

# EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION FOR FOREIGN MANAGERS TO INDONESIAN CO-WORKERS

**Respati Wulandari**

Management Department, School of Business Management, BINUS University  
Jln. K.H. Syahdan No.9, Palmerah, Jakarta Barat 11480  
D4886@binus.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

*Interpersonal communication tends to guide the way of management in companies worldwide. For multinational company, where expatriate is exist to blend with local partners or employee, the way they communicate to each other will determine the future of their company communication activities. The result of this research could be utilized by foreign managers and their Indonesian colleagues. Based on this research, which is supported by qualitative and literature methods, it can be found the effective method of communication to enhance job performance. The purpose of qualitative method that used by the author is to gain much information from employees and foreign managers in several companies. Besides interviewing them, author also joined in their interpersonal. The effective way of interpersonal communication to improve employee working performance is to form a sharing forum, informal meetings or communities of practice.*

**Keywords:** *effective interpersonal communication, foreign manager, local co-worker, community of practice sharing forum*

## ABSTRAK

*Komunikasi interpersonal cenderung mengarahkan fungsi manajemen dalam mengelola perusahaan di seluruh dunia. Pada perusahaan multinasional, di mana ekspatriat berada dan berbaur dengan mitra atau karyawan lokal, cara mereka berkomunikasi satu dengan yang lain akan menentukan masa depan perusahaan mereka. Hasil penelitian ini dapat dimanfaatkan oleh para manajer asing dan rekan-rekan mereka di Indonesia. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini, yang didukung oleh metode kualitatif dan kepustakaan, dapat ditemukan metode komunikasi yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kinerja. Tujuan metode kualitatif yang digunakan oleh penulis adalah untuk mendapatkan banyak informasi dari karyawan dan manajer asing di beberapa perusahaan. Selain mewawancarai mereka, penulis juga tergabung secara interpersonal. Cara komunikasi interpersonal yang efektif dalam meningkatkan kinerja karyawan adalah dengan membentuk forum berbagi, pertemuan informal atau praktek masyarakat.*

**Keywords:** *komunikasi interpersonal efektif, manajer asing, mitra kerja lokal, praktek masyarakat, forum berbagi*

## INTRODUCTION

Multinational company or institution will consist of foreign manager or expatriate and local employees or partners. The way they communicate to each other will lead them to good cooperation or misunderstanding which could be a disaster to the company. In the corporate world, especially in a multinational company, cultural differences in communication often come to the fore. (The Jakarta Post, 2013). Indonesia, a growing nation in huge business opportunity, is open to wide market to all business entrepreneurs that willing to invest or collaborate in Indonesian company. Whether it is as a business partner, joint venture, or involves in multinational company, interpersonal communication takes very important role in their job performances. There are many challenges to deal with particularly among foreign managers in communicating with locals. Indonesian people are varied among many local cultures and several communication problems may occur among locals. Cross cultural management often occurs as an issue in multinational company. Misinterpretation of verbal or non verbal communication can be the barriers for employee's job performance.

As globalization and cultural diversity increase, it is a certain thing that the issue of cross-cultural communication will also increase, according to D.C. Thomas and K. Inkson (2004). Language is the challenge of cross-cultural communication in the most obvious. Words easily misunderstood in verbal communication. Tone of voice is another hurdle in cross-cultural communication. How loudly, deeply and quickly people speak are different in each culture, and the intonation of the voice send secondary messages that have different meanings in different culture. (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010)

Effective interpersonal communication is very important for all organizations, in which no company can survive without it. People can work mutually dependent only through communication. Communication is also an important instrument in learning and decision making in organizations. Communication directs a process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people. (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010)

Hall and Hall, K. Wolfson and W.B. Pearce (1983) say that Communication is a critical factor in the problems of cross-cultural management. Cultural delivered and perpetuated to a form or any other form of communication. Culture and communication are also intertwined in complex ways that they are essentially synonymous. Communication, whether in writing, talking, listening, or via the Internet, is part of the inherent role of the manager and takes a lot from a manager's time in his job. Mintzberg (1973) demonstrates the importance of oral communication; he found that most managers spend 50 and 90 percent of time to talk to people.

The term communication describes a process of sharing by transmitting messages through media such as the words, attitudes, or material artifacts. Manager communicates with co-ordinate activities, disseminate information, motivate people, and negotiate future plans. (Deresky, Helen, 2011). Communication can also help the welfare of employees. (N. Ellemers, R. Spears, and B. Doosje, 2002). The information communicated from co-workers helps employees to manage their work environment, telling them, for example, how to complete the work procedure correctly or handle a difficult customer.

