

INTRODUCTION TO TALARIA INTERVENTIONS

This article explains the rationale for creating the Talaria Intercultural Interaction Skills Workshop and its core Learning and Performance process – the Talaria Facilitation Method. These two interventions improve upon many of the currently used approaches to facilitated Intercultural Competence Development.

If you haven't already, I recommend you read this website's Welcome page before this article. If you are still interested after reading this article, there are detailed intervention descriptions on the same page you are on now.

Thanks for reading.

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Acronyms

- TIIS - Talaria Intercultural Interaction Skills, as in TIIS workshop or TIIS model
- TFM – Talaria Facilitation Method
- ICD – Intercultural Competence Development, as in facilitated ICD, also known as Intercultural Training
- L & P - Learning and Performance process (replaces the term "Training"), consists of necessary workplace performance behaviors, learning content, and corresponding instructional methods.

How do you respond to cultural difference?

This is a good spot to mention The Intercultural Development Continuum© and its measurement instrument, The Intercultural Development Inventory® (IDI®). The Intercultural Development Inventory, IDI and IDI Guided Development are registered trademarks of IDI, LLC in the United States and other countries. IDI is owned and operated by Mitch Hammer.



The following is an excerpt from the IDI, LLC website, idiinventory.com:

The Intercultural Development Continuum© describes a set of knowledge/attitude/skill sets or orientations toward cultural difference and commonality that are arrayed along a continuum from the more monocultural mindsets of Denial and Polarization through the transitional

orientation of Minimization to the intercultural or global mindsets of Acceptance and Adaptation. The capability of deeply shifting cultural perspective and bridging behavior across cultural differences is most fully achieved when one maintains an Adaptation perspective. This continuum is adapted from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity originally proposed by Milton Bennett.

The Intercultural Development Inventory assesses how people respond to cultural difference and similarity.

The assessment rates respondents into one of the five orientations identified in the IDC paragraph above.

I am a Qualified Administrator of the IDI and have obtained a license to use the IDI from IDI, LLC. I use it as part of my workshops when clients and participants choose to do so. It is a strong component of any workshop. To me, one of the most powerful aspects of the IDI is that it demonstrates intercultural competence is a learned ability, and that anyone, given extensive intercultural interaction and facilitated learning and performance inputs, can develop into the multicultural orientations. It is not primarily a matter of open mindedness or good intentions. Like any skill, it takes a lot of work and experience.

The content on this website will likely be of most interest to readers who maintain the multicultural IDC orientations of Acceptance and Adaptation. However, I have written the content in its current form with the hope that it appeals to and is at least somewhat understood by readers with any IDC orientation. If you are not familiar with the IDI, I highly recommend going to their website and viewing a couple of very informative video introductions to it.

Mind the Gap

The website as a whole analyzes the deepest Ends and Means gaps between the current and ideal states of behavioral ICD. I then provide extensive description of a strategic Talaria intercultural learning and performance intervention which narrows the gaps. The Talaria Intercultural Interaction Skills (TIIS) Workshop embodies the learning and performance practices that are closer to an ideal state of behavioral ICD efforts. We can never reach an ideal state - hey, nothing is perfect! However, there is a lot we as a professional field and industry can do to get closer. All of the various resources on this website support, in one way or another, my take on the facilitated ICD field's needs for improvement and the related usefulness of the TIIS Workshop.

What's Happening These Days?

The Foundational Ends and Means Gap in Short: What is the current state of intercultural interaction skill development efforts and how does TIIS improve upon them?

This question assumes that the purpose of any skill development effort is to improve job performance. The outcome is behavioral – actions you can see performed and words spoken that will contribute to managing cultural differences, thereby increasing organizational effectiveness.

Obviously, the answer to the question is complex. First of all, there are numerous facilitated ICD efforts occurring worldwide. They are occurring in many contexts, including corporate, non-profit, and governmental organizations. Also, there are a multitude of providers. The TIIS workshop certainly is not a panacea for all possible gaps that could be included in response to this question of the current state. The scope of the TIIS Workshop's differentiation is within a few key areas I have noticed and been working on over the past 20 years. Over that time, I have been developing the pieces of this workshop that now converge to comprise its current form.

I believe these few specific gaps, though, are foundational. Until there is a widespread narrowing of these gaps, many current practices will remain generally slow and awkward in changing intercultural workplace performance. As with anything, some multicultural organizations are performing effectively in these areas and some aren't. Similarly, some providers to multicultural organizations are performing effectively and some aren't. My goal is to provide an analysis here that will help you to assess your organization's current state of cultural difference management. You can then have a better idea of whether or not the TIIS workshop might be of any benefit to you and your organization.

The Current Facilitated ICD State – Generally Speaking

Managing cultural differences toward adaptation is the core competency for anyone whose organizational work depends upon reaching results together with intercultural counterparts. Whether a senior global leader, a member of a multicultural team, an expat on assignment, or an individual contributor managing one's own cultural adaptation; the ability to manage cultural differences is critical to maximizing organizational effectiveness in multicultural contexts.

The most critical Ends gap is that we don't have a universal vision and corresponding strategic behavioral model of effective interaction which enables spontaneous management of cultural differences. This skill model needs to be accessible enough to learn in a workshop context. This gap is a yawning chasm. However, even if specific workplace interaction skills were effectively identified, many currently used Means - the L & P process - wouldn't result in the transfer of learning needed to effectively apply the skills in the workplace anyway.

Put simply, first we need an End that describes universally effective interaction skills in the workplace. Then the L & P process needs to align with the workplace performance objectives and corresponding workshop content. In addition, effective execution of the L & P process type depends upon any individual facilitator's skill level.

The TIIS Workshop, with its intercultural interaction skills model and its experiential problem solving and performance-based L & P process, narrows the current gaps. The TIIS Workshop's L & P process is multi-layered and wrapped up inside the Talaria Facilitation Method (TFM).

