

# Virtual & Cross-cultural communication

:: IDBM Capstone ::

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# Today's learning objective

- ✓ *Learn how to communicate effectively over technology*
- ✓ *Begin to build an awareness of cultural differences and how it may affect collaboration*





# Status Check

How many of you have  
collaborated in virtual teams?

1.3 billion  
virtual  
workers

(Johns & Gratton, 2013)





# Virtual work has become the new norm

- Globalization of businesses
- Ever-changing competitive landscapes and customer requirements
- Technology advancements
- The need to recruit experts near customers all over the world
- Requirements to cut travel costs
- Networked type of organizations requires virtual ways to interact

# Kemira

## Employees in 40 countries

- Europe, Middle East and Africa 55%
- Americas 35%
- Asia Pacific 10%

R&D – Globally distributed collaboration

# mozilla



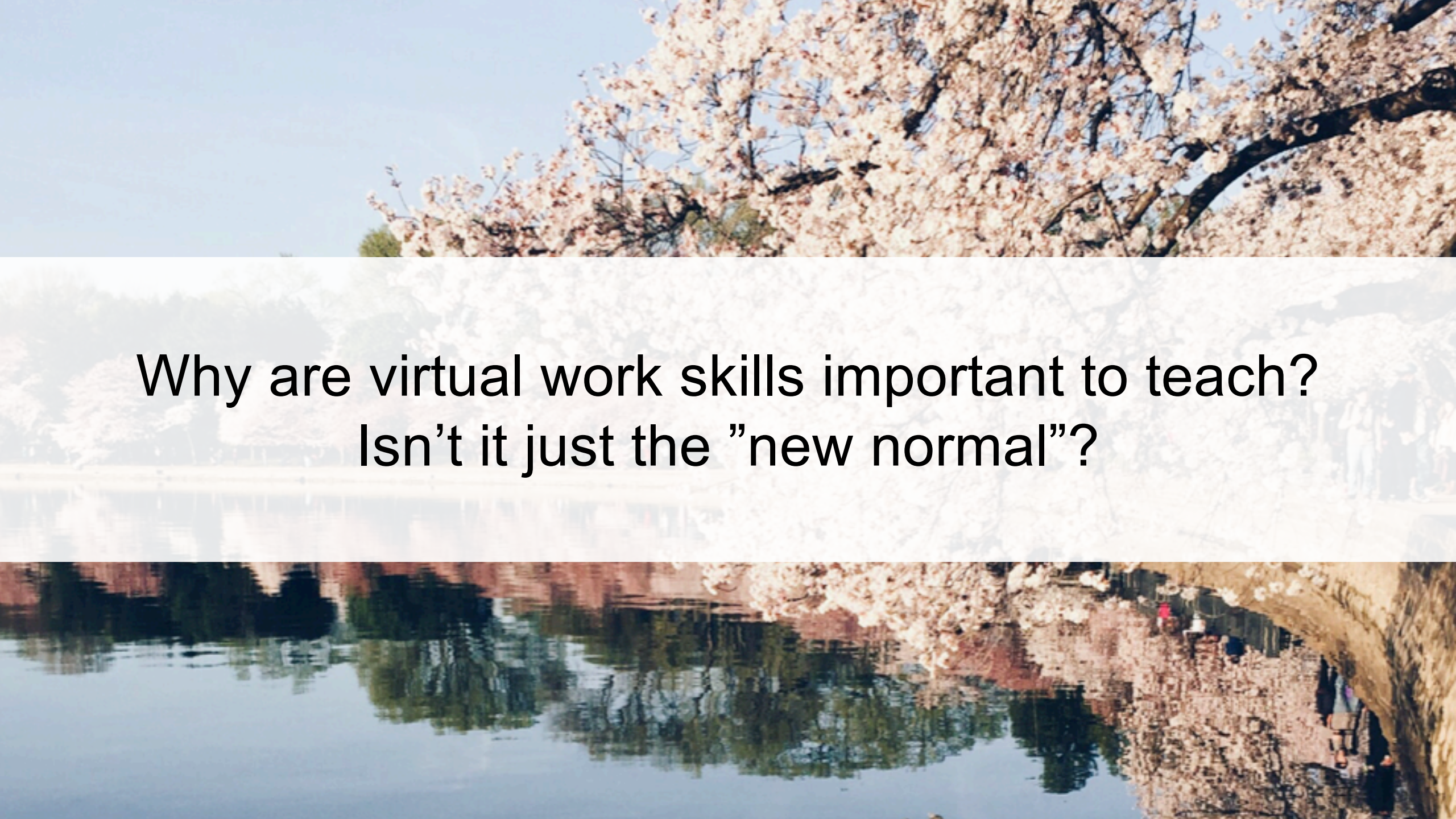
Employees in 20 Countries, 9 Physical Offices  
Millions of volunteer contributors



# AUTOMATIC



Fully Distributed



Why are virtual work skills important to teach?  
Isn't it just the "new normal"?





