

# Develop Cultural Intelligence

## Brief Summary

Today's workplaces are more diverse and multicultural than ever which has opened up new opportunities but also created new challenges. Professors Christopher Earley and Soon Ang defined [Cultural Intelligence](#) as "the ability to adapt to new cultural settings" and, as reported in [HBR](#), it is "an outsider's seemingly natural ability to interpret someone's unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures the way that person's compatriots would." The article identifies three components of Cultural Intelligence or CQ: **head** (cognitive component), **body** (mannerisms/demeanor) & **heart** (emotional component).

[Research](#) shows that professionals with high CQ are more successful on international assignments, as they adjust more easily to living and working within new cultural conditions. CQ can also give you insights into not just the geographical cultures but the organizational cultures in different workplaces. [Another research](#) makes it increasingly clear that companies with more diverse workforces perform better financially.

### Challenge

We can't assume we have the same perspective in the workplace or assume there is "one right way." In a more global workplace, we all need the skills to effectively work with colleagues who may have different values and approaches.

Many people believe that culture refers only to nationality, ethnicity or religion; it also applies to age groups, social groups, business organizations and departments, and teams within them. This broader understanding develops an organization's awareness of the power of cultural intelligence to increase business agility. Low CQ may result in misunderstandings and divisions within teams.

### Recommendation

In his 2011 [book](#), Dr David Livermore highlights four practical aspects of CQ that need to be developed to boost one's cultural intelligence:

**CQ Drive:** The motivation to learn about new cultures.

**CQ Knowledge:** Understanding how cultures influence what people say and do.

**CQ Strategy:** Having a plan to respond to cultural differences.

**CQ Action:** Behaving in culturally-sensitive ways, including handling any difficulties that arise.

## Proposed Actions

- Create safe space for employees to learn about others' cultures and how it affects their behavior and feelings.
- Give employees opportunities to engage in cross-team & cross-departmental projects.
- Provide training to raise awareness on how cultures shape employees' beliefs and behavior and to encourage employees to create their own plan to respond to cultural differences.
- Encourage managers and leaders to model culturally intelligent behaviors, both non-verbally and verbally.



### About the Author

[Betsy Bagley](#) is Pulsely's Co-Founder and DEI Director.

## Valued Guidance

### To Read



[Forbes: Why You Need Cultural Intelligence \(And How To Develop It\)](#)

[Asana: Why building cultural intelligence makes you a better manager](#)

### To Watch / Listen



[TEDx Talks: Cultural intelligence: the competitive edge for leaders](#)

### To Learn / Study



[CIPD: Managing multicultural teams](#)

[Coursera: Cultural Intelligence](#)

[LinkedIn Learning: Cultivating Cultural Competence and Inclusion](#)

[LinkedIn Learning: Developing Cross-Cultural Intelligence](#)