Since many facilitated ICD efforts today are not workplace performance oriented, nor accompanied by the correct instructional methods within the L & P process, they are not cost effective. This problem exists in the wider organizational training industry as well. However, much of the wider industry has been addressing this for a few decades now. We in the facilitated ICD industry are a bit behind.

Ruth Colvin Clark, a past president of the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI.org) comments on the cost of training waste in her book, *Developing Technical Training*, 3rd edition, pp. 6-10:

It is a common and costly myth that if there are ten to fifty people in a room with an “instructor” at the front showing slides and talking, learning is taking place. In other words, a training “event” is assumed to result in learning. It is further assumed that learning translates into improved job performance.....often training events fail to realize their potential! Participants are unable to do anything new or different after training when they return to the job.

Clark's defines Technical Training as “a structured learning environment engineered to improve workplace performance in ways that are aligned with bottom-line business goals...technical training includes both hard and soft skills.” The term “Technical Training” can conjure up the image of IT-related training for some people. Therefore, within the Talaria website, I refer to this structured approach for improving workplace performance as “performance-based training.”

Further, she comments on many of the people who have become facilitators of training:

As job performance becomes increasingly knowledge-based, there is a growing and appropriate trend toward using technical experts as trainers. But this brings us to another costly training myth: the misconception that all it takes for effective training is technical expertise, combined

with the years most of us spent in formal educational programs. This assumption puts an unfair burden on the experts, who are not given adequate support in the preparation and delivery of their training. It is also unfair to the employees who are supposedly “trained” and later feel demoralized because they can’t apply the skills needed on their jobs. Finally, poor training cheats the organization by failing to generate a return on investment.

While it is certainly not always the case, many of the people who are conducting ICD training have been chosen to do so as a result of their experience living and working in other cultures (their “technical expertise”) and/or their experience working in a multicultural organization. For sure, these are helpful and necessary qualifications. However, intercultural trainers often lack skill in designing and facilitating performance-based training.

Indeed, effective facilitators of intercultural training are a highly specialized group of people in a complex industry. We need to possess the same performance-based training skills as facilitators in the wider Training industry. In addition, we also need a high level of intercultural competence. The problem in the current state is that there is a wide variety of skill levels and many consumers of facilitated ICD are generally unable to distinguish between those skill levels.

The TIIS Workshop and its instructional methods - contained within the Talaria Facilitation Method – narrow current gaps in performance-based training. Facilitated ICD is complex stuff. Our goal is always to involve potential clients in what we call “accelerated learning activities.” These are one to two hour segments that can give clients a sense of how our approach works. We use experiential learning methodology in our TIIS-based workshops. We have found the same experiential learning methodology to work with potential clients as well. We like to show first and then tell!

We need to see for miles and miles and miles.....

Minding the Ends Gap: Clear Vision and a Concrete Workplace Performance Model

The Vision

The Ends must begin with a universal vision – a vision of what effective intercultural interaction looks and feels like, no matter which cultures, organizations, functions or job positions are involved. A behavioral interaction skill model is needed to operationalize the vision.

My assumption is that the End of any intercultural learning and performance intervention is an improvement in employee workplace performance. Improved performance enables employees to contribute to increased organizational effectiveness. In the facilitated ICD context, the workplace performance is “effective interaction with intercultural counterparts leading to cultural difference management.” A clearly articulated ideal model of this performance is needed in order to make ICD efforts relevant, worthwhile and cost effective.

Ah, but what is an ideal state of intercultural interaction performance? What does it look like if someone, or a group of people, is effectively managing cultural differences? If you want to have some fun (yes, it is fun to an intercultural learning and performance geek like me...), pose the six questions below to friends and colleagues in your organization. Then ask your intercultural competence development provider(s) the same questions. Ask the account manager and the training professionals and see what shakes out. The key to this exercise is to ask for responses that describe concrete and observable behaviors – words and actions you can see in your mind or see demonstrated by someone.

- 1) What do effective interaction skills look like during interactions between intercultural counterparts in the workplace? What kinds of specific things do people say and do leading to effectively managing cultural differences? Are effective interaction skills universal?
- 2) What are the organizational results of effective interactions? What are the immediate results of effective interactions for intercultural counterparts?
- 3) If all members of a multicultural work group had a high level of intercultural interaction skill, how would their interactions differ from a group that didn’t?

- 4) What are the organizational risks for multicultural organizations with relatively limited interaction skills? How can these risks be managed?
- 5) Do I need to change my cultural behavior when interacting with intercultural counterparts? If so, how? Should my counterparts adapt their behavior? How do I make decisions about adaptation?
- 6) Can intercultural interaction skills be developed, or do some people just have them and some people don't?

If you try this out as an assessment exercise, some of you may find that your own answers and the answers of your intercultural training providers are helpful and sufficient. On the other hand, I guess that some, if not most of you, will find inconsistency in the responses and there may be few specific and behavioral ones. One concrete response may have to do with "style-switching." Style-switching means basically doing it the same way as the other culture in question – you know the old adage, "When in Kathmandu, do as the Nepalis do." Style-switching is an important skill, but it doesn't tell the whole story. It is just one of eleven interrelated skills in the TIIS Model.

Another category of responses may be protocol and etiquette behaviors, such as the correct way to give and receive a business card or the right way to use chopsticks. These are important behaviors for sure. However, they are procedural in nature and many ICD programs spend an inordinate amount of time on these and then lose time which can better be spent on more strategic content, such as guidelines for effective interaction skill application.

I now recognize that much of the work I did over the years as a practitioner in this field was awkward and clumsy. There were many reasons for this. Chief among them was not having the answer to the performance gap question clear in my own mind (actually not even knowing the question existed). I used to think that the entire process involved skillful decision making about style switching and adept application of that decision. This limited view constrained my ability to assist participants and clients as much as I could have.