More than 50 % of virtual  
team collaborations fail!

(Ferrazzi, 2014)



# Technology saturated world



Actual Distance  
 $\neq$   
Perceived Distance

# Technology-mediated communication (TMC, CMC)



# Channel richness

**FACE-TO-FACE**  
(Nonverbal, visual,  
paralinguistic, linguistic)



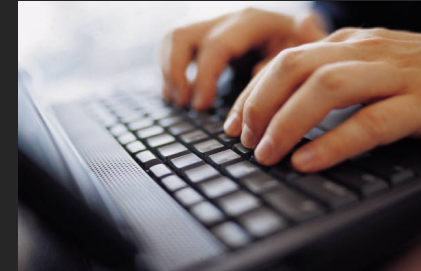
**TWO-WAY VIDEO**  
(Visual, paralinguistic,  
linguistic)



**TELEPHONE**  
(Paralinguistic,  
linguistic)



**COMPUTER MESSAGING**  
(Linguistic)



**Rich**

**Channel richness**

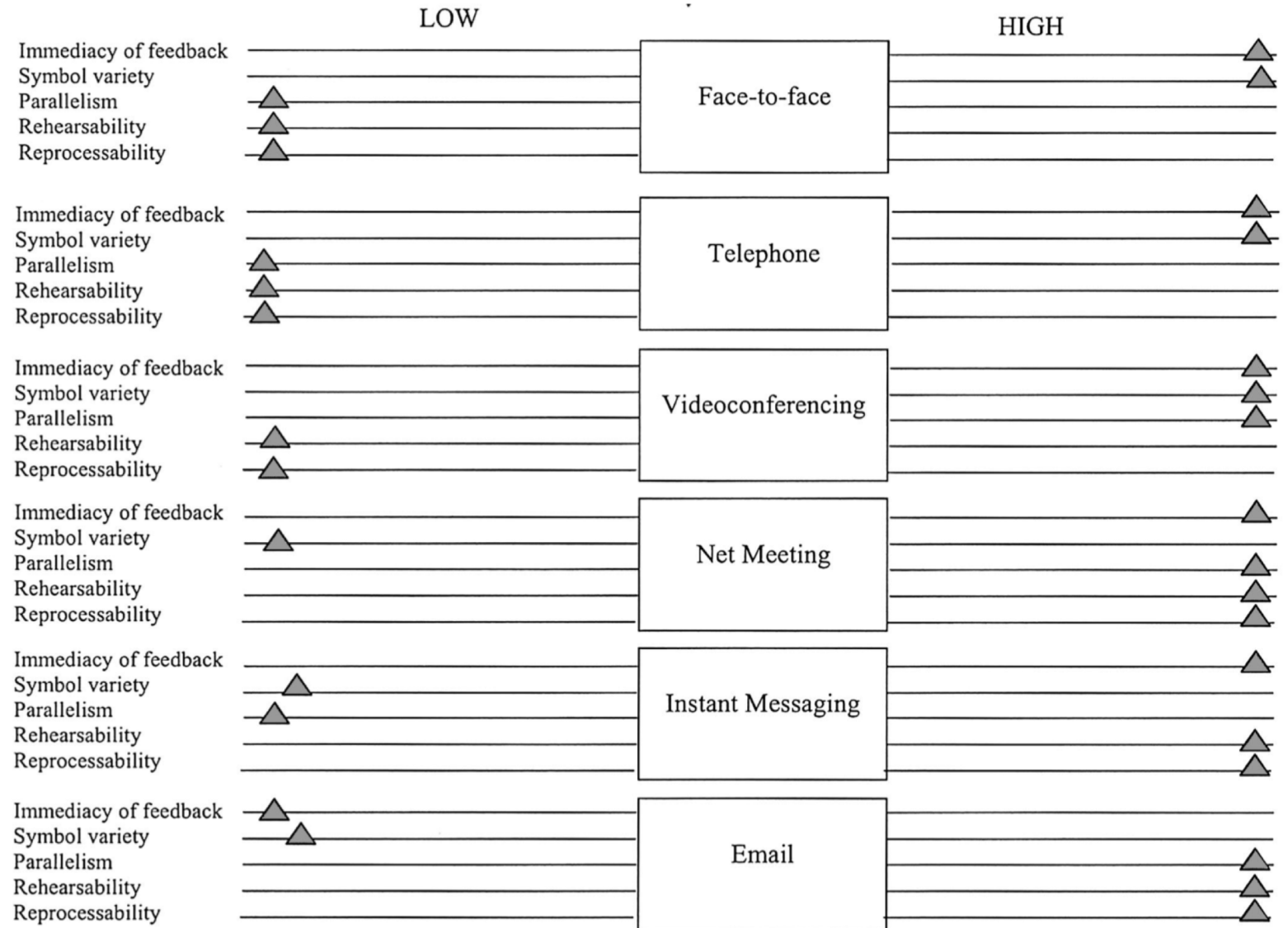
**Lean**

## Media richness theory:

The less social cues are filtered out, the richer the media. There is an optimal match between communication task and media (Daft & Lengel, 1986)

