

# the global scenarios series

**script for**

building the virtual team

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# building the virtual team - script

NARRATOR:

In this program, there will be three sections:

1. Cultural conflicts
2. Points of view
3. and Solutions

After each section, you can pause the program for consideration

## CULTURAL CONFLICTS

NARRATOR:

This scenario focuses on Diane King, manager for an internet retailer. Diane was recently assigned to global business development. Because of her worldwide responsibilities, her team operates in a virtual environment. Let's explore some of the challenges faced by a global virtual team.

*Location: airport*

DIANE

(thinking to herself)

45 minutes til my flight. Gotta catch up on email.

(Diane looks at her laptop.)

DIANE

No reply from Vijay. Unbelievable.

DIANE

(typing)

Vijay,

I emailed you 3 days ago re permits and licenses update. Haven't heard from you. Everything ok? Please RSVP asap.

-D.

DIANE

(thinking to herself)

At least Meilee replied.

MEILEE  
(reading e-mail)

Dear Ms. King,

Hello kindest regards out of Asia. I hope you and your family are in the most very best health.

I have trying to reach you on phone both office and handy but no good luck. I try again.

Sincerely,  
Meilee

DIANE  
Why is she calling me?  
(thinking to herself)  
I need the information right away.

DIANE  
(typing)  
Dear Meilee,

With time difference and travel schedules, it's very difficult to reach me by phone. Email is more efficient. There are many bad accounts in your territory; report is needed asap. Thanks.

-D

DIANE  
(thinking to herself)  
Problem. Better call headquarters.

*Diane looks at her cell phone.*

DIANE  
(thinking to herself)  
Two calls from Joaquin, but no voice message. Why would anyone call from South America and not leave a message?

*Diane dials the phone.*

DIANE

Hello? Hello?

(pause)

Yes, I'm trying to reach Joaquin.

(pause)

I'm sorry, I'm having a hard time understanding you.

(pause)

Oh, okay, he'll be back tomorrow.

(pause)

Ah, can I just call back and leave a voice message?

(pause)

A voice message. Like an answering machine.

(pause)

Oh, you don't have that.

(pause)

Just you. OK, please ask him to call Diane King, right. If I can't answer my phone, he should leave a message. Thanks.

*Diane looks at her laptop.*

DIANE

Okoro.

OKORO

(reading email)

Dear Ms. King,

Hello and I hope this message finds you very well.

Working with you and your company is a very high honor for me. I have studied and worked very hard to attain a good position in the internet industry, for this is where my interests lie.

If I may tell you more about my background...

DIANE

(thinking to herself)

Get to the point please...

*Diane scrolls down.*

OKORO

(reading email)

...that my good performance is very important to me. I would be very grateful for your comments on my performance and your satisfaction with my work, and any suggestions on how I might improve my positions.

With great sincerity,

Okoro Justin-Smith  
BS, MBA

*Diane looks at her watch.*

DIANE

My flight!

(typing)

Dear Okoro,

Got your message. You're doing a fine job. Got to catch my flight. Be in touch.

-D

NARRATOR

Our virtual team is hardly a team. Everybody's frustrated, it's unlikely much will get done. Let's visit with the team members to better understand the challenges of a virtual team, and the cultural factors behind them.

Let's consider the issues in this scenario:

- What cultural factors does Diane face with her four managers?
- What cultural issues do the managers face with Diane?
- How can they bridge their differences?

## **POINTS OF VIEW**

VIJAY

Ms. King says she is upset that I don't respond to emails faster. But this is for many good reasons. Our communications infrastructure is not strong here. Even at my office, sometimes it's impossible to get on the web. Sometimes the lines are busy, sometimes they're not working at all. Another issue is cost. Because of our infrastructure, being on line is very expensive, I am billed for every minute. If I was online as much as Ms. King, I would use my all my budget just for internet. Finally, it's important to understand that I am out of the office all the time. In my culture, in my country, you must do business face to face. So maybe I'm hard to reach for Ms. King, but I'm reaching customers, and that is what will build business here.