There are several issues which occur from cultural differences in communication in Indonesia. It is a bad impression where subordinates greet supervisor, particularly in eastern culture. Language barriers often lead to communication. (The Jakarta Post, 2013). The misunderstandings concerning Western and Indonesian work ethic are the different principles or priorities in their daily lives, such as for Westerner, individualism, rules and achievements are critical operating principle, while on the

other hand, for Indonesian, developing relationship of mutual respect, understanding and trust are the first priority. (The Jakarta Post, 2014).

A case study: Australia and New Zealand, *Doing Business with Indonesia* (Helen Deresky, 2011) mentioned several problems regarding communication barrier. Some cross-cultural behavior such as patience and courtesy is no more than good manner, it applies to all interpersonal communication. However, in Indonesia, as in the rest of Asia, there is more things to develop in a long-term relationship in order to produce a mutual relationship. Relationships rely on the hope of sharing together - for example, how the first contact should be made, how appointments should be set and stored, how the transaction should be closed, how the time should be set (including the Indonesian concept of *jam karet*, or “rubber time” which is very annoying to Westerners with their awareness of punctuality).

Indonesia, as a growing nation, has many multinational companies with many communication problems between foreign manager and Indonesian co-worker or employee. Indonesia is one of those countries in which a foreign manager’s home office prioritizes task over relationship; or corporate rather than human priorities. It may not be most effective ways to achieve productivity and effectiveness. Indonesia managers usually place more value on harmony, understanding, and mutual respect. At some point, this emphasis outweighs the importance of job performance and productivity. Because of these differences, author wants to explore and observe more regarding interpersonal communication to increase multinational companies’ management.

To discuss and offer a solution to the issue, the author identifies the problem that is what the method and effective interpersonal communication are to minimize the differences of cross-cultural and to increase employees’ job performance with Indonesian colleagues or local co-workers. This research was conducted in KMPlus ([www.kmplus.co.id](http://www.kmplus.co.id)) and several companies in Indonesia. KMPlus is a knowledge management consultant firm, which provides consulting services and training on the ins and outs of strategy and knowledge management. KMPlus itself has been established since 2004 and has handled about 100 companies in Indonesia. The objective of this research is to find and give the best way for foreign managers in communicating with their Indonesian co-workers; therefore it will enhance employee’s job performances. The scope of this research is focused on how the ideal interpersonal communication for foreign managers and Indonesia co-workers.

## **Literature Review**

### **Communication Problems (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010)**

Conflict often occurs due to a lack of opportunity, ability, or motivation to communicate effectively. First, when the two parties is less opportunity to communicate, each tends to rely on stereotypes to understand the other party in a conflict. Secondly, some people lack the ability to communicate adequately in communicating in a diplomatic way, non-confrontational manner. When one party communicates his or her disagreement arrogantly, opponent tends to further increase the perception of the conflict.

The third problem is the perception of conflict reduces the motivation to communicate. Conflict makes relationships discomfort, so people avoid interacting with others in relation to the conflicting relationship. Unfortunately, less communication can further escalate the chance of conflict because of less opportunity to empathize with the situation and the opponent would prefer to rely on the distorted stereotype of the other party.

P. Harris and R. Moran (1987) stated that nonverbal communication represents another potential area for cross-cultural misunderstandings. Many nonverbal cues subconsciously or

accidentally (like a smile) have the same meaning all over the world, but the attitude accidentally often have different interpretations. For example, most of us shake our head from side to side to say "No," but a variation of head shaking mean, "I understand" to many people in India. Filipinos raise they eyebrows to give an affirmative answer, yet Arabs interpret this expression (along the clicking one's tongue) as a negative response. Most Americans are taught to maintain eye contact with the speaker to show interest and respect, whereas some North American native groups and the Australian Aborigines learn at an early age to show respect by looking down when an older or more senior person is talking to them.

Effective interpersonal communication is very important for all organizations, in which no company can survive without it. People can work mutually dependent only through communication. Communication is also an important instrument in learning and decision making in organizations. Communication directs a process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people. (McShane and Von Glinow: 270)

### **Getting Your Message Across** (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010)

In order to get one's message across to another; one needs to (1) *Empathize*. Empathy is the ability of a person to understand and be sensitive to the feelings, thoughts and situations with each other. For example, sensitive to the words which allows the ambiguity of trigger the wrong emotional response. (2) *Repeat the message*. Rephrase the key points a couple of time. The saying "Tell them what you're going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you've told them" reflect this need for redundancy. (3) *Use time effectively*. Our messages collided with messages and voice, so find a time when the recipient is not in a state of distracted by these things.

