Office of the Ombud NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Communicating Expectations

Navigating what's said and what's unspoken

This workshop will provide an exploration into

* *Where expectations originate*
* *How expectations are set and followed*
* *Why they are a common source of conflict*

Kristine Paranica, J.D., is the NDSU Ombudsperson. She served as the Director of the UND Conflict Resolution Center for 15 years prior to coming to NDSU. The Ombud's Office provides consultation, coaching, mediation, group facilitation, and training to faculty, departments and colleges. The principles of Ombudsmanship are independence, confidentiality, neutrality and informality. Most people who visit the office are in need of informal conflict resolution ideas to achieve a positive change in their situation. The Ombuds' Office currently serves faculty, academic staff, and graduate students.

NDSU Ombud's Office

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What are expectations?

A strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future.
- "reality had not lived up to expectations"

A belief that someone will or should achieve something.
- "students had high expectations for their future"

Syn: supposition, assumption, presumption, conjecture, surmise, prediction, hope

How are expectations set?

-Spoken

-Unspoken

Types of Expectations:

- Job Description – the basics

  But, what isn't obvious? E.g., time expected in office, what meetings must be attended

- Behavioral expectations – legal/policy driven

  What isn't obvious? E.g., cell phone use, social media, communication preferences

- Professional conduct– what is considered "obvious" and what is "under the surface"

- Ethics – legal requirements and standards – but what falls through the cracks?

- Customer service - Who are your "customers"? What is the expectation in how we treats customers?

- Civility / Courtesy – What does this mean? How do you define this? Who decides?

- Responsibility - What are the expectations for taking on additional responsibilities such as service on committees, community service, helping out others in the department, etc.? How are these expectations made known?

- Accountability - To whom and for what are we accountable ? how is this communicated? Where do we see the impact of a lack of accountability? (missed deadlines, lack of follow-through, etc.)

- Collaboration / Teamwork: What does this mean? Is this a requirement or a suggestion? Why is this important?

How do we ensure that expectations understood?

How are expectations followed and measured?

Describe situations where unmet/misunderstood/unrealistic expectations created conflict:

Faculty typically deal with expectations in two ways:

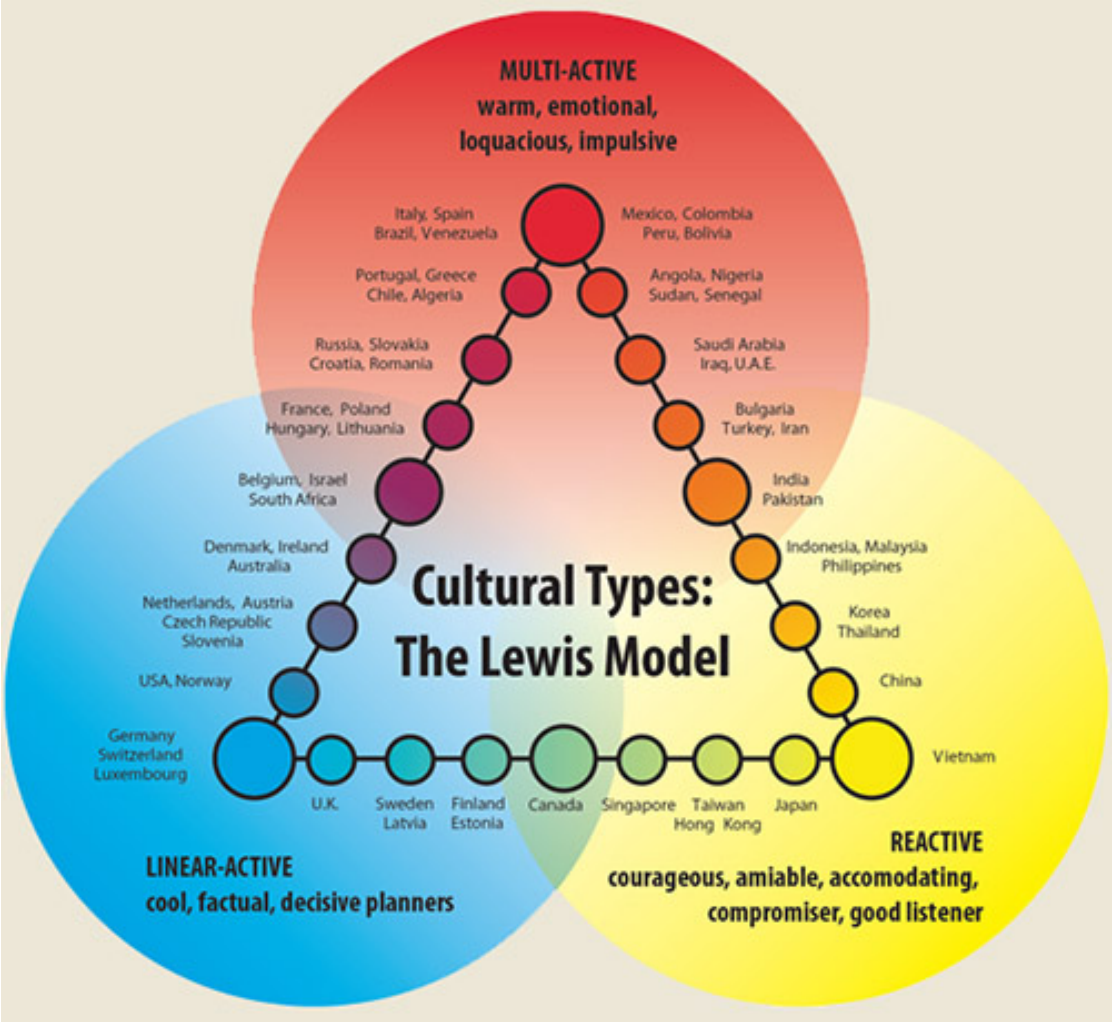
1) Communicating expectations to students, other faculty and staff ⟷ Students, peers and staff communicating, clarifying, questioning expectations to you
   a. Are there any common questions you get from others about your expectations?

   b. How have you managed situations where expectations created tension or conflict?