#### MEILEE

I respect Diane King, she has a lot of experience. But it's hard working for her because she only wants to talk by email. English is not my first language, so it's easier for me to speak it than to write it. It's better to talk. I never used a computer until I went to the university, so it's easier for me to talk than type. And most important, email is sometimes very bad for communicating, especially sensitive situations. Diane knows there are bad accounts in my region. She is concerned about this, and wants more information. I want to give this to her, but I also need to explain the economics so that she knows these problems are not because of me. I'm willing to use email for everyday. But for important things, you must meet in person, or at least talk. You must build (quanxi), a relationship.

#### DIANE

Meilee is worried about financial problems in her territory, and how this will affect her performance review. Understood. She feels the best way to discuss this is in real time, in person or web conference or by phone. And that might be true...for her. Where I work, deadlines are critical. So while Meilee was waiting for a chance to make herself look better with her superior, she made me look worse with mine. Perhaps an appropriate solution would be for Meilee to email me the numbers, then discuss the background by phone.

As for Vijay, he feels it's important to spend face time building relationships. I agree, but in my culture we also insist on efficiency and promptness. So while he was out building relations with clients, he was hurting his relationship with me. Of course I want him to build customer rapport, but he needs to balance that with my need for being up to date. As for problems getting online, that's all the more reason Vijay needs to check email frequently to compensate for down time.

#### JOAQUIN

It is surprising for me to work with Mrs. King. For me, it's always very nice in a job when people are interested in you as a person. But Mrs. King...she isn't so. It seems like she would rather talk, ha, to a machine than me. When I call her, she is my boss, there is respect. I can't talk through a machine, it's very cold, it is disrespectful. Like most of the people I know, I have no answering machine, I have an assistant, a real person. So when Mrs. King asked to leave a voice mail – that was very surprising for my secretary, who takes pride in her job. How can you understand what people are really saying, unless you talk to each other directly.

#### OKORO

I am trying, very hard, to understand Mrs. King. She doesn't write letters, we don't even telephone much. She only likes email. And she is surprisingly informal. When I send an email, I sign it with my full name, university degrees, I'm very proud of all this. But she has no time for being ceremonious, she just signs with the letter "D," not even her name. I've written her a personal letter about my family and my interests, but I'm not sure I should send it, I don't know if she's interested, she is always so abrupt. And most important, I can never understand what's

really being said in email. Mrs. King says my work is “fine.” Fine. What does that mean? Fine great, fine just ok. If I can’t hear her voice, if I can’t see her eyes, her face, how do I know what fine means? Email is a good thing, but we need personal meetings, web conference, phone calls, all kind of communication, so that we really have an understanding.

DIANE

I hear what Okoro’s saying, and he’s right: we need more face time. But with so much competition in our industry, I’ve had to take on more responsibility and my travel budget’s been cut. So we use a lot of email. Sure it’s informal, but your team is like your family, and it’s okay to be casual. And as for the meaning of my words, I write what I mean and I mean what I write. I’ll always be direct.

As for Joaquin, of course I’m interested in other people. But I usually have to save that for evenings and weekends. And if I leave a voice mail, it’s less respectful, it’s more efficient. And if Joaquin wants to show me respect, he should give me what I need: the quickest responses possible. I think what’s important here is to distinguish between the technology and the personal relationship.

We all view technology differently, so we need to create a communications policy that works for all us. What’s a proper response time? When do we leave voice mail? When should we email, call, get together for a meeting?

A lot of cultures really seem to value relationship-building, so it’s a good idea to create as many opportunities as possible for good-old in-person meetings. And between get togethers, use web conferences to get in face time.

When using email, being a little more chatty can help. We all want to save time by not “beating around the bush,” but this can alienate people and waste even more time in the long run.

