



## **Working across cultural differences – professional, organizational or national**

Below are listed some common reactions to encountering cultural differences :-

### **Ethnocentric pitfalls - Culture as Given**

#### 1. Ignore differences

- Be physically or mentally isolated/separated
- Deny

#### 2. Recognize differences but evaluate them negatively

- Denigrate others
- Feel superior
- Place others on a pedestal

#### 3. Recognize differences but minimize their importance

- Trivialize
- Fail to notice the unique – "we are all the same"

### **Ethnorelative approaches - Culture as a Process**

#### 4. Recognize and accept differences

- Acknowledge, appreciate, understand
- Acceptance ≠ agreement, surrender
- Acceptance needs to be instinctual and emotional as much as intellectual

#### 5. Adapt to differences

- Move outside one's comfort zone
- Empathy (temporary shift in perspective)
- Adaptation ≠ adoption, assimilation

#### 6. Integrate differences

- Hold different frames of reference in mind
- Analyze and evaluate situations from various cultural perspectives
- Remain grounded in reality; it is essential to avoid becoming dazzled by too many possibilities

#### 7. Leverage differences

- Make the most of differences, strive for synergy
- Proactively look for gems in different cultures
- Achieve unity through diversity

**Sources:**

Bennett, M. & Rosinski, P. in Rosinski, P. "Coaching across Cultures", 2003, Pubr Nicholas Brealey.

For further information please contact:

Eoin McCarthy  
Threshold Consulting Ltd

Tel/fax: +44 (0) 1684 891 566  
Email: [eoinm@threshold.uk.com](mailto:eoinm@threshold.uk.com)

Threshold Consuting Ltd 2006