While I still get tripped up often enough, I have made some progress. I see now that one of the necessary first steps in working with clients and participants is helping them to see the gap between current and ideal performance. Clients and participants need a vision of intercultural competence. A description of ideal performance contributes to this vision. The combined answers to the above six questions form part of a behavioral intercultural interaction vision. The questions provide a backdrop to the TIIS Workshop. The workshop enables participants to answer the six questions and to transfer their understanding to specific job performance. Specific required job performance is articulated in the TIIS workplace performance model.

The Workplace Performance Model

The TIIS Workshop is a capacity-building and job-based performance improvement program. Participants accelerate behavioral intercultural competence through development of a specific and concrete set of universally applicable interaction skills which enable them to better perform the key intercultural competency of managing cultural differences.

These skills comprise the Talaria Intercultural Interaction Skills (TIIS) model, which is the foundation of the workshop. See the next page.

TIIS Skills Model Primer

The TIIS skills enable intercultural counterparts to **proactively and openly work together in managing cultural differences** through application of the following three primary behaviors:

- 1) Questioning cultural assumptions
- 2) Recognizing and explaining cultural differences and similarities
- 3) Together with counterparts, determining the type of cultural adaptation needed to accomplish relevant organizational goals.

There are 11 progressive and specific skills grouped among the three primary behaviors.

Please note the significance of “proactively and openly work together.” This is TIIS’ primary strategic element, as it empowers counterparts to deal with differences in the moment of interaction, and under any circumstance. In general, this does not happen to any significant degree within intercultural organizations today.

During the workshop, the skill model is presented and practiced in several different forms, including those below:

- Facilitator modeling with accompanying participant feedback
- Modeling by characters in experiential learning activities, such as enacted dramas, written critical incidents, and guided visualizations. The source of critical incidents is often the participants’ own past experience.
- Participant practice and accompanying feedback from other participants and the facilitator.

TIIS is a strategic model in that it can be practiced and adjusted within an environment of constantly changing circumstances. The skills can be practiced in any culture with any cultural group. They are also helpful for resolving cultural differences within any human work process that is impacted by cultural differences, such as leadership, decision making, problem solving, performance management, managing teams, and managing conflict.

When I first started doing the TIIS Workshop, it was mostly in a general diversity and inclusion context. Early TIIS Workshop participants remarked that if they had participated in the TIIS Workshop first, they would have benefitted more from prior participation in global/intercultural training programs such as Leadership, Teams, Working with Culture Z, Global Diversity and Inclusion, Individual Coaching, Working in a Matrix, and Global Mobility. The TIIS skills can be used to manage cultural differences in any intercultural/global work context, including all of those just mentioned.

Now, whatever the workshop context, all Talaria workshops and organizational consultations are TIIS-based.

Failure to reach organizational goals can have many causes. Intercultural interaction skills enable counterparts to isolate the cultural difference factors hindering goal achievement so that they can better see their way through to the organizational problem at hand and adapt accordingly.

(Continue to the next page.)

Common Truism: It isn't so much what you communicate as it is how you communicate it.
Minding the Means Gap: The Talaria Facilitation Method (TFM) and Head-On Approach to Fear

The previous section outlined the need for workplace performance-oriented Ends. A compatible Means is then necessary to transfer learning. The core of the TIIS Learning and Performance process is TFM. It is a multi-layered process comprised of performance-based training practices and experiential problem-solving learning methodology. Complementing these two elements is the head-on approach to eradicating the fear and tentative nature which often exists when dealing openly and proactively with cultural differences.

Reinart, my Talaria partner-in-facilitation, has a point of view on one aspect of the Ends/Means gap. Come to think of it, I can't imagine anything about which he doesn't have a perspective. When I asked him for thoughts on the Ends and Means gaps – particularly whether or not the materials often used in most current efforts contributed to transfer of learning - he gave me the following response:

Ah, don't get me staahted on the PPT craze.....If I only had a dollar for every minute that has been spent by trainers and clients over the years agonizing over PPT presentations – the order, the exact wording, the bells and whistles, and more frivolities, while discussion about specific workplace performance goes unspoken. These slides usually have minimal impact on participants changing their workplace performance. Some program participants actually still complain if the facilitator skips over a slide or two. They get some kind of a feeling they're being fleeced - like they aren't getting their money or time's worth. Yet, you could work in this field for a long time before you hear a program participant complain that they weren't able to change their workplace performance after the training program. Some of these slide presentations will have as many as 30 to 40 slides, or even more! And another thing - you know, when I was a kid and we would have relatives or friends drop by on a Sunday afternoon to visit....you remember when people used to drop by?....my dad, may his noble soul rest in peace, used to leave the TV on – WITHOUT THE SOUND! It was a crutch I guess, and if there was an uncomfortable lull in the conversation, everyone could turn their heads to look at the silent TV screen. It seems ludicrous to me now when I think back on it. That is sometimes what training programs feel like to me. Much of the time, people seem to be engaged with the projected PPT slide images more than with each other. The facilitator in some programs never turns off the screen for crying out loud! Marshall McLuhan was right..."the PPT medium has become the message – or at least something like that." Anyway Patti Boy, if I had all those dollars now, I wouldn't need to be working with you in this ramshackle outfit with Hermes' visage bearing down on me.

Reinart can go on a bit of a rant at times, but nonetheless you probably get the gist of his opinion. Just to let you know, participants and clients usually like his irascible nature – it comes off as charming and somewhat vulnerable, if you can imagine that.

At Talaria we do of course use visuals for content delivery. However, PPT is generally not a workable medium for our visuals. For one thing, all of our content is provided within an experiential learning methodology – a component of the Talaria Facilitation Method (TFM). A pre-determined linear sequence is not compatible with this. The timing of content inputs, including the activities and visuals, depends on the unfolding of the experiential problem solving scenarios and the direction in which the participants take them. Also, our materials are designed to be used back in the workplace along with job aids. All of our materials, including visual graphics, are better placed inside the participant manuals. As a participant in one of our TIIS-based Global Diversity and Inclusion Workshops put it when asked what contributed to the learning experience, "Instead of PPT slides, we had mostly discussions and once in a while, we referred to our materials." When asked the same question, a participant in a TIIS-based Global Teams Workshop responded, "Open forum – non-traditional teacher/student classroom format."

