

## Communication skills in an intercultural technical environment

### for Project Managers of

## IPLOCA, The International Pipeline & Offshore Contractors Association



### The Request

Iploca is an international association that includes major pipeline contractors and suppliers and works in collaboration with oil company clients throughout the world, Iploca is well placed to help solve the shortage of skilled personnel within the industry. With members in more than 40 countries, Iploca represents over 250 key players in the onshore and offshore pipeline construction industry worldwide.

Essential to working in intercultural project teams is the ability of good communication skills, getting the project team to collaborate and understand and respect cultural differences of other project team members, clients, associates, personnel and subcontractors. For the Project Manager the key question is: "how to get a task done by using everyone's strengths?" In general Project Managers working in technical projects do not have sufficient knowledge of communication skills while communicating about safety rules, contracts and cultural differences is vital to the success of a project.

For this purpose S&N International offered a proposal for a high quality communication skills training in an international setting.

The desired key outcomes of the learning activity were:

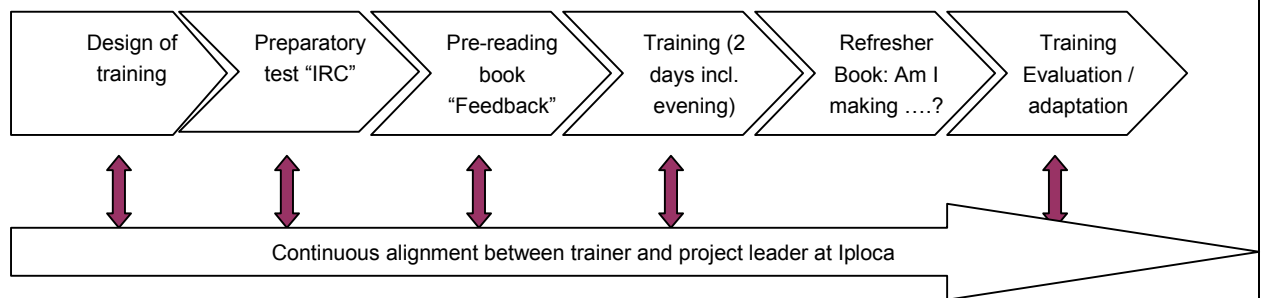
- An improvement of the members' skills to communicate effectively and influence to reach work goals, to deal with a complex working environment with different interests and cultures and to work effectively in projects.
- To equip employees with skills they can readily apply in their work or they can immediately benefit from in case switching to a new working environment/employer applies to them.



### Our approach

As preparation for the event, we recommended an individual on-line assessment, the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC), to help assess participants' current level of intercultural competence. The IRC is a 60 item-questionnaire assessing four key aspects of intercultural competence and provides valid and reliable information on a person's current strengths and preferences relevant to effective intercultural interaction. Each competence can be further developed. The IRC feedback will therefore offer concrete suggestions for how team members could strengthen these competencies and will form the starting point.

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The four key intercultural competences that are essential for working effectively across cultures, are:

- Intercultural Sensitivity
- Intercultural Communication
- Building Commitment
- Managing Uncertainty

The four communication topics in the training were:

1. Improving your listening skills: Active Listening ( Summarizing and Asking questions)
2. Leary's rose: Influencing others start with yourself
3. The importance of feedback (the "I – I – YOU" method)
4. The three communication levels: content – procedure - relationship

Our training methods were:

- Individual reflection in pairs
- Interactive presentation
- Plenary discussion
- Role play
- Simulation exercises
- Integration exercise (trying out new behaviours)
- Individual feedback
- Presentation, supported by audiovisual material

## The result

*„The IPLOCA training was an excellent course and I have recommended this training course within our organisation.“*

Arjan Goorse – Project Manager Technip Germany

*„I found the session on how to approach and communicate with different context cultures, high and low context very interesting and wish to further pursue this topic.“*

Gabriel Pesce – Project Manager Techint Eng & Construction

*„The training was very well prepared and interactive. I believe it will be helpful in my professional life. The training not only emphasized the importance of communication and the need for continuous improvement, but was also helpful to draw attention to essential topics that could easily be ignored in daily professional life.“*

Erhan Hersek – Tefken Construction and Installation Co., Inc.

S&N International, P.O. Box 266  
5300 AG Zaltbommel, The Netherlands  
T: +31 418 688 666, M:  
international@sn.nl