# Media synchronicity theory

- (1) **Immediacy of feedback** - The speed at which a medium can deliver messages to communicators
- (2) **Symbol variety** - The number of ways in which information can be encoded in terms of multiple cues and language variety
- (3) **Parallelism** - The number of effective simultaneous transmissions
- (4) **Rehearsability** - The extent to which a message can be checked and edited before transmission
- (5) **Reprocessability** - The extent to which a message can be reviewed and reprocessed after the message has been received.

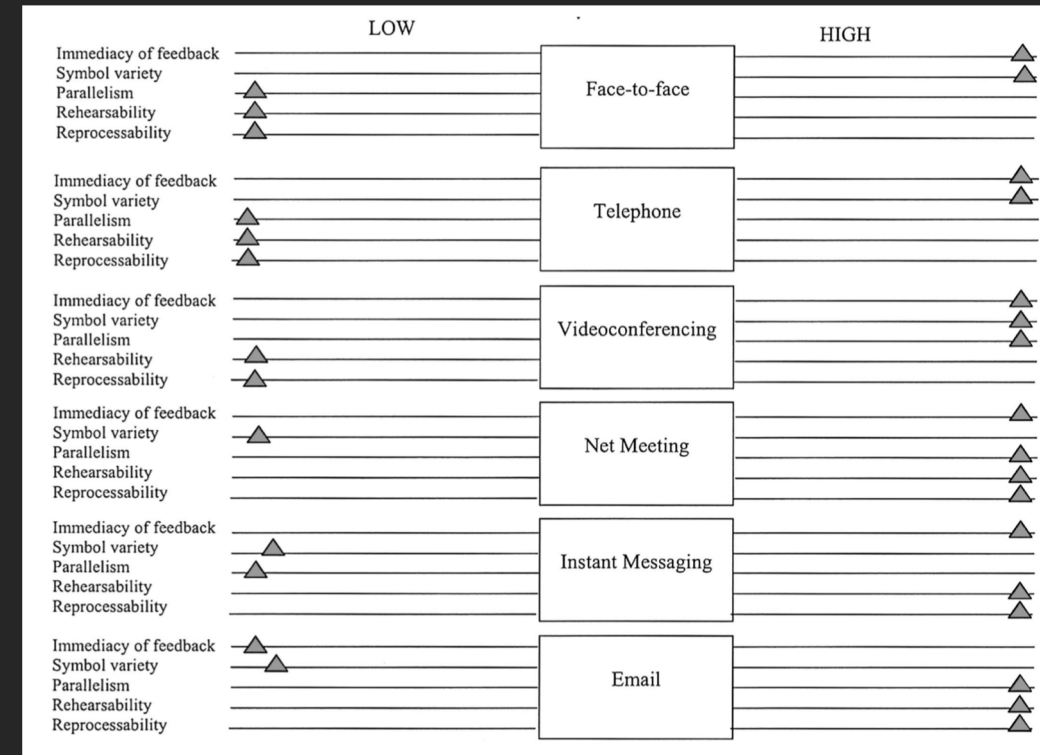


# Media synchronicity theory

Decision-making and other tasks requiring team collaboration can be divided into two communication processes:

- 1) transmission of new information (conveyance)
- 2) discussion of preprocessed information, convergence

Step 1) Is supported by reprocessability, rehearsability parallelism. Step 2) by high velocity rate and rich symbol sets



(Dennis, Fuller & Valacich 2008)

Imagine that your industry project team was virtual.