Darn Reinart....I often end up having to write a long passage like the one above to fill in the blank spots of his rants.....

The University Model vs. the Performance-Based Approach

Like anything for us subjectivist interculturalists, everything lies on a continuum of relativity, including learning and performance process effectiveness. Let's call learning and performance processes on the ineffective end of the spectrum the "University Model." Processes on the effective end of the spectrum follow the "Performance-Based Approach." Most of today's Means reflect the university model more than the performance-based approach. Talaria programs use the performance-based approach. I will once again leave it up to Reinart to explain. The following excerpt is from a recent interview with Reinart conducted by Janet, the editor of an intercultural competence development industry journal:

Reinart: Well Janny – I think you said it's fine to call you that, right?

Janet: Sure, I know you use the name affectionately.

Reinart: Janny, right now in this discussion, I am contrasting the current facilitated ICD reality and the needed reality in terms of two ends of a continuum. By doing this, your readers can decide where on this continuum their current efforts fall.

Janet: Great, thanks for clarifying that. How would you label the two ends of the continuum?

Reinart: Right, if we think of two different approaches to behavioral intercultural competence development, we could identify the university approach at one end – the weaker end - and the performance-based approach at the other. Most efforts these days are nearer the university approach end. We borrow the term "university approach" from the seminal intercultural training work by Harrison and Hopkins.

Janet: Harrison and Hopkins?

Reinart: (shows mock exaggerated surprise) Kiddo! If you are involved in this ICD field at all, you haven't done your homework until you've become familiar with *The Design of Cross-Cultural Training: An Alternative to the University Model* written by Roger Harrison and Richard Hopkins in 1967. You can find it in the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences*, volume 3, Number 4, pages 431-450.

Janet: (laughing) You've memorized the citation?

Reinart: You're darn tootin'. I always use it when developing facilitators in the use of TFM, the Talaria Facilitation Method.

Janet: But you said 1967. It's a bit outdated, isn't it?

Reinart: Well Kid, if you read it and can tell me that any part of it isn't relevant today to the learning and performance process in all intercultural training efforts, I'll be glad to take you out for a fantastic dinner. To me, their work generally reflects how little our typical learning and performance process has changed in 48 years! Sure, there are pockets of providers and companies that have progressed from the university approach, but they are in the minority. Harrison and Hopkins didn't label it as such, but their suggested alternatives to the university approach are very much in line with the performance-based approach.

Janet: OK, you've caught my interest. I'll read it and let you know. (smiling) If I read it and see it the way you do, that will be according to your plan and also if I read it and find something resulting in you taking me out to dinner, that would probably be just as good for you, I guess.

Reinart: (laughing mischievously) Well Janny, I'm merely trying to set up a win-win situation for us both.

Janet: Tell me more about the contrast between the university approach and the performance-based approach.

Reinart: OK, let me give you just a narrative overview and see if you have any questions. With the university model approach, participants and facilitators are largely concerned with the transmission and absorption of information. Just as the name implies, it is like what happens when you go to a university. You collect a lot of information and then at some distant point in the future, you are supposedly going to be able to recall the needed information. ICD info can come in the form of facts - like in area studies, ideas, process descriptions, style-switching possibilities, protocol and etiquette, and value-orientation models. Participants may expect that if they get all the information they will be prepared for their intercultural work. Some trainers may think that if they provide all the information, participants will be prepared for their intercultural work.

Janet: So, why doesn't this approach work?

Reinart: First, it violates a key adult learning principle. Adult learning, when behavior change is the goal, needs to be "here and now" oriented. The university approach is future-oriented. The trainer gives lots of information, participants fill out a nominal action plan at the end and then by some sort of magic the information transmission is supposed to turn into changed behavior at a future time. Without a behavioral skill performance model as the foundation of the program and ample time to practice the skills, any kind of behavioral change is unlikely.

Janet: So, it seems like you think a lot of time is being wasted when people use the university approach?

Reinart: Well, I guess you could argue that any kind of learning is helpful, but from a cost/benefit perspective, I do believe a lot of resources are being wasted. You know Janny, I am still trying to convince Patrick that we should offer a new workshop called "The Five-Minute Intercultural Competence Development (ICD) Program."

Janet: All right, I'll bite. What is that all about?

Reinart: This idea was inspired by Father Guido Sarducci.

Janet: Well, that would at least be a good marketing line for the program (laughing).

Reinart: Right, good idea. Anyway, you gotta go on You Tube and check out "Father Guido Sarducci's Five-Minute University." As he says, "In five minutes you learn what the average college graduate remembers five years after he or she is out of the school."

Janet: (cracking up for a minute) So let me guess, in the Five-Minute ICD Program, you learn what the average ICD university approach-based program participant remembers five weeks after he or she is back in the workplace.

Reinart: You got it. Sarducci suggests 20 dollars for his university. Given inflation, I think we could easily charge \$100. I think we could clean up by pumping out 5-minute segments all day long for 100 bucks a pop. And, we would save our clients boatloads of cash. Sarducci is hilarious but it's no joke how much dough organizations are blowing on training programs that don't transfer learning to workplace performance.

Janet: You may have missed your true calling as a business development expert. What else can you tell me about the university model vs. the performance-based model?

Reinart: Besides protocol and etiquette procedures, the workplace performance change aspect of it, if at all, usually consists of style-switching information, like how to manage the performance of

American employees in the American way if you are a Tanzanian relocating to work and live in Portland.

Janet: But that style-switching information is valuable, right?

