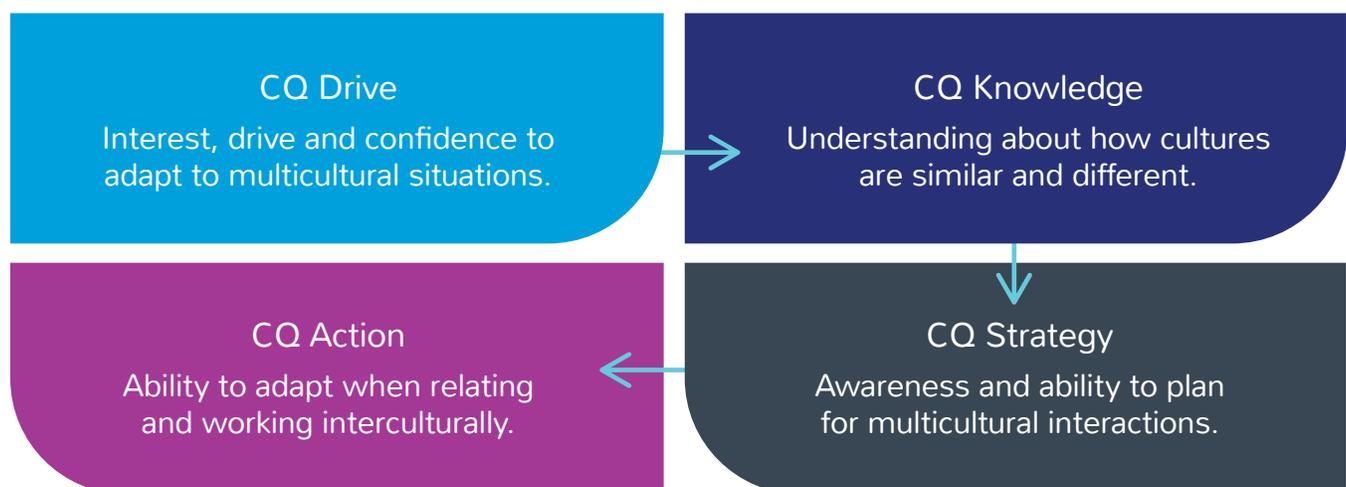


CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Where to begin? After recognizing the value of building stronger intercultural connections, the next step is to diagnose **cultural differences** that are impacting employee or customer experiences. There are some well-known broad cultural value categories that can be useful at this stage and help in plotting out gaps before moving on towards a remedy. Every culture plots differently on scales used in these categories, which influences how they behave and react. They include communication, evaluation, persuasion, leadership, decision-making, trust-building, confrontation, and time management, among others.

What's needed next is a framework for building a comprehensive strategy. 'Cultural Intelligence' (CQ), a term coined by David Livermore, exemplifies the gold-standard of **mastering intercultural connections**. Focusing on developing these four areas increases CQ and, oh yes, skyrockets results.

Where front line workers serve customers with different cultural backgrounds, diagnosing and remedying differences can really make waves.



Source: David Livermore, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*

HOW DO WE GET TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER?



Shaping intercultural connections via training requires a high degree of focus and a roadmap that leads to results. At [Vision Wheel](#), we start by building [connected foundations](#) helping people understand the cultural undertones at play in their work. Then, we focus on the critical soft skills that enable [connected conversations](#) to build those intercultural bridges. Finally, we fill in the finer skills required to create [connected solutions](#), as team members learn to practically apply all of this to their roles.

As we work through these stages, we embrace several guiding principles. Any intercultural connection strategy should be:

PRACTICAL

Training people on theory alone won't drive meaningful change. Rather, results follow when theory and knowledge application has been made intensely practical.

PROVEN

Building cultural intelligence requires well-tested, well-proven training and communication methods that are truly effective in shifting mindsets and behaviours.

ENGAGING

Since engaged minds retain information in ways disengaged minds never could, innovative engagement methods while rolling out strategies are critical to success.

INTEGRATED

Connection training and communications materials should always be branded to match overarching brands, fitting seamlessly within existing structures and systems.

COMPREHENSIVE

Given the complexities of intercultural understanding, a solution that fully addresses the innumerable dynamics and nuances at play within an organization is required.



WHY FOCUS ON INTERCULTURAL CONNECTIONS?

Spotlight:

CROSS-CULTURAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

If you've listened to enough customer service calls, you'll immediately recognize the difference between two people with a strong connection on a call, versus two people with a weak connection. When connections are strong, conversation tends to roll smoothly. Both parties are at ease and they work through issues together, collaboratively. There is a high level of respect and mutual appreciation. On the other hand, when there is a weak connection, a call can seem awkward and strained. You'll frequently hear frustration in both voices and long periods of silence. Many times, conflict results, escalation occurs, and sometimes services are even cancelled.

When call centre agents are trying to connect with customers across cultures, it is common to misinterpret what is being said (or how it is being said) because of layers of cultural differences that exist. By understanding these cultural differences, we remove misinterpretation, and build a **better, smoother, easier** connection. It is that strong connection that results in an excellent customer experience and lasting loyalty.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF INTERCULTURAL CONNECTION →

It is only when you start to identify what makes your culture different from others that you can begin to open a dialogue of sharing, learning and ultimately understanding.



BENEFITS OF A STRONG INTERCULTURAL CONNECTION FOR CUSTOMERS:

- A more positive general impression of your brand
- Better enjoyment of products and services
- Higher chances of referring your brand or product to a friend
- Extended customer loyalty
- Less chance of considering the competition

BENEFITS OF A STRONG INTERCULTURAL CONNECTION FOR EMPLOYEES:

- A feeling of personal accomplishment and satisfaction
- Improved first-call resolutions with happier customers
- Increased customer satisfaction and call review scores
- Significantly expanded sales opportunities
- Improved customer retention results

It's easy to see how getting to the heart of intercultural connections within your teams and organizations can make an enormous difference in this one simple example. Cultural value differences can create invisible and toxic frustrations, so it's necessary to get to the root of the issues before they breed disengagement. With the **right diagnosis** and understanding, bridges can be built, tensions can be relieved, and organizations can truly flourish.

At [Vision Wheel](#), we believe culture matters. And working with global organizations who want to figure out a comprehensive, proven, practical, engaging intercultural connection strategy means bringing change to our world on a whole new level.

As we continue to bring the heart of intercultural connections to financial, telecom, government, education, consulting and philanthropic sectors, we find ourselves getting to the heart of so much more! We're filling our daily lives with countless special moments we hadn't considered possible before.

How could an [internal intercultural connection](#) transform your organization?

[START YOUR JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY TODAY.](#)





VISIONWHEEL

Vision Wheel is an internal communications agency specialized in one-of-a-kind employee experiences, result-defining employee education and long-lasting employee engagement.

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