NARRATOR:

Let’s recap some of the challenges faced by a virtual team:

- Face to face visits and/or web conferences are essential for a team’s wellbeing
- Different communications channels are better suited for different tasks
- Foreign language and educational issues can limit the use of some technologies
- Different people have different definitions of appropriate response times
- Email can be the least effective channel for consensus building and personal issues

## SOLUTIONS

*Location: airport*

NARRATOR:

Age old cultural issues still prevail in high tech communications. Let's go back and see how things could work out differently if our virtual team were more sensitive to cultural differences.

*Diane looks at her laptop.*

DIANE

(thinking to herself)

45 minutes til my flight. Gotta catch up on email.

VIJAY

(on video email)

Dear Diane,

Hello and I hope all is well.

I'll be out of the office visiting with important clients today. I apologize but I won't be able to update you on permits and licenses until tomorrow.

Best Regards,

Vijay

DIANE

(typing)

Dear Vijay,

Thanks for your message. Clients must come first. I'll look for your report tomorrow.

Best regards,

Diane King

DIANE

(thinking to herself)

Oh, Meilee.

MEILEE  
(on video email)

Dear Ms. King,

Hello and kindest regards out of Asia. I hope you and your family are in the very best health.

You'll find attached the information on bad accounts. I look forward to discussing this in our web conference Thursday.

Sincerely,  
Meilee

*Diane looks at her cell phone.*

DIANE  
(thinking to herself)  
Voice mail from Joaquin.

JOAQUIN  
(heard on the telephone)  
Hello Ms. King,

I'm just calling to reconfirm our telephone appointment. I look forward to speaking with you then.

*Diane looks at her laptop*

OKORO  
(on video email)

Dear Ms. King,

Hello and I hope this message finds you very well.

I hope that you've received my personal letter by now, since it's difficult to spend time together in person.

Also, I'm looking forward to more feedback on my performance...

DIANE  
(typing)

Dear Okoro,

I received your letter, and thank you very much. It was very interesting learning about your family. And of course they must be very proud of your achievements.

As for your performance, it is very good, but it's best if we schedule this discussion when I can give you full attention.

Until then,

Diane King.  
MBA, Univ. of Colorado

**Narrator:**

It seems like everyday there are innovations in electronic communications. But even with futuristic technology you need to be sensitive to traditional customs. You need to stay grounded to real world culture to be effective in the virtual team.

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## **exercises**

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# building the virtual team - exercises

## Exercise #1 - Mirror, Mirror

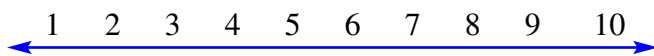
**Objective:** gain insights into personal cultural orientation

**Participants:** individual exercise

**Instructions to participants:** Rate yourself using the scale below. Keeping your ratings secret, ask one or more people who know you well – family, friends, etc. – to rate you.

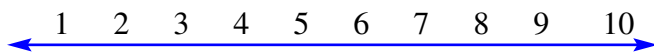
How quickly do I respond to communication from others?

Very slowly...very quickly



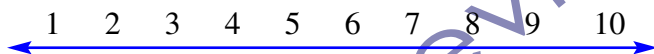
Am I urgent or patient with the response time from others?

Very urgent...very patient



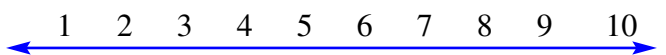
What's more important in communication: efficiency or human touch?

Efficiency...human touch



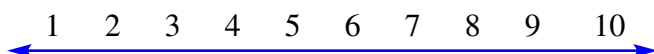
In my communication style, am I informal or formal?

Very informal...very formal



Are the emails I write brief or detailed?

Very brief...very detailed



And how do I feel about voice mail?

I never leave voice mails...I always leave voice mails



**Conclusion:** All participants should meet as a group, taking turns discussing their findings. Special emphasis should be placed on participants whose self-rating differed from those of their family and friends.

## **Exercise #2 - Formal Wear**

**Objective:** increase awareness of different communication styles: formal versus informal, efficient versus relationship-building, etc.