### **Active Listening**

"Nature gave people two ears but only one tongue, which is a gentle hint that they should listen more than they talk." (K. Davis and J.W. Newstorm, 1985). Listening is an active process of sensing the signal from the sender, evaluating it correctly, and responding it appropriately.

Sensing is the process of receiving a signal from the sender and paying attention to them. The active listeners improve sensing in three ways. First, they delayed evaluation by not forming an opinion until the speaker is finished. Second, they avoid interrupting speaker's conversation. Third, they remain motivated to listen to the speaker.

Evaluating component of listening includes understanding the message's meaning, evaluating the message, and remembering the message. To improve the evaluation of their conversation, the active listener empathizes with the speaker - they try to understand and be sensitive to the feelings, thoughts and the situation of the speaker. Evaluation also improves by organizing the speaker's ideas during the communication episode.

Responding, the third component of listening is to provide feedback to the sender, thereby motivating and directing communication of the speaker. The active listeners achieve this by maintaining eye contact sufficiently and send back a signal channel, where they show an interest. They also responded by clarifying messages - rephrasing the speaker's ideas at appropriate breaks.

### **Improving Communication Throughout the Hierarchy** (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010)

#### **Workspace Design**

Leaman and Bordass (1999) speaks on Executives in Japan Airline decided to tear down some of the walls can be the opposite of the financial state of the airline miserable. The airline's board

members and senior executive team moves out of individual offices into a single large room, where it is easier for them to spontaneously share information. The new space also includes an elliptical conference table at roommates they can hold meetings. Japan Airline executives have discovered that people can better communicate with each other when there is no wall between them.

### **Direct Communication with Top Management**

"The best fertilizer in any field is that of the farmer's footstep!" This ancient Chinese proverb states that farmers will have more success by taking more time on the field to observe directly the development of harvest. Translated in an organizational context, this means senior executives will better understand their business if they meet with employees and other stakeholders directly. T.Fenton (2008) tells about nearly 40 years ago, the people at Hewlett-Packard created an expression for the communication strategy: Management by walking around (MBWA). Founder and CEO Brian Scudamore takes this practice further. "I do not have my own office, and I very often move around to different department for a day at a time," says Scudamore.

This also happens in Kowloon's meeting Shangri-La Hotel. R. Rodwell in South China Morning Post (2005) tells about communicate with employees can be a challenge when an organization can be a great hotel, which operates every time. But this condition does not prevent the senior management at Kowloon Shangri-La of the meeting held "state of the hotel" with 700 staff twice a year. It is held two sessions in the morning and one in the afternoon - so employees at Hong Kong hotels can attend without leaving the hotel short-staffed. "It's a chance to communicate about the good, the bad and the ugly," says Kowloon Shangri-La general manager Mark Heywood.

### **Communicating through the Grapevine.**

Research conducted decades ago reported that Grapevine send information quickly to all directions within the organization. The Grapevine works through informal social networks, so it can be more active when the employees have the same background and are able to communicate easily. Many rumors apparently have at least one point of truth, possibly because they are transmitted through media-rich communication channels (face-to-face) and employees are motivated to communicate effectively.

### **Appreciative Inquiry Approach (McShane and Von Glinow, 2010)**

F.F. Luthans (2002) speaks on appreciative inquiry tries to break out the problem-solving mentality of traditional change management practices by reframing relationships around the positive and the possible. These activities seek strength and organizational capability (or team) and then adapted or applied that knowledge is to further success and prosperity. In other words, this approach emphasizes building strength rather than trying to correct the problem directly.

S. Berrisford (2005) shares that British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) requires a more innovative program to reverse the situation in which the number of viewers decreased, but the employees complained that radio, television and the Internet does not provide a creative working environment. To unite how to be more creative, the company sponsoring the appreciative inquiry process consulting employees called Just Imagine. More than 10,000 employees (about 40 percent of employees BBC) have participated in 200 meetings held within six months. The BBC's executive publicized the result and immediately implemented a several recommendations, such as a job swapping and a newcomer orientation program.

## **Cultural Intelligence** (Martha Maznevski. The Jakarta Post, 2008)

How cultural intelligence can improve performance: Adapting abroad while being yourself. Cultural intelligence is the key to the success of today's cross culture, cross border, cross organization worker. It consists of specific knowledge about different culture, as well as general knowledge about how culture work. It also requires skill – interpersonal, negotiation, listening and cross-cultural. Martha stated that the most important characteristic is cultural mindfulness or openness to new experiences and ideas and the ability to keep learning.

