

Cross-Cultural Competence: Challenge to R&D

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CPG - Cognitive Performance Group

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“The Role of Cross-Cultural Competence (3C) on Organizational & Mission Success”

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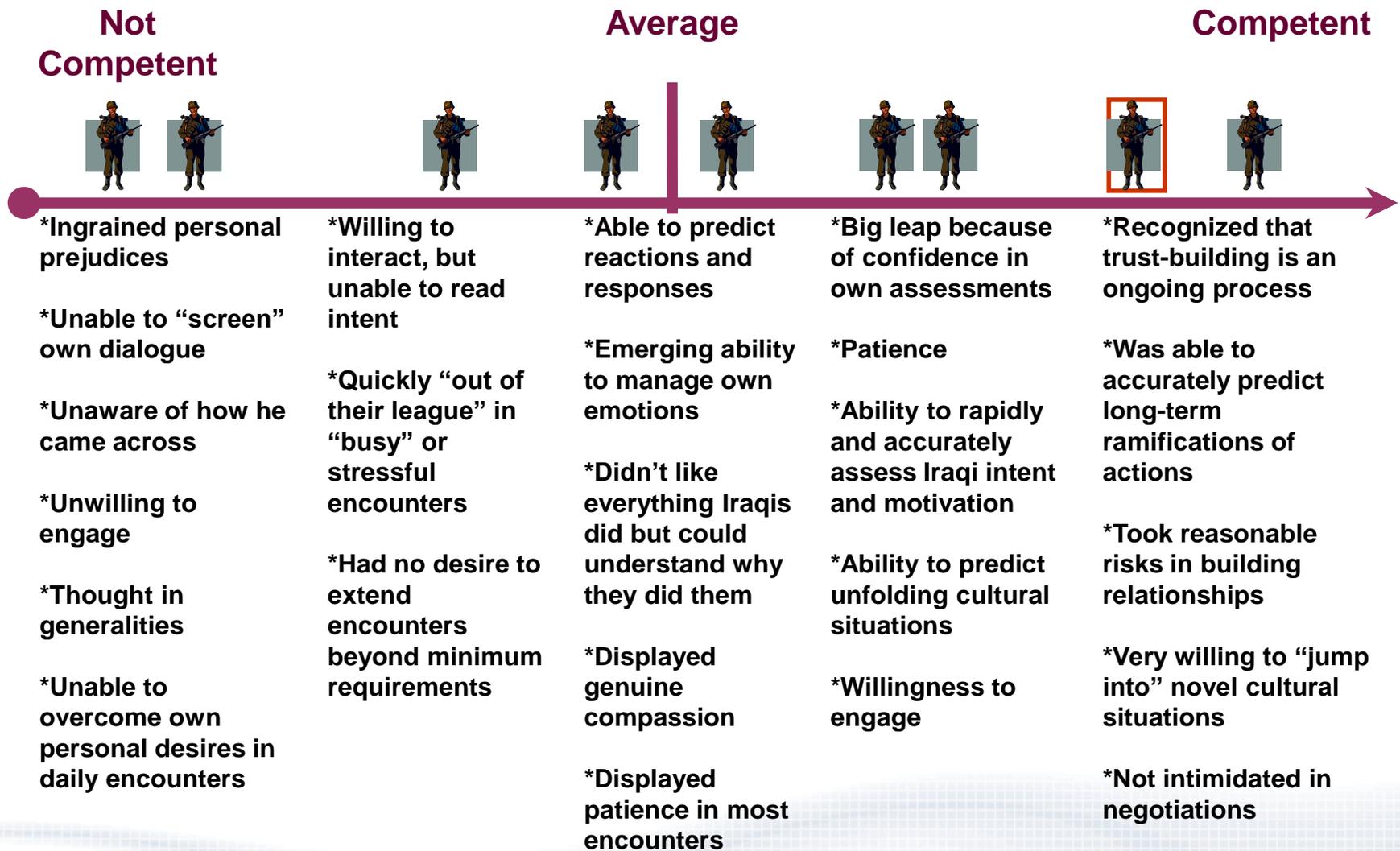
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Current Research & Development

- Ranges from training, education, knowledge management, and leadership to assessment.
- Different research efforts often have one thing in common – incidents gathered from service members who generously share their time and experiences with researchers.
- My experiences conducting in-depth interviews include predominately Army with some Air Force and Marine participants and so I will talk from that perspective.