**Participants:** 2-person teams

**Instructions:** Divide the participants into pairs. It's best if the 2-person teams are comprised of participants who don't know each other well.

Each pair is assigned a brief research project, such as researching the culture of another country. The facilitator may choose a learning project that is relevant to other work or learning objectives.

Each participant will conduct his/her own research, then share the findings in a brief report to his/her partner. The project will be conducted by email only.

Within each pair, the two participants are given secret instructions below. Participants may not share their instructions with each other.

**Secret instructions for participant A:** Upon completing your research, email your findings to your partner. Be as brief as possible. Do not greet your partner, use his/her name, or communicate in any other way. Simply paste your notes into an email. Upon receiving your partner's email, read your partner's email carefully and in full. Then consolidate both reports and forward them to your instructor as quickly as possible. You will be assessed in part by how quickly your report is submitted.

**Secret instructions for participant B:** Upon completing your research, compose an email to your partner. Prior to sharing your research results, include a relationship-building personal letter. Tell your partner that since you're working on a project together, it's a good idea if you get to know each other. You can include information such as your background, personal life and interests, recent activities or events, etc. The amount of personal information should be at least the length of your report or 250 words, whichever is greater. You will be assessed in part by on the word count of your relationship-building effort.

**Conclusion:** The exercise ends when both participants complete their secret instructions.

**Questions for discussion:** For Participant A, how did it feel to send your report without any personal salutation? What was it like to receive a lot of personal information from your partner, when you were under time pressure? Did this frustrate you?

For Participant B, how did it feel to receive your partner's report without any personal salutation? What affect did it have on your perception of your partner? Would you be more or less interested in working with this person in the future?

For all participants, what are the cultural implications of this exercise? How might you modify your own behavior in the future?

Preview Only

### Exercise #3 - The Medium is the Message

**Objective:** increase awareness of the link between the message and the most appropriate form of communication.

**Participants:** individual exercise

**Instructions:** Each participant fills out the table below.

<b>Example:</b> I feel courier service is appropriate when...	...sending important documents such as contracts, and documents that require signatures, etc.
I feel email is appropriate when...	
I feel email is inappropriate when...	
I feel voice mail is useful when...	
I feel voice mail is not useful when...	
I feel the telephone is a good choice when...	
I feel telephone is inappropriate when...	
I feel web conference is a great choice when...	
I feel web conference is the wrong choice when...	
I feel a face to face conversation is essential when...	
I feel a face to face conversation is not essential when...	

**Conclusion:** The exercise ends when each participant has filled out the table. Participants should take turns comparing results by communication type (i.e. – participants can begin by discussing their comments on email. Once everyone has commented on email, the group then discusses voice mail, etc.)

**Questions for consideration:** What patterns emerged in your answers? What answers did the group have in common? What differences arose? Did other people’s answers influence your ideas?

### **Exercise #4 - Decisions, Decisions**

**Objective:** increase awareness of the effect of different communication media on teamwork and decision-making

**Participants:** 4-person teams

**Instructions:** Divide participants into 4-person teams.

Each team is assigned 2 brief research projects, such as researching the culture of another country. The facilitator may choose a research project that is relevant to other work or learning objectives.

Each participant will conduct his/her own research, then share the findings with his/her team members. Each team member should press hard for his/her information to be included in the report, and oppose the inclusion of other’s information. The team must engage in a process of negotiation and decision-making. Team members must then consolidate the information and create one group report.

For the first report, team members may communicate via email only.

For the second report, team members may communicate via in-person meetings only.

**Conclusion:** The exercise ends when participants have completed both reports. All participants should meet as a group and compare and contrast the experiences.

**Questions for consideration:** Describe the experience working together via email only. What was it like working in person instead? Which method was more efficient? Which lead to greater team building? When would you prefer working together by email? When would you prefer working together in person? In general, which would you prefer and why?

# the global scenarios series

## **role plays**

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# building the virtual team - role plays

## General Instructions for Role Play

Role plays are “what if” scenarios in which participants act out certain characters in certain situations.

