

UNIT 8

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## LECTURE 11 and Handout 1

### DESO – Detailed Description

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The **DESO Model of Intercultural Communication** may help to resolve communication problems across cultures. It may be used as a guide to develop the skills for dealing with people from other cultures when discussing needs, conflict, motivation, perception, assumptions, etc.

- D** *Describe* the exact **behavior** that is under discussion and your interpretation of it. *Determine* the important facts; be objective; use concrete, terms.
- E** Express your **feelings** about the situation. If you are upset, confused, frustrated, just say so calmly, directing yourself to the behavior and not the person. *Evaluate* all perspectives, showing respect for the other's point of view. *Examine* the intent as well as the content.
- S** *Specify* the **new behavior** you would prefer. *Speak* about alternate approaches.
- O** *Outline* the **outcome**, the **positive results** expected from the new behavior. *Observe* how everyone needs to know the consequences when suggested changes are put into effect. *Offer* feedback and positive verbal support.

One example of how DESO may be followed when talking to people from other cultures is:

"Today, while I facilitated the workshop, you had your arms folded and your eyes closed. It was obvious to me that you were not paying and that bothered me. In this environment, we expect your full attention by having direct eye contact and good posture, but I understand it may be different in your culture. It would be helpful in the future if you could try to pay attention the way we mainstream Americans do, and I know people would appreciate it. If you continue the same as you did today, people will consider you to be rude. Aside from that, I really enjoy our working together."

Choose a situation that you face on the job that you must deal with and practice using the DESO model.

Adapted from *50 Activities for Diversity Training*  
by Jonamay Lambert and Selma Myers. HRD Press, 1994

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## EXERCISE 9A

### DESO Model of Intercultural Communication

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- Objective:** The purpose of this activity is to tie in intercultural concepts with a practical approach in the workplace.
- Time:** 45-60 minutes
- Materials:**
- Lecture and Handout 1 for each participant
  - Handout 2 for each participant
- Procedure:**
1. Divide participants into groups of four or five. Give each group one case study from Handout 2, or have each group develop their own based on their experiences.
  2. Allow a few minutes for everyone to read the cases or to develop new ones.
  3. Have each group discuss what is happening in the assigned case, how culture played a part, how the situation could have been handled and whether or not the conflict could have been avoided in the first place.
  4. Ask each group to report and discuss the different responses.
  5. Distribute the Handouts to each participant.
- Learning Point:** This activity offers a good opportunity to discuss culture clashes and to analyze several situations in light of good intercultural communication practices. Summarize by discussing the importance of developing communication skills to manage diversity. Point out how each case study could have been handled in terms of DESO. If time permits, each group should role-play its case study using the DESO model.
- Facilitator's Notes:** There is an example in the lecture and handout 1 and several examples in Handout 2 illustrating how DESO may be used. Using these examples as a guide, have participants create new case studies that may be more appropriate or applicable to their experiences.

## EXERCISE 9B

### Case Studies

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#### Case 1. Handling Ethnic Jokes

You are in a meeting and before the Boss comes in, there's a general feeling of camaraderie, with many jokes. You suddenly realize that an ethnic joke has been told and, as you look up and see the face of the person whose group has been slandered, you realize he's been hurt. There is an awkward silence for a moment and then general sports banter takes over and the subject is changed.

#### *Questions*

- What should you do?
  - How do you feel and how should you handle the situation?
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#### Case 2. A New Colleague

One of your white male co-workers was told he would be getting a new black colleague as his office-mate. Before the white man ever met his new office mate, he was heard grumbling and groaning about all the trouble he would have and how he didn't have time to offer the new man all the help he knew he would need. You were standing nearby when he described his feelings.

#### *Questions*

- Why was the white employee so concerned?
  - What was going on here? What could you do to help the situation?
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#### Case 3. Performance Review

The "mainstream" supervisor calls in the Laotian employee for a semiannual evaluation. After the supervisor offers some positive aspects of the evaluation, she begins to discuss areas for improvement.

Since the Laotian employee looks down at the floor during the entire feedback session, the supervisor concludes that the employee is hiding something. When the supervisor tries to draw it out of him, the employee begins to giggle.

#### *Questions*

- How might this behavior be explained? What do you think is taking place?
- How should you address this situation? What procedure should you set up?

**Case 4. The Invisible Woman Syndrome**

Ben is a successful Purchasing Manager with a reputation for being hard working and fair. In his regular Monday morning Buyers' meeting, the participants are Harry, Charlie, Jim and Sally; Ben gets along with them all.

After the latest meeting, Ben is surprised when Sally approaches him almost in tears, and complains, "Ben, first thing in today's meeting, I suggested we consolidate the commodity purchasing into one section. Before I was halfway through, you cut in to let Jim speak. By the end of the meeting, you agreed with my idea, but gave Jim all the credit."

Sally thought to herself, "Nobody listens to me, is there something wrong with me?" Ben doesn't know what to think, and besides, he can't even remember Sally bringing up the idea in the first place. "Is something wrong with Sally today?," he wonders, "Why is she making a federal case out of this?" So he makes a joke to minimize the situation.

Questions

- What's happening here?
- If you were Ben, would you have been able to understand what was going on and avoid it?
- If you put yourself in Sally's shoes, how would you handle the situation?

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