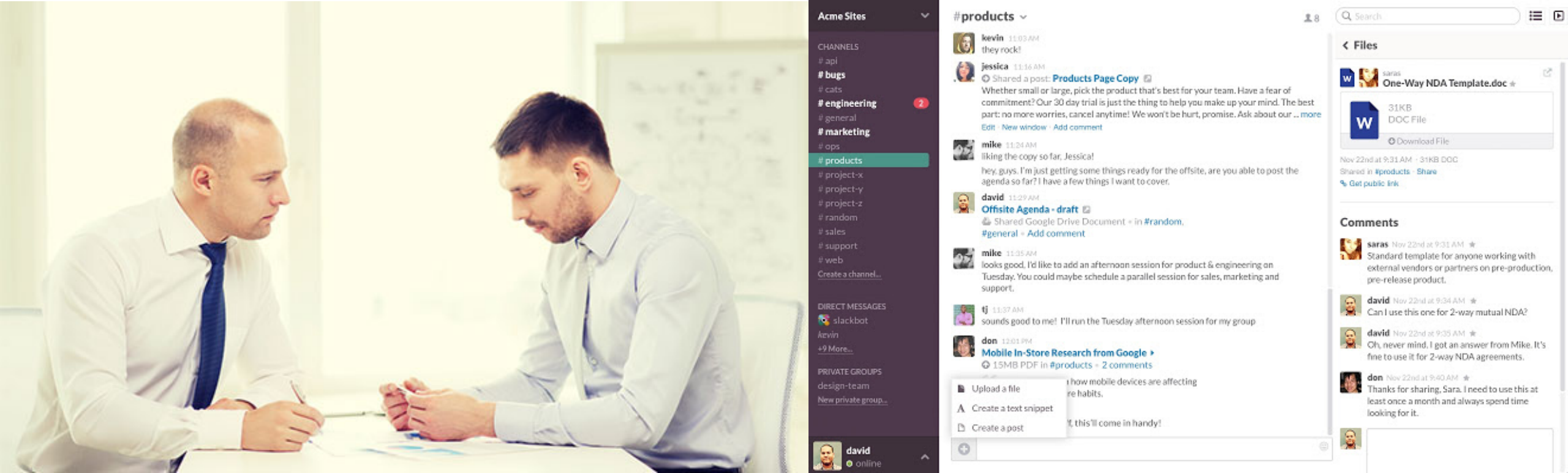
How would you design the team's communication and use of tools for different stages of the project's lifecycle?



# Site visits for relationship building and situated coworker familiarity (including empathy) (Hinds & Cramton, 2014)







Actual Distance  
 $\neq$   
Perceived Distance

# Closeness – an absolute measure of distance?

- Old wisdom: Physical distance - objective
  - We feel close to those who are in close physical proximity to us (Allen 1977; Festinger 1951; Kiesler & Cummings 2002)
- New wisdom: Perceived proximity - subjective
  - People can develop feelings of proximity or sociomental bonds across spatial distance (Chayko 2002; Chayko 2007).
    - Reflects one person's perception of how close or how far another person is
    - Perceptions of proximity do not increase linearly with actual proximity (Hansen and Lovas 2004).



How can you be  
close when you  
are far?

# Social presence – The sense of being with another in a mediated setting

One key challenge of distributed work is lack of social presence.

*Social presence* is established through three dimensions

- 1) Co-presence: includes feelings of inclusion and mutual awareness.
  - Achieved e.g. by showing that you notice the other part.
- 2) Psychological involvement: mutual attention, empathy, and mutual understanding
  - Achieved e.g. by showing that you understand and appreciate what's being messaged.
- 3) Behavioral engagement: behavioral interaction, mutual assistance and dependent action
  - Achieved e.g. by offering assistance and being responsive to the other person



## Example of low behavioral engagement in a virtual meeting:

What do you guys think about that?

[Silence]

Well I guess you all agree then?

[Silence]

I'll take that as a yes.



Psychological states or intrinsic feelings are difficult to convey over distance

# Technology can help...

But this picture below is pretty rare in the real world



**Action is key!**



Global faculty team

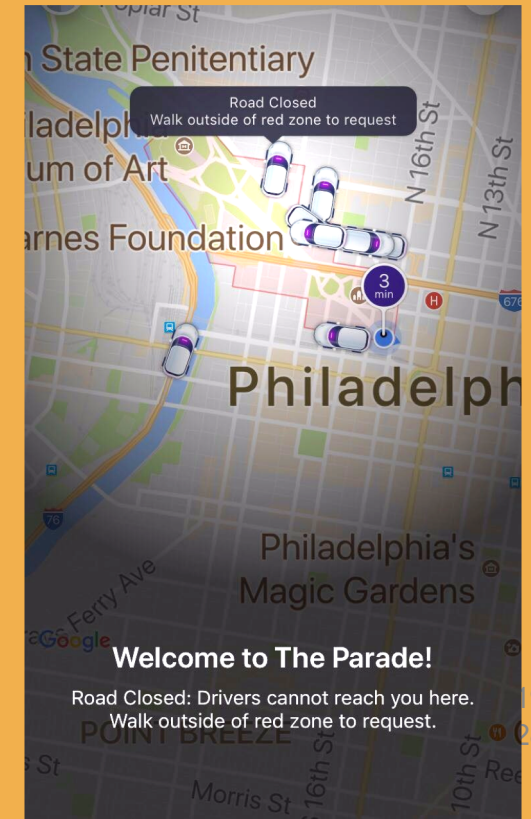




Busted?  
Or  
Ice breaker?



Super Bowl  
Victory parade!



# Culture





# Cultural diversity – A good or a bad thing?

While some challenges exists:

- Misinterpretations of messages
  - Lack of shared understanding (e.g. on logics of other nationalities and meanings of messages)
  - Additional challenges for leadership
- Cross-cultural workforce can also lead to more creativity and innovation due to a wider pool of perspectives.