Reinart: Yes, in a way. However, within the university model, the style-switching information is often provided primarily as fact content and concept content. If there is accompanying practice of the behaviors in the session, it increases the likelihood of learning transfer. However, practice is often minimal in most university approach programs. Style-switching is a critical skill. But it is just one of the 11 TIIS skills. The 11 skills comprise a coherent sequenced model. Development of these interrelated skills happens through a progression from simpler to more complex skills. Without development of the other ten related skills, people often struggle with the nuances of style-switching. It becomes more of an isolated procedure rather than a skill which can be applied across a wide variety of situations.

Janet: So, there is this idea of needing action during the workshop to complement the information in order for it to be transferred to workplace performance. It seems that one of the key differentiating factors between the university approach and the performance-based approach is that the performance-based approach uses extensive practice of the intercultural interaction skills in the workshop.

Reinart: You are correct my dear! Let me test you Janny. What famous philosopher/educator wrote, “And information severed from thoughtful action is dead, a mind-crushing load....it is a most powerful obstacle to further growth in the grace of intelligence.”

Janet: Hmm, (tentatively) I’ll guess Krishnamurti.

Reinart: (jubilantly) That’s a fantastic guess Janny! That’s great that you are familiar with him. I could imagine that line being in his book, *Education and the Significance of Life*.

Janet: When I was a student-teacher in college, our practicum instructor gave us that book to read. It was a revelation.

Reinart: Yes, I would recommend that book to all intercultural training facilitators as well. However, that particular quote I mentioned is from John Dewey’s 1938 book, *Experience and Education*.

Janet: Oh, right, I could see that. He was very big into experiential learning, as I recall. Didn’t he spend a lot of time in China, and his work influenced Mao?

Reinart: Exactomundo. Hu Shi, one of Mao’s early comrades, was a student of Dewey’s. Through Hu, Mao was inspired by Dewey’s work. One of our mottos at Talaria is, “No mind crushing allowed!”

Janet: Hey, I like all of these references. Is there anyone else you can think of who is big on the need for action and knowledge to work together?

Reinart: Hmm, well, nearly 100 years ago T.S. Eliot said, “Where is all the knowledge we lost with information?” That’s a very cogent statement for our discussion right now. You can look at knowledge as information that has meaning. In our context, meaning is the change in workplace performance behavior. So, in our performance-based approach, we offer information on a need-to-know basis. Our information becomes meaningful knowledge because it is always directly related to workplace performance behavior. Currently, there is typically a lot of nice-to-know information provided as background in programs. This information without meaning has a filtering affect and prevents people from distinguishing what is valuable and actionable knowledge and what is mind-crushing information.

Janet: Eliot said that a long time ago. I am thinking that now, with the proliferation of electronic virtual communication, there is probably even more meaningless information around.

Reinart: Good point Kid. And then of course there is Paulo Freire and his masterpiece *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In particular, he describes quite well the need for *praxis* - the process of action and reflection that inform and develop each other. The practice of *praxis* –say that three times as fast as you can Kiddo! – strengthens one’s ability to change their social reality. In our case, the social reality is the interaction between people from different cultures. If you don’t want to wade through his book, you can get short descriptions of his work through the Freire Institute, online at Freire.org.

Reinart: Back to the university model.....information provision by the facilitator is often predominantly linear, and fundamentally didactic. The facilitator invites questions anytime and occasionally asks reflective questions to the participants. This is often described as interactive presentation. With the linear approach, information is presented and then the participants, assumedly with increased awareness now, can participate in application activities. This could be in the form of written or verbal exercises and/or the ubiquitous small-group discussions followed up by each small group reporting their discussion to the larger group. Sometimes scenario-based experiential activities are used. They can come in the form of written critical incidents, acted out dramas and role-plays. These are valuable and contribute to transferring learning to the workplace if they are done right. However, often these scenario-based activities are not effectively implemented.

Typically this type of activity includes presentation of a scenario, followed by a discussion with a few reflection questions, such as those listed below:

“What happened?”

“How would you feel in this situation?”

“What did you learn?”

“What will you do if you are in this situation?”

“ Why?”

Although these questions may stimulate some reflection and discussion, they often fail to lead the participants in a clear direction toward workplace performance improvement, especially if the participants are not already skilled at reflection. In addition, participants from hierarchical and risk-averse cultures often find it challenging to participate in experiential scenario follow-up discussions. The Talaria Facilitation Method (TFM) is a universally applicable approach to both the facilitation of, and participation in experiential problem solving methods. TFM is the core of the learning and performance process in the TIIS workshop. Here is a short spiel on TFM. (Reinart hands a passage written by Barbara Baker, former faculty member at World Learning’s School for International Training in Brattleboro Vermont).

I see this product as being very useful to the general field of intercultural training. It strikes me as a simple, concrete tool that can be readily explained and utilized, and instrumental in effecting profound changes in training and learning styles...it provides a structured, non-threatening means to encourage and accept various opinions, to think about the consequences of different choices, and to experience creative problem-solving.....I see another application of the method with adolescent and young adult groups to encourage the development of responsible decision making.

Back to the university model, Jannie....then there are games and intercultural simulations. These are often thought of as being experiential. While there is some value in these for bumping people toward increased awareness, it takes exceptional facilitation skill to make the leap from the game to its implications for workplace performance change. I find the experiential scenario methods, such as using real-world critical incidents, case studies and so forth within the Talaria Facilitation Method are more accessible for participants in transferring their learning to tangible workplace performance change.

Janet: Hmm, maybe I could use TFM with my 14 year-old son.....(Reinart enthusiastically assents). What does it look like in a workshop that is more performance-based? I observed the TIIS Workshop, and it was quite different from any other one I've seen, though I can't really break it down.