### Through this process, you’ll help your participants:

- Analyze problems from various perspectives
- Improve problem-solving skills
- Develop team work and cooperation

### To do:

**Decide objective:** Decide whether you’re developing skills, assessing skills or both. If you’re assessing skills, establish quantifiable competency level. Explain clearly to participants the objective of a role play, to ensure maximum learning. Ask participants if they have any questions or reservations about a role play.

**Customize role plays:** Whenever possible, customize role plays to your organization or situation. For example, if you work for a company, use your company’s name in the role play and reference real partners or clients.

**Facilitator’s role:** You can either help participants, or challenge them by adding additional obstacles. In any event, whenever possible help your participants recognize learning opportunities.

**Put players at ease:** Some people are uncomfortable with role-playing. Ask participants if they have previous experience with role plays. Put them at ease by telling them they’re only pretending, and that there’s no right or wrong. It’s fun and a learning experience! It’s a good idea to start with simple exercises, then build up to more complicated role plays.

Note that players will need some time to review their characters and prepare for the exercise.

**Team assignments:** It’s best if the facilitators assign players to teams. Being outside the comfort zone will promote greater learning.

**Conclusion:** Watch the role play and critique it afterwards. Feedback should be specific. Learning experiences can also be summarized in reflective reports, which can be distributed and shared with the group.

**Note to facilitator:** because of the nature of virtual teamwork, it's difficult to conduct role play within a live instructional session; some of the role plays below take place outside of the instructional session

## The Medium is the Message

**Objective:** increase awareness of the need for balance between effective communication and human touch

**Participants:** 4-person teams

**Instructions:** Participants are divided into 4-person teams.

One participant is designated the manager. The manager must relay the news below, balancing efficiency and human touch. If the manager is too efficient, he/she loses points for lacking human touch. If the manager uses excessive human touch, he/she loses points for being inefficient.

You'll find rankings below for 5 different communication methods. The facilitator may customize these rankings.

Communication method	Efficiency Ranking	Human Touch Ranking
Email	1	5
Voice mail	2	4
Phone	3	3
Web conference	4	2
In person	5	1

Below the instructions, there are two more lists of "news," so that participants can take turns playing the role of manager. The facilitator can also create custom lists.

**Instructions to managers:** you must give the following news to your employees:

- A co-worker has been killed in a car accident
- The employee's performance needs improvement
- The government has indicted members of the company's senior management
- The time and place for a meeting
- Your company has a new CEO

Using the 5 choices below, decide which form of communication to use for each piece of news. Note that each form of communication is ranked by efficiency and human touch. If your answers differ from your team members, you'll be penalized. Your goal is to balance – as effectively as possible - efficiency and human touch.

Communication method	Efficiency Ranking	Human Touch Ranking
Email	1	5
Voice mail	2	4
Phone	3	3
Web conference	4	2
In person	5	1

**Scoring:**

For each employee that selected the same communication method as you, score 1 point.

If you're off by 1 ranking, you receive 0 points

If you're off by 2 rankings, you lose 1 point

If you're off by 3 rankings, you lose 2 points

If you're off by 4 rankings, you lose 3 points

So if for one piece of news, you chose phone, and the employee selected in person, you lose 1 point.

**Instructions to employees:** you will receive the following pieces of information from you're your manager:

- A co-worker has been killed in a car accident
- The employee's performance needs improvement
- The government has indicted members of the company's senior management
- The time and place for a meeting
- Your company has a new CEO

Using the 5 choices below, decide which form of communication is most appropriate for each piece of news. Note that each form of communication is ranked by efficiency and human touch. Your manager's objective is to choose a communication method that balances efficiency and human touch.

Communication method	Efficiency Ranking	Human Touch Ranking
Email	1	5
Voice mail	2	4
Phone	3	3
Web conference	4	2
In person	5	1

**Scoring:**

If your manager selected the same communication method, he/she scored 1 point.