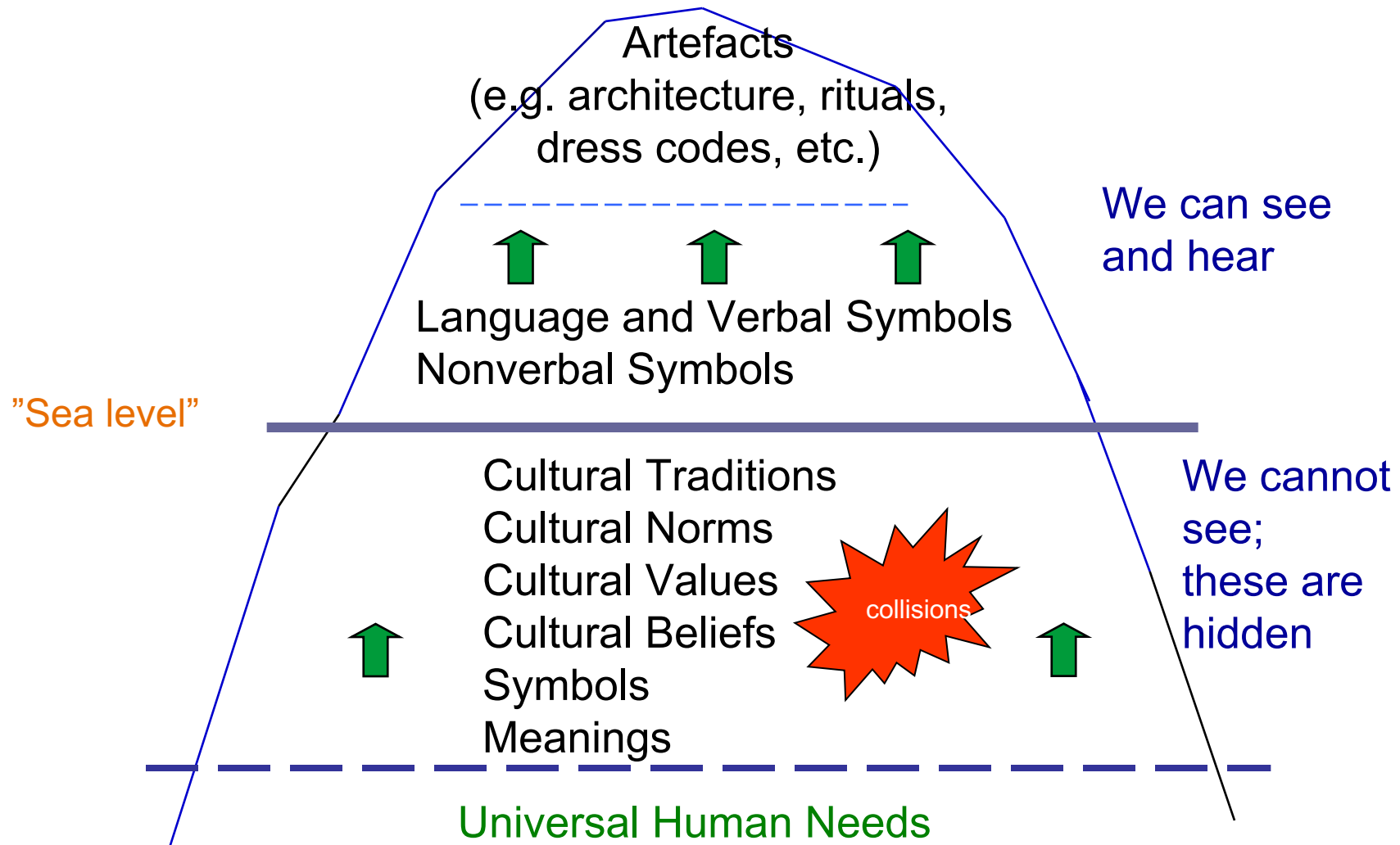


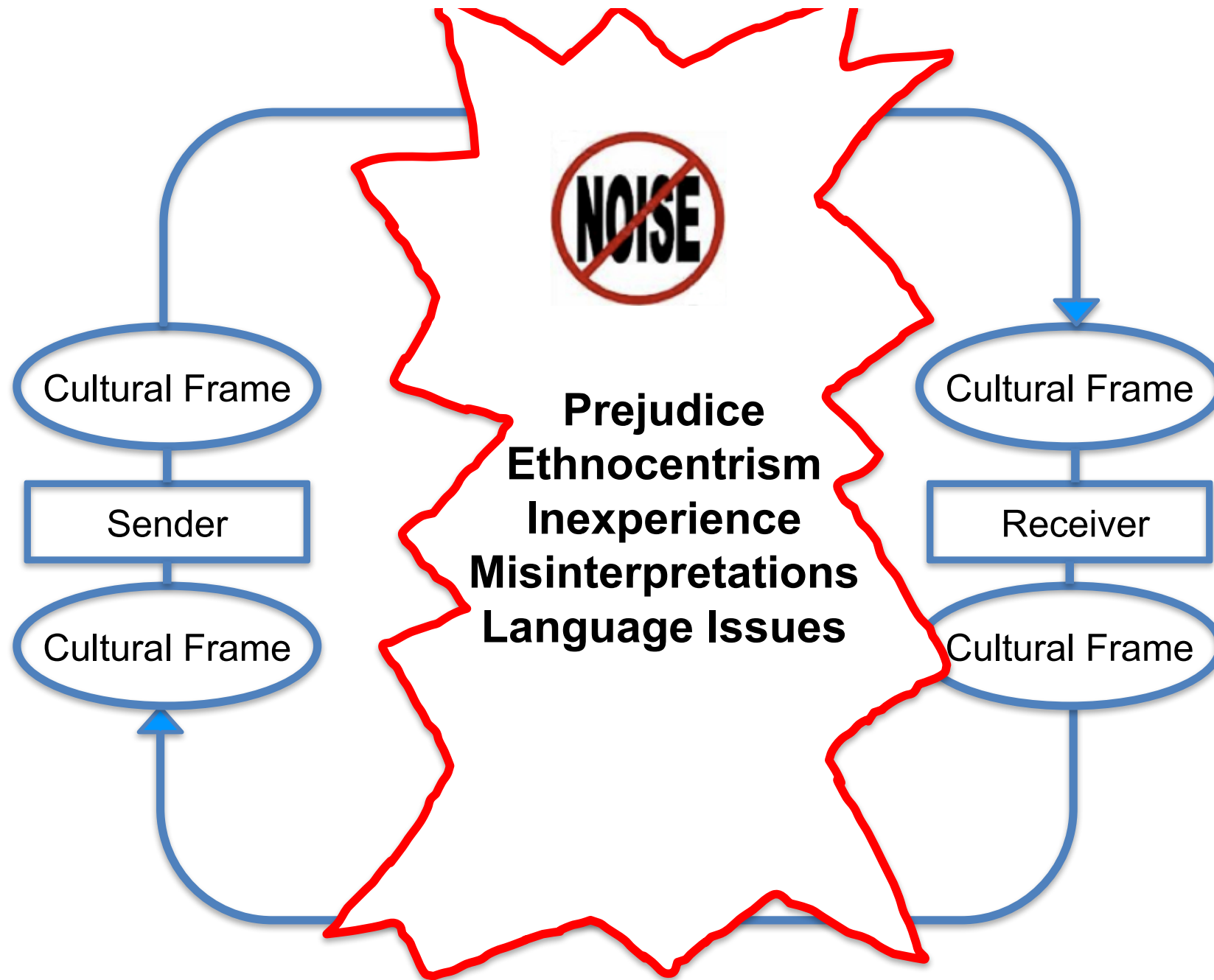


CULTURE: An iceberg  
metaphor



# CULTURE: An iceberg metaphor







*A sales person Natasha visits various locations around the globe but fails to get any sales done. What does she do wrong?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlifMplwPus>



