

# The impact of cultural values

Workplaces today are filled with people from different cultural backgrounds. Author and cultural intelligence specialist **Gaiti Rabbani** explains how your cultural values impact your leadership style

**LEADERSHIP IN** today's global world is a multicultural challenge laden with complexity. Whether you're leading across geographical borders or navigating increased diversity at home, one of the key challenges is to align people of different cultural backgrounds to work together to fulfil the same objectives.

It is fair to say it would be impossible to master all the norms and values of the many cultures that most people encounter on a daily basis. The good news is that, whether you are managing a diverse team in Australia, strategising entry into new markets in Asia or reporting to shareholders in Europe, you don't have to learn the intricacies of each culture. Becoming aware of the cultural values that shape your leadership style, the variations that exist among cultures, and how those differences play out is the key.

Culture is a filter people use to perceive and interpret the world around them. This filter is mostly subconscious. By developing cultural intelligence (CQ) we become more

aware of our assumptions and how they can impact our ability to motivate and influence others.

We explore three cultural values here that will help you uncover your leadership style and consider ways in which you may adapt your approach to better influence, motivate and engage your stakeholders.

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**Context. What is your communication style? Is it explicit, direct and clear, or is your communication style more indirect, emphasising harmony?**

Consider that in Australia it is culturally acceptable, in fact expected, that individuals should express their views in the workplace.

Discussion and debate and even explicit expression of disagreement are the norm. In contrast, in India, China and South Korea, rarely would an individual openly communicate a difference of opinion when seniors are present. A convention of hierarchy holds strong in such cultures where leaders and elders within the family, community and

business are held in high regard. The culture is one of promoting harmony, and silence represents respect.

To obtain viewpoints from across your team, you may consider offering alternative ways for them to share information with you. By scheduling a private conversation before