Reinart: I just happen to have a simple table outlining a few of the key differences (laughs). (hands out the chart below to Janet)

	University Approach	Performance-Based Experiential Approach
Program Outcomes	--Primary focus is on participation in the training program. --Goals expressed as “increased awareness or knowledge”, or “topics covered” or “develop strategies” – often not specified.	--Focus on workplace performance improvement. --Behaviors/skills expected in the workplace represent the program goals. -- Expected behaviors communicated in the form of a workplace performance model.
Program Learning Activities	--Follow a linear input-application model. --Inputs generally one-way from trainer to participants. --Commonly called interactive presentation. --Generally, little attention is paid to emotions. --Practice is limited, often non-existent, because there is no workplace performance model to practice! --Gain awareness and then apply this awareness to large and small group discussion or exercises. --At some distant point, apply in the workplace.	--Multi-layered learning activity process. --Activities based on experiential problem solving methodology. --Participants engage in an ongoing problem solving flow. --Participants’ own critical incidents and cases and facilitator-designed incidents provide the context for identifying problems. --Problem solving process includes attention to the emotional element of intercultural adaptation. --Extensive practice of the workplace performance model. Exercises and activities simulate workplace performance. --Participants self-evaluate and give/receive feedback with other participants during practice activities.
Transfer of learning to the workplace	--Typically a written action plan at the end of the program. --Only occasional role play practice and use of experiential learning methods. --Materials designed for use in the training program, not for use back in the workplace. --Rampant use of PPT. Generally, PPT is not a helpful form of material for assisting with workplace performance.	--Experiential methods, along with extensive practice. --Materials designed as job aids for use back in the workplace. Participants learn to use the job aids as they practice in the program.
Evaluation	--Typically, Level One -reaction level only – did the participants like the program or not?	--Level Three - behavior level change - through practice activities, facilitator and participants can evaluate performance of the skills model.
Content	--Often uses background, tangential and nice-to-know content.	--Need-to-know content only. Only content that directly assists in practicing the performance model is included.

Reinart: So, Jannie, what is your understanding so far of the university approach?

Janet: I think what you are saying is that even if behavioral workplace performance behavior were to be specified, it seems the university approach would generally be ineffective in transferring learning to the workplace. Performance-based training and experiential problem solving methodology results in a higher transfer of learning rate.

Rienart: Just so Dearie.

Janet: Yay! I passed the test (both laugh).

Instruction Manual for Love

Training as a form of communication is meant to communicate workplace behavior expectations and then provide a learning and performance process that will result in meeting expectations.

Let's look below at a couple of other communication forms that illustrate the need for compatible ends and means:

- 1) You don't usually receive a poem along with your new flat-screen TV to help you put it together. An instruction manual will usually work better. An instruction manual is an effective form of communication for putting things together.
- 2) However, you generally don't use an instruction manual to profess undying love. A poem, or perhaps a poem put to music, will generally work better. Let's see how the instruction manual form of communicating love might go. Below is an excerpt from a manual which Paul gave to his new love, Charlene.

Directions for Building Love – Call Paul 24/7 at 800-436-1009 if you have questions.

1. In everything between us, and even when I disappoint you, remember I always love you.
2. If you find yourself questioning #1 above, immediately call me for an email and verbal confirmation.
3. Always use an appropriate location for discussion of any issues between us. Such locations can include outside on a walk, sitting at the kitchen table or on the living room couch. Talking about relationship problems in the bedroom is to be strictly avoided.
4. Always remember special occasions. If I do happen to forget your birthday, remember that my heart speaks truer than my scattered mind and then go back and review step one.
5. Remember to take with a grain of salt both of our respective pronouncements of love in the first six months of our time together. These will largely be statements generated by hormones and the infatuation which accompanies the Western Romantic Myth.

CAUTION! If forces of the Western Romantic Myth persist, immediately call a licensed Jungian therapist, re-visit your primary archetypal influences, and read the following three books by Robert Johnson: *He, She, and We*.

Now, these directions may be helpful in some way, but there may be just as strong a possibility the directions will have the opposite result intended. It's likely that a poem would be a more appropriate form of communication for Paul to use.

It's a similar situation when using the university approach to change workplace interaction behavior. The means usually won't take you to the desired ends – that is if your ends include workplace performance.

So, the Ends and the Means need to be compatible. To me, the correct means is actually more important. Resources spent creating incompatible Ends and Means – without workplace performance improvement results - are wasted, resulting in weakening organizational effectiveness rather than strengthening it.

Out with the Eggshells!

In addition to the vision and performance model Means gaps, the third key Means gap is the inattention paid to intercultural difference fear. In any other area of organizational work life, it is a truism that people need to communicate with each other about the root causes of problems and that the solutions depend on continued reciprocal communication. However, this is often not the case when cultural differences are the root cause of organizational problems.

For ICD to be accelerated, we need to sweep away the eggshells on which many multicultural groups tread - to take away the tentative, nervous, and sometimes fearful nature of intercultural interactions. Fear weakens motivation to proactively and openly address cultural differences and together determine how to reconcile differences and achieve goals.

In the current state of intercultural competence development, people are generally hesitant to openly address cultural differences because they don't understand the big picture of the cultural difference/adaptation process. A second reason is that they don't have the skills to openly and proactively address cultural differences in a safe and productive way. As long as a general state of hesitancy and fear exists, ICD efforts will remain slow and awkward.

The TIIS Interaction Skill Model narrows this gap. The TIIS Workshop deals with the fear factor head-on. See the link at the end of this Welcome page for a detailed description of the TIIS Workshop. The "Take a Peek at the Workshop" section of that document highlights how the workshop begins the process of sweeping out the eggshells.

As one of the participants in a recent TIIS-based Global Leadership Workshop observed, "These skills are a safe communication model for talking about cultural differences."

In the following short excerpt you can check out Reinart's view on cultural difference fear – that is if you can take any more of him. There is a full excerpt on the Readings page of this website.

Janet: Reinart, at lunch you mentioned the need to address cultural difference fear head-on. What do you mean?

