

Seeing Through Different Lenses: Navigating Cultural Differences at Work



Alicia Utami
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“You need to be **more direct**”

“You are **too direct**”

“You are being **too pushy**”

“You’re **not assertive** enough”

“You need to **adapt** more”

“You need to be more **authentic**”



DOES THIS SOUNDS FAMILIAR?

MY SURVIVAL STRATEGY



“Which shape should I **mold** myself into so I can be accepted?”

“Which **setting** would make everyone comfortable?”







ALICIA UTAMI

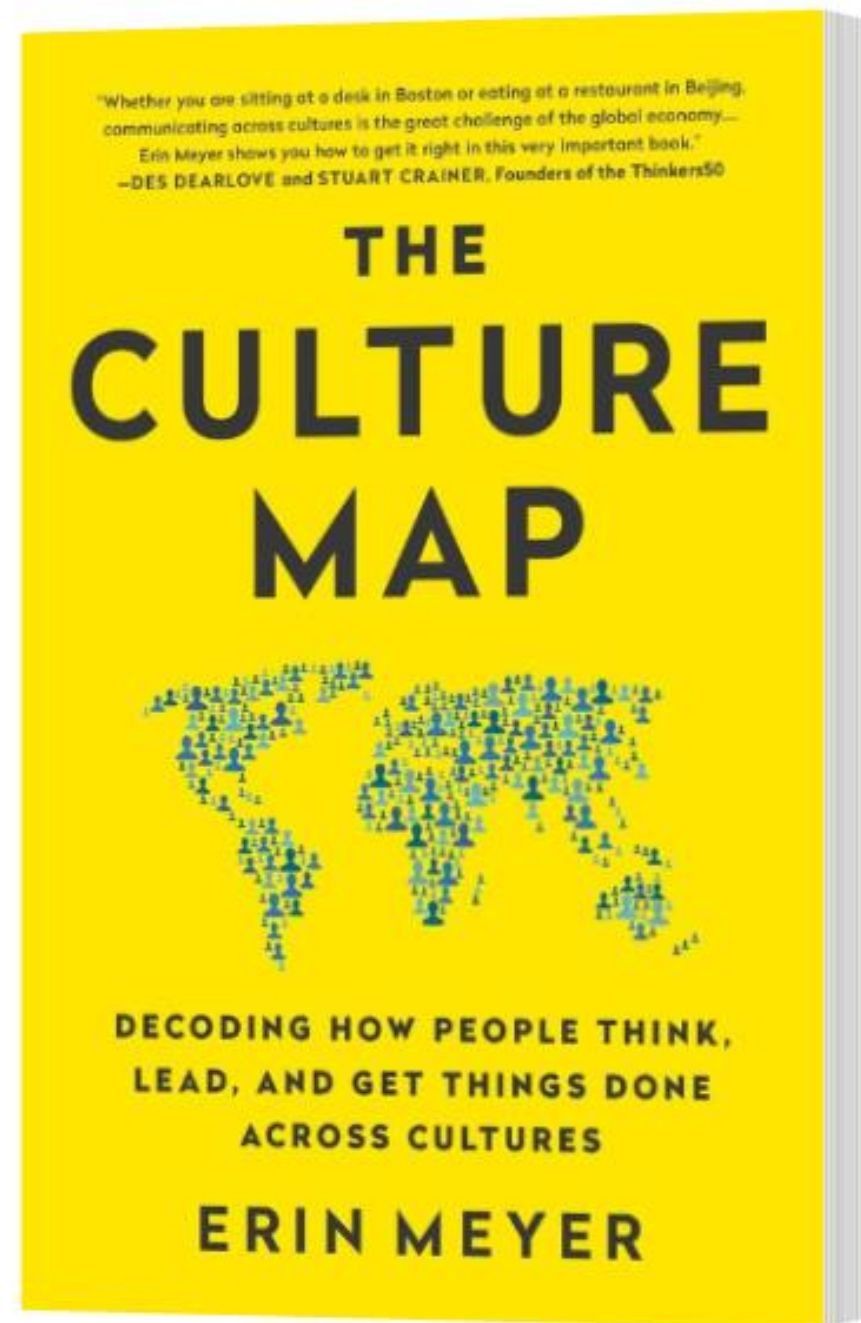
13 years in Banking industry.

