It's a small world after all: an intercultural experiential exercise in business communication.

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It's a small world after all: An Intercultural Experiential Exercise in Business Communication

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The Global Workplace

In 2016, the Fortune 500 earned two-thirds of the US GDP and 37% of the global GDP, with 28 trillion in revenue and 1.5 billion in profits.

- These companies employ 67 million people in 34 countries.

- The number of US workers employed by foreign-owned companies rose 22% over an eight-year period; compared to an average 3.6% increase in employment in U.S.-owned firms (Pew Research Trust 2017).

Intercultural competency shortfall?

- Theory vs competency
- Intra-university projects, UK based
- Mismatched student and employer perceptions
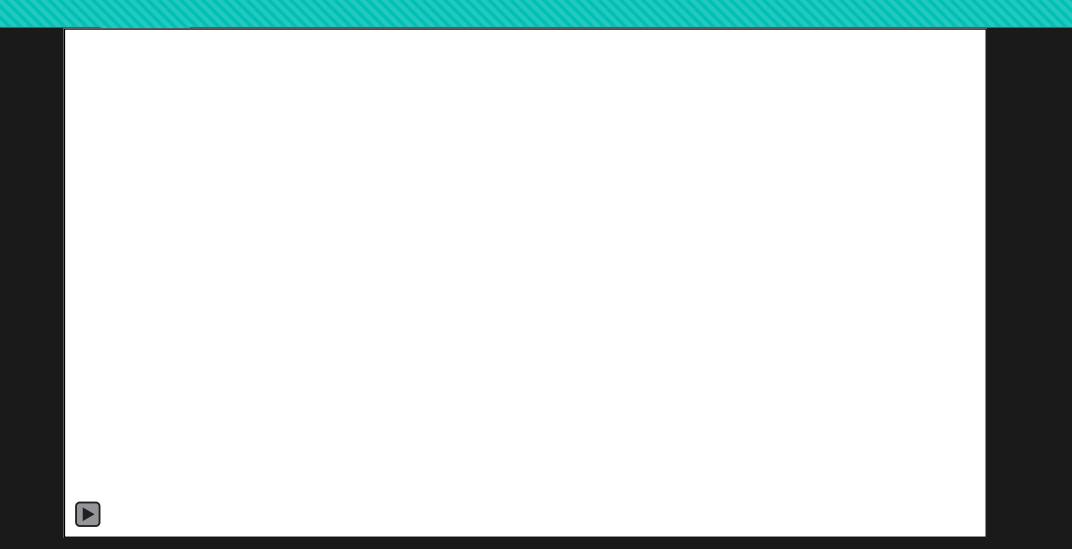- Need for more intercultural, experiential student projects

Project Aims

- Improve English language skills
- Improve the ability to work with non-native English language speakers
- Develop intercultural competencies
- Promote the use of digital channels in cross-border communication
- Cultivate team project management skills
- Develop an understanding of the communication challenges facing companies operating in a global context

International, virtual collaboration

- Four countries: Scotland, Germany, USA, Portugal
- October to November 2017 – six week project
- Over 100 students in virtual teams
- Global industry clients / brands

Stephanie Swartz, *Professor of English and US-American Culture at Mainz University of Applied Sciences in Mainz, Germany*

Student Activities:

In virtual teams:

- Research a named company operating in more than one country

- Identify three key communication issues and solutions

- Prepare ten minute team presentation to class

- Submit 500 word individual reflective summary

Core Learning Outcome

To learn how to communicate with people from another culture…

Evaluation Criteria

Chen and Starosta's intercultural sensitivity five point scale:

- Interaction Engagement
- Respect of Cultural Differences
- Interaction Confidence
- Interaction Enjoyment
- Interaction Attentiveness

Key Findings

- Increased sensitivity to subtle clues in cultural communication
- Slight increase in recognising that students needed to watch behavior to interpret words
- Negative effect on willingness to interact with those from another culture
- Negative effect on willingness to interact with those from their same culture
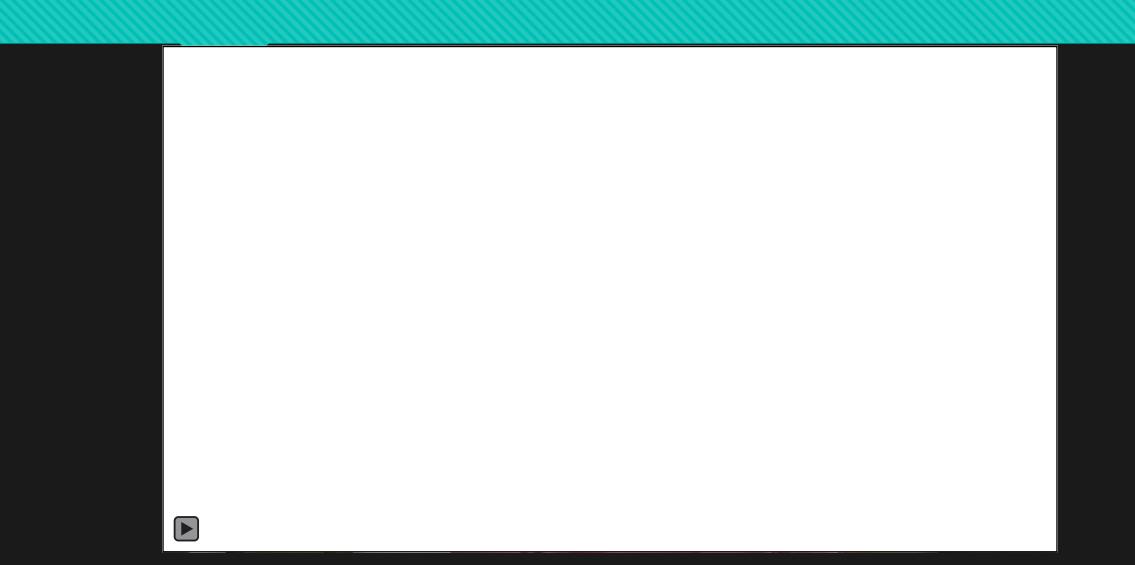
Key Findings

- Increase in enjoyment in interacting with people from another culture

- Decrease in fear around interacting with people from another culture

- Decrease in fear of one's ability to communicate with people from another culture

- Increase in willingness to try to convey meaning in a manner outside of one's own comfort zone.

Conclusion and next steps

- Evolve and refine evaluation methods

- Improve timing, composition and support for student teams

- Incorporate more international student presentations

- Develop more consistent, integrated assessment criteria

- Include more frequent multi-way tutor communication

Susan Luck, Professor of Business in the Graduate School at Pfeiffer University in North Carolina

Recommended Reading

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Thank You!

Questions