# Power distance



# Collectivism vs Individualism



# Masculinity vs Femininity



# Uncertainty avoidance



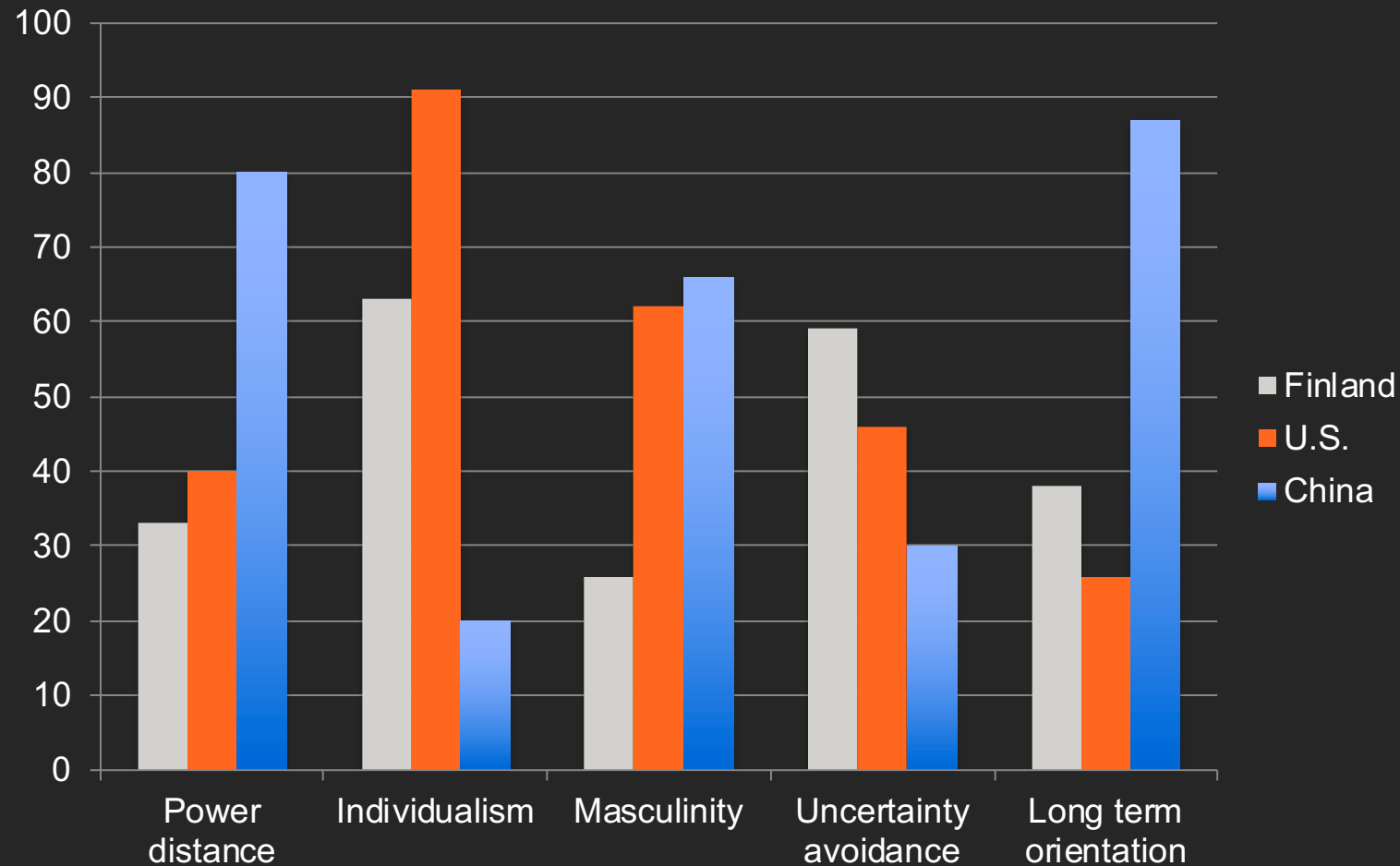


# Long term vs short term orientation



# Cultural dimensions: USA, Finland, China

## Relative positions of countries on scale 1-100

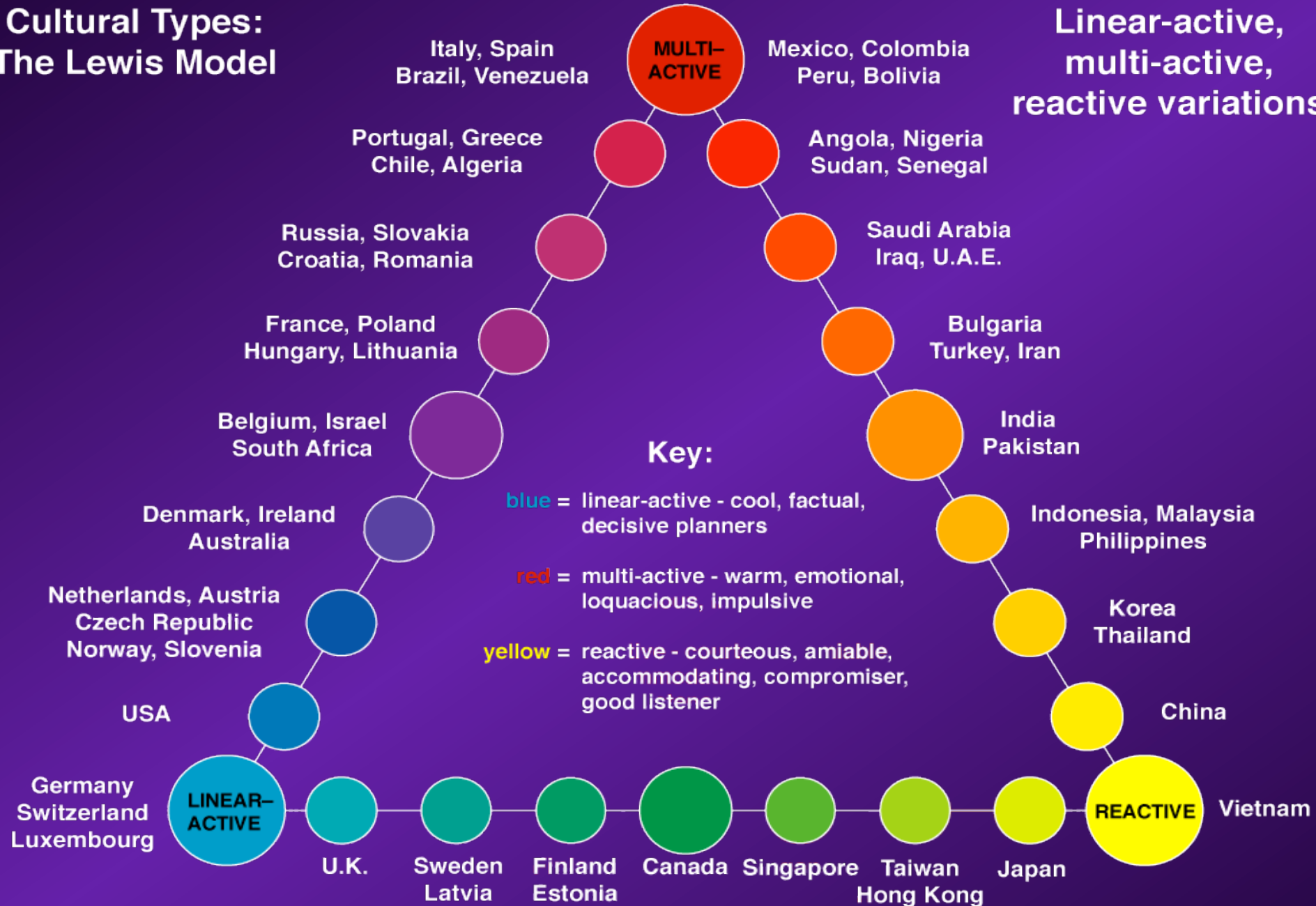


# The Lewis Model - A more business oriented model

LINEAR-ACTIVE	MULTI-ACTIVE	REACTIVE
Talks half the time	Talks most of the time	Listens most of the time
Does one thing at a time	Does several things at once	Reacts to partner's action
Plans ahead step by step	Plans grand outline only	Looks at general principles
Polite but direct	Emotional	Polite, indirect
Partly conceals feelings	Displays feelings	Conceals feelings
Confronts with logic	Confronts emotionally	Never confronts
Dislikes losing face	Has good excuses	Must not lose face
Rarely interrupts	Often interrupts	Doesn't interrupt
Job-oriented	People-oriented	Very people-oriented
Sticks to facts	Feelings before facts	Statements are promises
Truth before diplomacy	Flexible truth	Diplomacy over truth
Sometimes impatient	Impatient	Patient
Limited body language	Unlimited body language	Subtle body language
Respects officialdom	Seeks out key person	Uses connections
Separates the social and professional	Mixes the social and professional	Connects the social and professional

# Cultural Types: The Lewis Model

Linear-active,  
multi-active,  
reactive variations





# What's your cultural type?

- **Familiarize with these web based tools from business practice to understand your cultural backgrounds!**
  - <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-lewis-model-2013-9>
  - <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>

Write down your reflections in chat:

- Does any of the models represent your own culture (more) accurately? Why / Why not?



## Who are you?

- Do you feel like all the others in your own nationality?
- Have you got any influences from another culture?
- Any exposure to culturally pluralistic settings also triggers a process of acculturation (Crisp & Turner, 2011)

# NORMAL person VS GLOBAL nomad

## PERSONALITY & TASTE



Normal people are more likely to live in one place their whole life

Normal people usually speak their mother tongue and some English

Same old friends

Normal people's work often depend on location



