



Expectations of the Australian Workplace

A career development program
for international students

Why this program?

- **Employment outcomes for international students and graduates appear to be less than for local students**
- **Cross-cultural issues are a significant factor affecting workplace success rates**
- **Successful experiences in the Australian workplace can enhance global skills and international or local prospects**

Program Aims

- **To raise awareness of Australian workplace culture and practices**
- **To develop strategies to improve effectiveness in the workplace**

Activity: Spotting cultural differences

The chief element of Quality is considered as:

Obsession with standards	... in France
Quality of relationships	... in USA
Luxury	... in Australia
'It works'	... in Japan
The pursuit of perfection	... in Germany

What is culture?

- **“The way we do things around here”**
- **What we consider ‘normal’**
- **Learned behaviours**
- **Centred on values and beliefs**
- **Dynamic and changing**

Key differences between Australian and other workplaces

- **Organisational hierarchy and management styles**
- **Expectations of you as an employee**
- **Communication styles**

Organisational hierarchy and management styles differ

Can influence:

- **Decision-making and negotiation processes**
- **Conflict management**
- **Relationship building**
- **Communication and dissemination of information**
- **Workplace attitudes towards authority**

Expectations of you as an employee

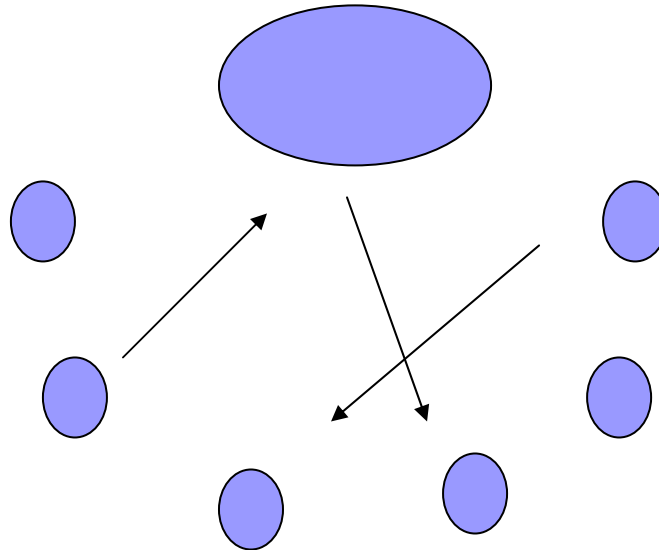
Employers prefer appropriately skilled employees:

- **Demonstrate good communication skills**
- **Have good problem-solving, planning and organisational skills**
- **Able to work independently or in diverse teams**
- **Show enthusiasm and are self-motivated**
- **Take initiative and are assertive when appropriate**

Australian communication styles

- Informal speech is typical
- Directness can be seen as being more efficient and effective
- Managers use collaborative rather than directive communication styles with subordinates
- Humour between colleagues doesn't mean there isn't respect
- Sarcasm is a common form of humour

One of the mates



Australian Approach

Ref: Lewis, D (1999), *Cross-Cultural Communication, A Visual Approach*, UK: Transcreen Publications

Case Study: Somphan and John

Somphan is from Thailand and has been employed in an accounting practice for six months. But things are not going well. His employer, John, is not entirely happy with Somphan's work so far.

Read through each of the following perspectives and discuss:

- What are the problems being experienced ?**
- What strategies will overcome some of the challenges?**

The employer's perspective

John:

I'm very concerned about Somphan. It's like he wants to be told what to do all the time. I don't know what the problem is. He's very quiet in meetings and never seems to say what he really thinks, just always agrees with the rest of the group. He doesn't seem to get on well with the others in his team – they think he's a bit 'up himself'. He's talented but I really don't think he's fitting in very well.

The employee's perspective

Somphan:

I'm having difficulty in this office. I do whatever John tells me to do and I accomplish everything he wants, but it doesn't seem to be enough. I try hard to help him and to guess what he needs and I always support him in meetings. The other problem is I can't understand everything my team mates say, their accents are very difficult for me at times. I was invited to join the social club but I don't drink.

An Australian career path

- **Casual work: waitress, kitchen hand, cleaned houses**
- **Volunteer in a community radio station**
- **Assistant producer in small rural radio station**
- **Trainee producer in Sydney, working irregular shifts and public holidays**
- **Permanent position after two years**
- **...eventually an academic with a PhD**

Tips for finding work in Australia

- **Volunteering or any workplace experience can help you gain valuable skills and insight**
- **Networking is a valuable way to make contacts**
- **Research the companies you'd like to work for**
- **Be prepared to begin work at an entry level**

GOOD LUCK !