Why We Conduct In-Depth Interviews



Reaching Out Across Cultures Saves Lives and Supports Missions

- A family was beside a wrecked vehicle and their things were scattered all over the road. A passing convoy would typically not stop, but the convoy leader listened to his interpreter and stopped to find out what was going on.
- Soldiers helped pick up all the family's belongings and get them off the road so they wouldn't be destroyed by the convoy and righted the vehicle which was on its side.
- A couple weeks later, someone from the family was waiting by the road and flagged down the convoy coming through the area again to warn them not to go down the road because an IED was waiting for them.



Awakening to the Need to Get Your Bearings in Another Culture

- An Army Platoon Sergeant for communications assumed he had no need to figure out anything about the culture around him. He and his unit were self-described “Fobbits”—they never left the Forward Operating Base (FOB).
- His firm belief that he had no need to understand the culture around him persisted into his third deployment. His mindset was “I don’t need to talk to them; I don’t need to know anything.” cursory culturally-oriented training reinforced this.
- During his third deployment he became the platoon sergeant. At the same time the unit was being broken up into small groups to leave the FOB regularly and he began acting as a convoy commander. It suddenly hit him that he was responsible for everyone’s safety and he had no idea who was around them “out there” or how to find out.



Transfer of 3C Knowledge Supporting Mission Success is Not Standardized

- When the Master Sergeant was asked what trainable skill he would impart if he had to get a group ready for Iraq tomorrow he said patience. He believed patience is trainable but only by practicing it. He started the process by making his replacement aware of the need.
- They waited together for 45 minutes for an Iraqi to meet them to discuss some security issues. The replacement asked “How do you deal with it?” “Deal with what?” he responded.
- He explained that “nine out of ten” times pointing out that you want the person to be on time and to respect your time, but then letting it go because you understand their perspective of time, will help them be on time more often eventually but also will support attaining your objectives. Making a big deal of lateness will not.



Cultural is the Condition in Which Performance Occurs

- Military Transition Teams advising the Iraq Army have a wide range of goals to achieve and information to impart. Just being proficient at your job and having good ideas about how things should get done is not enough to transplant processes and procedures into a different culture.
- The US Army Colonel was assigned to support an Iraqi Colonel in standing up a fully operational battalion. The US Colonel felt he knew what had to be done in the coming weeks for a smooth process. The Iraqi Colonel agreed with all his ideas.
- Over the next 2 weeks, the US Colonel exhibited patience, determination, and flexibility as he tried again and again to get the Iraqi Colonel to start preparations, telling stories of planning success, warning of potential problems with housing, and praising without success.
- The US Colonel realized it was more important to get the battalion stood up than to train his counterpart. Finally, he created a huge organizational representation of the incoming soldiers requiring the counterpart to just fill in the names which engaged and motivated him. The credit and honor went to the counterpart smoothing the way for more successes to come.



Self-Control, Perseverance, and Tactical Patience *Are 3C*

- A Special Forces unit was deployed to an African country to promote pro-US sentiment by building positive relations with local clans. The 12-person unit was separated from other military.
- They had some success and when they needed to convoy 40 km to a new village, they hired 3 local drivers.
- Driving over rugged terrain one of the drivers accidentally hit and killed a child. When the convoy stopped they were immediately surrounded by about 300 angry people brandishing machetes.
- The unit leader was not going to let them kill the driver. Should they take a defensive posture?
- Controlling his emotion, he assessed that he needed to express remorse and indicate there would be justice. He began negotiations.



Challenge to R&D

- Our research challenge is to understand what your experiences mean in terms of requirements for the development of 3C training, education, leadership, knowledge management and assessment that best support your efforts.
- Your experiences and your perspectives count and that's why we are all here together.