If your manager is off by 1 ranking, you receive 0 points

If your manager is off by 2 rankings, you lose 1 point

If your manager is off by 3 rankings, you lose 2 points

If your manager is off by 4 rankings, you lose 3 points

So if for one piece of news, you chose in person, and the manager selected phone, the manager loses 1 point.

List of news #2

- 15% of the company’s staff will be laid off
- Instructions for the new phone system
- Second quarter sales results were disappointing
- The marketing plan for next year
- The employee has an emergency at home

List of news #3

- A member of your team has been accused of embezzlement
- The company is being taken over by another
- The company’s London office is moving to a new building
- The employee’s doctor’s office called with test results, and you need to call them urgently
- You (the manager) are leaving the company, and need to introduce your successor

**Conclusion:** The role play ends when all participants have played the manager, or when decided by the facilitator.

**Questions for discussion:** Were you successfully able to balance efficiency and human touch? Was it easier or harder than anticipated? What factors did you take into consideration? Did this increase your awareness of how different communication methods are appropriate in different situations?

## All In Good Time

Note: this role play takes place outside the instructional session

**Objective:** understand the impact of culture, time zones and other factors on virtual teams

**Participants:** 3-person teams

**Instructions:** Decide the duration of the exercise (e.g. – 48 hours, 1 week, etc.). Divide participants into 3-person teams.

Team members work for a major software company. Each 3-person team is comprised of a) Vice President of Marketing, based in North America, b) Regional Marketing Director, in Europe, and c) Manager of Software Development, in Asia. Team members should exchange phone numbers and email addresses; in person communication of any kind is prohibited.

The facilitator will need to tell the participant playing the Manager of Software Development in Asia how long he/she must wait before replying to message. For example, if the role play is to last one week, the response delay might be 48 hours.

**Secret instructions to Vice President:** You are about to launch your most popular software in Europe. You've had difficulty reaching your Manager of Software Development in Asia, who is in charge of a team of engineers who have authored and are now de-bugging the software. You've asked your Regional Marketing Director in Europe to get answers to the following three questions, in order, one at a time (you may not ask the second question until you've received an answer to the first):

- a) what bugs in the software still require fixing?
- b) what other problems might we encounter?
- c) when will the software be ready for release?

You are under extreme time pressure, and must meet the deadline (set by the facilitator). Because of the time difference, you may only call the Regional Marketing Director before 12 noon.

**Secret instructions to Regional Marketing Director:** You are in charge of the European launch of a popular software program. Your boss, the Vice President at the North American headquarters, has asked your help in communicating with the Manager of Software Development in Asia; the manager is in charge of a team of engineers who have authored and are now de-bugging the software. The vice president will send you three questions, one at a time. You need to get answers as soon as possible from the Manager of Software Development, and then update the Vice President. Because of the time difference, you may only call the Manager of Software Development before 12 noon.

**Secret instructions to the Manager of Software Development in Asia:** Your company is about to launch in Europe its most popular software. You are in charge of a team of engineers who have authored and are now de-bugging the software. The Regional Director of Marketing will ask you three questions, one at a time. Your answers will be delayed because of a) the time difference and b) the time it will take to get answers. The facilitator will determine the minimum length of each delay in response (for example, you must wait at least 48 hours before replying to any question). In your culture, it's important you meet with your team in person to ensure you're getting accurate information.

**Answers to the three questions:**

- a) What bugs in the software still require fixing? There are some language translation issues that require debugging.
- b) What other problems might we encounter? There is a major Hindi holiday next week, but I've identified non-Hindi engineers who can finish up in their absence.
- c) When will the debugging be completed? Approximately 10 days.

**Conclusion:** The role play ends when it reaches the time limit set by the facilitator. All participants should gather to discuss their experiences, one team at a time.

**Questions for discussion:**

**For the Vice President and Regional Director:** what was it like waiting for information when under time pressure? What were the factors that caused the time delay? How might you improve the process and avoid similar problems in the future?