Mindfulness is the ability of people to pay attention. It is what helps a person recognize and understand the differences between cultures. Recent research has shown that if teams or individuals working in cross cultural situation can be persuaded to pay more attention, performance goes up. The reason that many merger and acquisition have difficult time integrating is usually because they have different norms, values and ways of life. This is a classic example of where cultural knowledge, skill, intelligence and mindfulness are very important.

According to Martha, adapting is the responsibility of anybody who cares about performance. If one person adapts, performance improves a bit. If everybody adapts, performance skyrockets.

## **Interpersonal Communication Practices for Cross-Cultural Management in Indonesia**

President Director of Bank ICBC Indonesia Yuan Bin is well aware of the likelihood of cultural differences in communication. (The Jakarta Post, 2013). The Chinese national consider implementing effective communication in crucial means to bridge cultural differences, and prioritizes a work culture that value collaboration. Under his leadership, he has made the multinational blend engine that drives the company forward. Yuan acknowledge there are still some differences, such as religion and language, but they can be overcome with his simple recipe: understanding each other's culture and beliefs. He said that communication is the key to cross-cultural understanding. However, it is the language barriers that often lead to miscommunication. For that reason, despite the use of English as the international language, they equip their Indonesian and Chinese staff with language training. Yuan always support activities designed to increase awareness and respect of the two cultures. Understanding each other's culture builds a good relationship within all divisions of the bank. But the more important thing is to maintain the relationship, which is essential to keep the team solid. Greeting to others, including superior and subordinates, upon their arrival at work is one basic example of how they maintain their relationship.

Pri Notowidigdo (2001) says useful frameworks if managing cultural differences speaks about the issues of western manager and Indonesian manager. With his United States experience, motivation and excellent track record, it reassures him that he will encounter little what he cannot handle in his assignment in Indonesia. After having been on the job for several months, western manager is experiencing a lot of frustration and Indonesian manager also experiences the subordinates lack both in training and motivation. Efforts on part of the western manager to resolve the issues have been futile. The problem became increasingly severe in the weeks that followed. At the face value, they are obviously not communicating with each other. From cross-cultural perspective, there is cultural conflict in term of different values, assumption or expectations.

In this regard, Fons Trompenaars, a cross-cultural guru, states that a culture distinguishes itself from other cultures by the specific solution it chooses to certain problems. He proceeds to apply a useful framework of managing cultural differences by highlighting five fundamental dimensions on how to relate to other people: rules versus relationship; the group versus the individual; the range of feelings expressed; the range of involvement and; how status is accorded.

In this case, the Western manager, individualism, rules and achievement are critical operating principle. He assumes that his Indonesian colleague shares his assumptions and expectation. The Indonesian manager, though, needs to first develop his relationship with his partner (western manager) in order to develop a basis for mutual respect, understanding and trust.

Elliot Davernas, the country manager of Englishtown Indonesia, implements a leadership style that eschews hierarchy while focusing in individual empowerment achieved by a strong sense of ownership. (The Jakarta Post, 2012). The Swede combines his staff's set of work experiences and skills with his open Swedish approach of allowing all employees to voice their opinions. He said that compromise is the key, he would be ignorant to think that he would be better suited to know their Indonesian customers' needs compared to his teams, who consists of Indonesian and from whom he has the fullest respect. Being humble and respectful of the differences that exist are essential in his efforts to produce a beneficial cross-cultural work environment. He tries to remain open-minded and adapt to the environment he is in and act as a catalyst for positive change. He explained that whenever a team member is doing something well, they let him or her share that knowledge, and also mentor somebody who is more junior.

Due to its unique and unconventional approach to securing future employees, English First (EF) is dedicating itself to conducting regular training both between teams and through mentoring within the teams themselves. Furthermore, as a global corporation with a network of offices spread throughout the world, EF routinely conducts best practices sharing between national teams through regular meetings and kick-off on both the international and regional level, as well as via Skype or video conference. Davernas believes that by bringing teams from various functions and locations to interact with each other directly establishes the key learning platform that allows them to benchmark from each other.

Joan Hardjono (Helen Deresky, 2011) tells about one of the toughest challenge in working in a foreign country is to learn how to operate in different cultural procedures. International managers tells endless stories of cross-cultural breakdowns, missed appointments, problems over differences in management style, lost orders or down time on production lines, labor problem between the foreign management and local staff and many other examples of miscommunication. Many have been avoided or at least are reduced. Expatriate managers and their local colleagues have prepared better for the differences in employment patterns.