They have a pet

Normal people are more likely to live in the suburbs



Global nomads are more likely to live in more than 4 countries during their lives

Global nomads converse with their families and friends in at least in 4 languages

New friends all the time

Global nomads have location independent jobs

Mobile life, no pets

Global nomads live in big cities



## FOOD & STYLE



Normal people prefer traditional foods and drinks

Their style is neat and casual



Global nomads love sushi, hummus and exotic food

Global nomads consider their style chic and different



## TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA



Normal people are more likely to have a normal PC and a Nokia phone

Normal person watches TV, read local print newspapers and use internet



Global nomads have a Mac, an iPhone and iPad

Global nomad watches international TV channels and read international newspapers online

Global nomad refers to people who live a significant part of their lives in different countries

Virtual team members are exposed to multiple cultures

- Home, Distant, Global
- May hold multiple identities
- Global identity = a sense of belongingness to mankind in a global community that transcends national boundaries and cultural divisions. (Erez & Gati, 2004)



Cultural differences matters –  
Cultural intelligence is a key skill







Additional reading

# Cultural Intelligence - four dimensions

CQ = A person's capability to adapt as s/he interacts with others from different cultural regions

## **Cognitive**

knowledge and nuances that can be learned from a book or personal experiences about a culture.

## **Metacognitive**

awareness during intercultural interactions, reflection on intercultural experiences, active challenging of cultural assumptions, and regulation and adjustment when interacting with those from other cultures

## **The motivational**

incorporates intrinsic willingness, drive, and enthusiasm to partake in cross-cultural contact and perseverance to deal with challenges of cross-cultural encounters.

## **The behavioral**

refers to the capability to display appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions (e.g., words, tones, gestures) in different cultural contexts.

"Strength lies in  
differences, not in  
similarities."

Thank you!  
Questions?