**For the Manager of Software Development:** what was it like delaying response time to your superiors? How do you think your superiors' culture would view such delays? How might you improve the process in the future?

## **What's Our Policy?**

**Objective:** increase awareness of the link between the message and the medium

**Participants:** teams of 4 or 5 people

**Instructions:** Create teams of 4 or 5 people. Each team should create a policy governing communications across cultures and time zones.

**Instructions to team members:** You're forming a new global team for a communications company, and will be working together virtually. In order to work together as effectively as possible, and maintain team motivation and synergy, you must create a communication policy that works for all team members. Factors to consider include:

- Communications infrastructure
- Formality vs. informality
- Human touch
- Language differences
- Relationship-oriented societies
- Time difference
- Values

Based on the factors above, create a detailed communication policy addressing each of the points below.

### **Communications Policy**

- Appropriate uses for email:
- Appropriate uses for voice mail:
- Situations requiring documents sent by courier:
- Situations requiring voice conversations:
- Situations requiring web conference:
- Situations requiring in person meeting:

#### **Other considerations:**

- Response time:
- Greetings and salutations:
- Language policy:

**Conclusion:** The role play ends when the teams have finished creating their communications policy. Teams should take turns sharing their policies, either verbally or in writing.

**Questions for discussion:** What types of communication can take place via high-tech, low-touch methods such as email and voice mail? What types of communication suggest middle ground methods such as telephone or web conference? What types of communication require high-touch, low-tech methods such as in-person meetings? What policy did you create for response time, and what factors affect response time? What other insights did you have from the experience?

# the global scenarios series

## **questions for consideration** building the virtual team

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## **RESPONSE TIME**

- What was the primary issue between Diane and Vijay?
- Describe a situation in which you sent an important email, and the response time seemed slow to you. How did you react?
- Describe another situation in which you were unable to respond promptly to one or more emails (for example, while traveling in a remote place). How did the senders react?

## **INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION**

- Describe the conflict between Diane and Meilee.
- Why did Diane want Meilee's report sent by email?
- Why did Meilee want to discuss the report by phone?
- Do you feel that the best way to communicate sometimes depends on the situation?
- In other words, are certain methods of communication more appropriate in certain situations?
- What types of issues are appropriate for discussion by email?
- What types of discussions would be better served by real-time communication?

## **HUMAN TOUCH**

- What was the main issue between Diane and Joaquin?
- Do you ever hang up before leaving a voice mail? Why?
- How do you feel when someone calls you and doesn't leave a message?
- How do you feel when you're trying to call someone and only reach voice mail?
- How do you feel when you call a company that has no live operators or support, but only computer prompts?

## **FORMALITY VS. INFORMALITY**

- Describe the problem between Diane and Okoro.
- Do you write emails that are detailed and descriptive?
- Or are they concise and consisting of acronyms, abbreviations, and incomplete sentences?
- Does your level of detail and formality depend on the situation, and if so, how?
- How do you feel when you receive emails that are too curt; for example, the sender doesn't greet you by name, etc.
- How do you feel when you receive emails that are too long, bogged down by unnecessary information?

## **RELATIONSHIPS**

- How important is it for you to get to know co-workers and professional associates?
- Is it essential to meet in person regularly with co-workers and associates, or is an occasional email sufficient?
- What is more important, building human relationships or getting the job done?

## **THE MEDIUM AND THE MESSAGE**

- In what situations would email be an appropriate form of communication?
- In what situations would email be inappropriate?
- Describe a situation in which each of the following forms of communication would be appropriate: voice mail, phone, web conference, and in person. Is it easier to make group decisions by email or in real time (phone conference or web conference)?
- Why? What implications does this have for a global virtual team?

## **LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

- Have you ever had to use a foreign language?
- Do you feel that in a foreign language, some types of communication would be more comfortable than others?
- If you had to use a foreign language, what type of communication would you prefer: spoken or written? Why?
- How would you feel about using a foreign language with email, phone call, voice mail and web conference? Why?