Domain Expert Business Process Management ABN Amro

Board Member of Diversity Network ABN Amro

Cultural Intelligence Trainer/ Speaker since 2018





- Erin Meyer – professor at INSEAD Business School
- Culture Map - Dimensions that are important in intercultural Collaboration
- It is not good or bad – but looking at the preferred values



Recognise the values and the ‘cues’

Low Context <i>Precise, simple, clear, messages expressed/ understood at face value.</i>	COMMUNICATING	High Context <i>Sophisticated, nuanced, layered, messages spoken/read between the lines.</i>
Direct Negative Feedback <i>Negative message stands alone; delivery is blunt/ honest/ frank.</i>	EVALUATING	Indirect Negative Feedback <i>Positive message usually wrapped into negative one, delivery is diplomatic/ soft.</i>
Confrontational <i>Open confrontation is seen as positive (doesn't negatively impact relationship)</i>	DISAGREEING	Avoids confrontation <i>Open confrontation is inappropriate, negatively impact relationship, confrontation is discreet.</i>
Application-first <i>Avoid theoretical discussion, prefer bullet points & summary, fact/ statement/ opinion before concepts.</i>	PERSUADING	Principles-first <i>Theoretical argument/ complex concept is developed first before presenting fact/ statement/ opinion.</i>

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE AND INFLUENCE

Communicating / Evaluating / Disagreeing / Persuading



Focus: How we exchange ideas, challenge assumptions, and get our point across.

Reflection questions:

1. How clear and concise is my communication – when my audience doesn't share my context or assumptions?
2. When giving feedback/ disagreeing, do I focus on the issue or the person?
3. Do I adapt the way I build my argument? Data first or big picture first? Who am I trying to convince?
4. What signals can I use to show respect while still be direct (or vice versa)?

Recognise the values and the ‘cues’

Egalitarian

Flat org. structure, low distance between top-subordinates level.

LEADING

Hierarchical

Layered & fixed org. structure, status is important, high distance between top-subordinates level.

Consensual

Decision made with input from all levels, higher engagement but slower.

DECISION MAKING

Top-down

Decisions made by senior management and passed down, faster decision.

HOW WE LEAD AND DECIDE

Leading / Deciding

Focus: How authority, hierarchy, and consensus shape clarity and accountability

Reflection questions:

1. When I lead a discussion, how can I create a safe space for others to challenge my view?
2. Do I clearly understand who decides and who contributes before a meeting or a project starts?
3. How do I interpret silence – agreement, hesitation, or respect for hierarchy?
4. What small adjustment could make our decision-making process faster or more inclusive?



Recognise the values and the ‘cues’

Task-based

Cognitive trust, build & dropped easily based on practicality, through business-related activities

TRUSTING

Relationship-based

Affective trust, build slowly over time, through business social-related activities

Linear-time

Sequential approach, one thing at a time, focus on deadline & sticking to schedule, good organisation above flexibility.

SCHEDULING

Flexible-time

Fluid approach, changing tasks based on opportunities, focus on adaptability, flexibility above organisation.

HOW WE BUILD RELIABILITY AND DELIVER RESULTS

Trusting | Scheduling



Focus: How relationships, time expectations, and accountability affect delivery and trust.

Reflection questions:

1. Do I rely only on task performance to build trust, or do I invest in personal connection as well?
2. How explicitly do I confirm timelines and definitions of “done” across teams?
3. When deadline slip, do I explore whether the issue is workload, communication, or differing views of urgency?
4. What can I do to strengthen reliability – both in my own delivery and in how others experience working with me?



3 - STEPS TO KEEP ME GROUNDED

1. SURVIVAL TO AWARENESS

- Feedback reflects the giver's **lens**
- Replace judgement with **curiosity**
- Shift from reaction to **intention**

2. AWARENESS TO CQ SKILL

- Challenge your own **perspective**
- Recognise the **cue** of invisible
Cultural norms
- Understand the **benefits** of these
'other values'

3. CQ SKILL TO STRATEGY

- Which part of my identity/ cultural
values can help me to **succeed** here?
- Which gap(s) do I need to **bridge**?
- What are my **boundaries**?

THANK YOU.



CULTURE MAP | ERIN MEYER

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