Reinart: Right, you know Jannie, there is plenty of work to be done before we can advance ICD. Before we can make real progress in both the ends and means, we need to eliminate the fear of proactively and openly communicating about intercultural differences with intercultural counterparts. That is one of the overall guiding strategy elements in our work at Talaria. Related to this this head-on collision with fear, we need to incorporate the emotional element of intercultural adaptation. You know, the complexities of adaptation are more in the gut than in the head. The university approach is generally ineffective in dealing with the emotional element. David Hoopes and Margaret Pusch, got into this in their 1979 pioneering book, *Teaching Strategies: the Methods and Techniques of Cross-Cultural Training*.

Janet: (chuckling) And I suppose you could give me a select quote from that book?

Reinart: Why certainly my dear. You know, you really need to learn some of the lore – get into these pioneers of intercultural competence development. They wrote the following:

It is at the affective level that the learning must take place if it is to have an impact on behavior—the ultimate aim of the educational experience.

Janet: I don't suppose you know the page number, do you?

Reinart: Sure – page 106. You know Janet, I think you enjoy exposing me as the intercultural geek that I am.

Janet: Very much so sir! (both laugh) Now, can you speak a bit about the fear element? What do you see as the main reasons for it?

Reinart: The overall current state of organizational intercultural competence contains an overall tentative, even fearful, dimension. It lets us know that we are in the very early stages of mass intercultural competence fluency worldwide. I believe there are two primary reasons for this fear. One is that, typically, people everywhere are afraid of the unknown and what they don't understand, so they avoid it. The second reason is that most people don't have a way to safely and productively communicate about cultural differences and their resolution. From an organizational effectiveness perspective, this hesitancy can cause a lot of negative results.

Janet: Say a little more about that....

Reinart: Right, how many multicultural teams start out their first meeting with a "cultural audit" - an open discussion of the cultural differences between members? For example, a team meeting leader might start out by saying the following:

OK everybody, I am looking forward to working with you all. We have great diversity in our team, with members from Brazil, India, the U.S. and Germany. I'd like to spend this morning's meeting starting to create our team process norms. For example, I can guess our American and German members likely prefer a more monochronic approach to the way we handle time, while perhaps our Indian and Brazilian members might generally be driven more by polychronic values. This will of course affect our project planning deadlines and punctuality in meetings. I'd like to take a few minutes to get you all involved in an open discussion right now to create our punctuality norm, and then our deadline norm.

Janet: I guess that few teams do this.

Reinart: Right. So, in the current situation, thousands of teams in multicultural organizations are limiting their production and efficiency because when they have work process problems that are hindering their goal accomplishment, they can't see the cultural differences that are the source of the problems and they don't know how to mutually learn these from their intercultural colleagues. I had one client who used to complain to me about their virtual meetings. He was frustrated that the Brazilian members typically seemed to always be late in joining the meetings and they would have to get them caught up when they arrived. Obviously, this was causing inefficiency and tension between them because they weren't openly addressing the issue with open intercultural discussions. I asked him why he hadn't openly addressed it by recognizing the cultural value differences that may be part of the different behaviors. He said that he didn't want to impose his own cultural behavior on them! This is how confused things can become in our current state.

Janet: But I can guess that many multicultural team members wouldn't be able to have that kind of discussion. Many would have no idea what polychronic and monochronic even mean.

Reinart: And it's a darn good thing they don't Janny! If everyone had the ability to fluently engage in these kinds of discussions and change their cultural behavior as a result, we here at Talaria Intercultural would be out of a job and likely out on the street! (jovially laughing).

What does inclusion include?

Janet: Right, I suppose we are getting at the crux of ICD. As you are saying that, I am thinking back to the TIIS Workshop I observed. Your intercultural skills model is a solution for developing this ability to proactively and openly discuss and resolve cultural differences. As the participants gained more fluency through practicing the model and receiving other big-picture learning inputs from you, especially the non-dominant/dominant culture dynamic, they became more comfortable. The fear was being taken out of it. Remember in the session I observed, the one participant suggested they have an activity on the second day called, "everything you ever wanted to know about other cultures, but were afraid to ask"?

Reinart: Yes, I loved that! You didn't attend the second day, but they did that activity, running it themselves, and it was fantastic. They were using the TIIS skills and really opening up with each other. Whenever I do the workshop, I feel a special bond with the participants, and they with each other too, I think. In addition to the learning and transfer of learning to actual performance, the workshop creates relief as much as anything. You saw that the workshop is as relevant to not only national cultural differences, but any kind of group culture difference where cultural values are involved. For example, I find that African-American participants get a lot out of it. They benefit from the workshop as much as people from different national cultures – maybe more so. You know, many African Americans working in white mainstream dominated organizations rarely have their culture recognized and included. Like members from any non-dominant culture, they are included - as individuals and as a physical presence - when they attend meetings and do all of the things you do when working for an organization. However, their culture is rarely recognized and included. In the current diversity and inclusion state, people often mistakenly believe that a seat at the table means inclusion. But if the non-dominant culture person is simply accommodating to all of the dominant-culture behaviors, there is not true inclusion. There is no stronger inclusion act than to openly and proactively recognize and explain someone's culture, and then collaborate to see who should change their cultural behavior in order to achieve objectives. The modeling of that dynamic is a central element of the TIIS Workshop. At Talaria, we actually prefer the term, "difference mindset" over "global mindset" because "difference mindset" includes all cultural differences.

Janet: Yes, in the workshop I know you helped the participants understand, as you blithely put it, "the twisted and confused" diversity and inclusion approach in many multicultural organizations today. You know, to me, the TIIS Workshop could be called a Global Diversity and Inclusion Workshop.

Reinart: Glad you noticed dearie. That is one workshop context in which TIIS forms the foundation. TIIS is also the foundation for workshops like global leadership, teams, working with culture Q, working in a matrix, and a large part of global mobility programs, not to mention individual coaching programs. Anytime we are helping people better manage cultural differences, TIIS is at the core.