2) Chairs/Supervisors communicate expectations to you ⟷ You clarify expectations with those who supervise you
   a. In your experience with Chairs and other Administrators, what examples can you offer where expectations were set clearly, and when they were not?

   b. How did you work through the latter scenario?

Communicating Expectations: *Cultural Implications*



How does culture impact communication generally?

Culture is, basically, a set of shared values that a group of people holds. Such values affect how you think and act and, more importantly, the kind of criteria by which you judge others. Cultural meanings render some behaviors as normal *and* right *and others* strange *or* wrong.

Cultures may be high or low context in terms of communication, and cultures subscribe to a variety of worldviews that impact behavior, such as individualistic, harmonic, collectivist, etc.

Provide examples where communicating expectations were lost in translation:

Communicating Your Expectations:

Be descriptive, specific, clear and direct about the expectations you have. Give a specific example if you have one. If you are having this conversation because there has been behavior outside of expectations, then give specific examples of their behavior as well as the preferred behavior. Allow them to ask questions and note their non-verbal cues.

Try it on: (but avoid always/never, judgmental language, moralizing, speaking for others (we), blaming or criticizing)

Communicating to Your Boss about Her/His Expectations:

The previous advice works, of course, but here you might be **asking questions**. You want to be clear about what you perceive as a mixed message or confusing aspect. Your goal is to engage in a helpful conversation, and therefore your first sentence is critical. Send a message that you are open, you may have misunderstood, and want to figure this out. Avoid blaming, criticizing, condescending language which will create defensiveness and shut down communication.

Try it on: (consider *reflecting* back what you hear to ensure clarity)

A Few Common Workplace Expectations & Needs:

- Employers and employees have shared obligations for creating respectful and courteous workplaces.
- Employers want a productive workforce that manages its performance and achieves results.
- Employees want to work in a place where:
    - they know what is expected of them
    - the workplace is safe and they are treated fairly
    - their skills and contribution are recognized and valued
    - training and development support career progression
    - they can work harmoniously with others.

(Respect: Promoting a culture free from harassment and bullying in the APS, Commonwealth of Australia, 2011 (4th ed.)

HELPFUL IDEAS

Set clear expectations of behavior.

Team discussions can highlight a set of agreed behaviors that embody the values and codes of conduct. These discussions are very effective with a new team or when a new manager is appointed. The exercise can also be used for existing teams as a way to reinforce the importance of fostering respect. It could even be included as a regular team meeting agenda item. The goal is to develop a shared understanding of appropriate conduct at work and what these expectations mean in a practical setting.

Be a positive role model.

If you are respectful, others are more likely to follow. If you are abrasive and impolite, often others feel they have an excuse for displaying the same behavior. Be genuine in your actions and promote the kind of culture that inspires people to do their best.

Make it how you do business.

Include behavioral expectations in performance plans and give regular feedback relating to performance and values, code of conduct, etc. Give practical examples of positive as well as negative behaviors to build a shared understanding of what is expected. Acknowledge *how* people achieve, as well as *what* they achieve.

Push back on disrespectful behaviors.

In cases where a person is displaying discourteous, unconstructive or abrasive behavior, have a conversation with them to name the specific behavior and the impact the behavior is having on you. If you let it go, you may be seen to condone such unacceptable behavior and set a norm for future behavior.

Create a positive work environment.

Everyone can influence the way the people in your team feel about your workplace and the time they spend at work. Within the bounds of the workplace, people need to feel comfortable to be able to express who they are, bring and take away meaning from the work they perform, and build commitment through inclusion in decisions. Find ways to enjoy yourself at work, and to feel part of a community that respects and supports you, and encourage others to do the same.

Maintain open communication.

Be open and transparent with others. Share work fairly and set clear and realistic deadlines. Request constructive and regular feedback, and work to maintain a balance between work and home life.

CHALLENGE

What can you do to create clearer understanding of expectations before the end of the semester?

NDSU OMBUDS OFFICE TRAINING EVALUATION

1. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the degree to which this event was useful to you as a participant (i.e., 5 indicates the event was very useful; 1 indicates the event was not useful).

Was not useful				Very Useful
1	2	3	4	5

2. What did you find most useful or helpful?

3. How will you put these new idea and skills to use / What actions will you take?

4. Please comment on the format of the presentations and/or the written materials.

5. Please comment on what the presenter could have done differently to enhance your learning?

6. What other training would you like to see offered from the Ombud's Office?

7. If you would like to be contacted by the Ombud for other purposes, please list your name and a phone number to reach you here: _____

Thank you!