Janet: I think that many white mainstream people don't realize there is an African-American culture.

Reinart: Precisely! You could include Jewish-American and Hispanic cultures in that statement. Actually, most people in the world don't understand that there are other cultures at all. They understand there are different countries and different ethnic groups who all have some surface behaviors that are different. This includes food, dress, religious customs, pop culture etc. However, few people anywhere have a high enough level of critical awareness to fully understand that different cultures have vastly different values that drive ways of approaching human organizational processes, such as decision making, performance management, level of directness in communication, innovation, and any other human interactions process. I think you are familiar with the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC©). Using that model, we can say that people who maintain the two multicultural orientations – acceptance and in particular adaptation – are in the vast minority everywhere.

Janet: I guess it is like that saying, "People don't know that they don't know."

Reinart: You know Kid, I am really enjoying this discussion with you! You're right, and this is another central reason that the university model of ICD doesn't work. Pierre Casse, another ICD luminary, puts it like this on page 17 of his 1980 book, *Training for the Cross-Cultural Mind*:

Experience-based learning in a cross-cultural training context is appropriate for people who, 1) do not know what or how to learn, 2) do not know that they do not know what or how to learn and, 3) live in a world that does not support the questioning of basic cultural assumptions.

- Janet: It seems he is describing the intercultural competence state of most people. Sounds like another call for experiential approaches to learning and performance programs Reinart.
- Reinart: Right. His concise statement also helps to explain why the majority of participants in ICD programs, including the readers of your publication, accept the university approach as their learning process. They not only don't know what to learn. They don't know how to learn it until they have experienced effective performance-based and problem solving experiential learning.
- Janet: It seems like a rigorous performance-based approach like Talaria's isn't often used, but there are many ICD efforts going on these days. In some of those activities, participants are openly discussing cultural differences and what to do about them.
- Reinart: Sure, there are. Don't get me wrong. We are making progress and some organizations, along with their providers, are doing better at it than others. There has been some movement toward directly communicating with intercultural counterparts about cultural differences – “a common language and process” as we say. The online intercultural work-style preference assessments can be helpful in this area, if used right. For example, a global team can be brought together to compare their cultural work styles with each other. Some providers have designed worksheets to address differences. There are also a few providers who have developed large online cultural intelligence tools, which can be very useful. All of these developments contribute to a language for cultural value differences and their resultant work process behavioral differences. However, how much the use of these tools results in workplace performance change depends upon the ability and inclination of any individual facilitator to use performance-based practices and problem-solving experiential learning methodology. Very often, facilitators have those tools I just mentioned at their disposal, but try to use them with a university approach, which won't accomplish the necessary workplace performance changes. Overall in the workplace, straightforward and open discussion of cultural differences, along with their resolution, is much more the exception than the rule.
- Janet: So, I can see some of what you mean. It seems like, in this situation, it could be a lot of guess work to try and figure out who should be adapting to who and how and when. It's like each side is trying to figure out what to do, but often not having an open discussion with the other side.
- Reinart: Cultural adaptation is tremendously complex. It takes a long time to develop cultural adaptation fluency. For example, a Japanese person named Yuji, working in the midst of a team of Americans, may learn that it is effective to openly disagree with others in a team meeting. Now, for someone who has spent their whole life behaving in a relatively indirect way in group settings, and usually not disagreeing openly, it can be quite difficult to determine the finer points of this, or how it changes across contexts and situations. In the current ICD reality, there doesn't seem to be a systematic form of communication Yuji can use to straightforwardly inquire of an intercultural counterpart which disagreement behaviors would be effective and when and in what situation. That's what TIIS, together with the TFM process, provide.
- Janet: You know, when I observed you facilitating the Talaria Intercultural Interaction Skills (TIIS) workshop, it seems like that was what it was all about – providing this kind of universal systematic form of communication and practicing it in the workshop. I remember that you had the TIIS performance model at the front of the room and said to the group, “The objective of the workshop is to practice these 11 skills as frequently and to the highest possible level in the next two days. That's it.”
- Reinart: Right you are. So, we have just talked about a huge gap in current ICD efforts – a systematic intercultural interaction workplace performance model. The TIIS Workshop intervention significantly helps to close that gap. As the participants gain fluency in practicing the interaction skill model during the workshop, their fear of discussing cultural differences progressively recedes. The fear recedes because they learn a way of proactively identifying, explaining and resolving differences together with their intercultural counterparts in real time.

What's the Meaning of This?! Putting More Meaning into Facilitated ICD

In many facilitated ICD efforts these days, there is a gap between currently provided meaning and needed meaning. The foundational meaning of any effective learning and performance intervention is a change in workplace behavior that contributes to organizational effectiveness. The TIIS Workshop is a meaningful intervention that significantly narrows current Ends and Means gaps.

The Ends Gap

The most critical Ends gap is that we don't have a universal vision and a corresponding behavioral model of effective workplace interaction with counterparts that is accessible enough to learn in a workshop context.

The Means Gap

Without concrete workplace performance Ends, the Means are largely irrelevant. It's like having bald tires in a snowstorm. They keep spinning around, but you don't get anywhere. Even if specific workplace interaction skills were effectively identified, many currently used Means wouldn't result in the transfer of learning needed to result in effective workplace performance.

Narrowing the Gaps

The TIIS Workshop narrows the gaps and creates meaning. It accelerates the ability to manage cultural differences through effective application of intercultural interaction skills. It does so through the following key ingredients:

- Ends that provide a universal vision of organizational intercultural interaction skills and a workplace performance model which operationalizes that vision.
- Means that include performance-based training practices and experiential problem solving learning methodology, applied with an integrated approach using the Talaria Facilitation Method.
- Straightforward and open approach to reducing the hesitation and fear of discussing cultural differences.