There are some concerns for Indonesian managers work with their western colleagues. For example, they believe that westerners must strive to adapt to the culture, taboos, and the language of their Indonesian colleagues. They should give the instruction slowly and clearly in standard English and should ask for a paraphrase to ensure understanding. They must be willing to consider individual cases and cultural needs (such as prayer time or other religious duties, time off to visit the tomb before Ramadan, weddings and funerals). On the other hand, Indonesian managers should be willing to make many adjustments to working in an international company. Important areas where western management techniques are most successful include strategic, planning and timetable deadlines, efficiency and punctuality, handling conflict and taking responsibility.

Sensitivity to the needs of employees is a management area that is seldom stressed in most western business cultures where efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness take priority. For example, when someone loses control through anger, distress, or confusion, the Javanese would normally recommend the need for *eling* (in translation, not allow oneself to be overwhelmed by mixed-up feelings and thoughts but to regain self-control). Self control is a high value for the Javanese, maybe of the highest. This value is not unique to Indonesia. It is a common cultural emphasis on the art of making and wearing masks to represent hidden emotions. Regardless of the cultures they come from, mask convey the essential emotions. (Rupa-Pratirupa, 1998). Thus situations can arise in business

contexts where hiding true feelings and keeping up appearances may take precedence over solving a problem.

Maintaining harmony in the office by giving the outward appearance stating that there is nothing wrong is reasonable in Indonesian traditional office. The bad news is not in talking with the boss and which situations seem insurmountable to the employee can simply ignore. (George. B. Whitfield, 2006). Because of this attitude is not generally accepted as a part of western culture - although in fact it exists - western managers should be taking more time to observe and listen to Indonesian employees than they would be back home.

Another reason why such attentiveness is important is that Indonesian business relationships are paternal or maternal. Workers expect their supervisors to keep their interest as parents to their children, and supervisors understand and accept their responsibilities. Furthermore, the tension involved in being the bearer of bad news to one's boss is felt very keenly by Indonesian employees, and this needs to be taken into account by managers and supervisors. The English language injunction is "Do not shoot the messenger" but some Indonesian workers seem to expect a firing squad when they have to report failure. Therefore, western manager should make it clear that they wished for and expect subordinates to come to them with questions and concerns and that the response will be non-judgmental and self-controlled. The faces should be without mask; they should not portray the negative emotion of anger, confrontation or aggression. Manager in Indonesia are expected to always polite and always smiling, no matter how angry they may be inside.

These particular practices of interpersonal communication are happened in Indonesia. The way of communication leads and effects job performance to all parties. Despite the fact that there are common issues occur from cross-cultural differences in communication, there is always solution to minimizing the misunderstanding of the differences.

## **METHOD**

In this research, author used qualitative and literature methods. The purpose of qualitative method that used by the author is to gain much information from employees and foreign managers in several companies. Besides interviewing them, author also joined in their interpersonal communication activities. Some explorations and deep interviews are experienced by author to find the best or ideal way of communication between foreign managers and local employee.

Author did much literature research by collecting academic book and articles from credible newspaper in Indonesia. The aimed of this method is to look out of some common or unique references that have been used in several multinational companies in communicating between foreign manager and local partner or employee.

From these deep interview, observation by joining in their activities, and literature references, author will conclude the best method of interpersonal communication to enhance their working performance. The result will be taken from these data.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The data shown in this study is the data that has been obtained from KMPlus and several companies in Jakarta based on interviews that have been conducted by the author.

## **KMPlus**

KMPlus has their interpersonal communication strategies with their clients. The strategy is to come to clients and meet them face to face and via telephone. By meeting face-to-face with clients, KMPlus would find their client's needs. This way will be nurtured and sustained good relations with some of their regular clients.

In this research, KMPlus shared their communication strategies in fostering cooperation with their regular clients, those are: (a) Mind set of communication. It is a method or way in which KMPlus want to build a good and effective communication with the client. These attitudes instilled by the team KMPlus in interacting or working with clients. (b) Skill set of communication. They are communication skills or abilities possessed by team of KMPlus about communication techniques. Every person and company has its own model or ways of communication. These different types of communication must be recognized and used by KMPlus to maintain their business relationship. (c) Communication tool set. It is tools or means that are employed to communicate in fostering good working relationships effectively. Such as email, phone, or chat group. The most important thing in boosting interpersonal communication is maintaining trust one another.

In strengthening internal communication in a team, KMPlus held weekly meetings. The purpose of this routine is clicking up to date current job or future programs. Evaluate the work, find out who is working on the ongoing project and give each other opinions and suggestions on the work team. Weekly meeting is considered effective in fostering communication within the team of KMPlus. In addition to discussing the work, to reinforce the sense of brotherhood and friendship in the team, it is necessary to maintain the cohesiveness of the occupation.

In this research, KMPlus provided data of its clients on how interpersonal communication uses and takes place in several companies.

## **KMPlus' Clients**

### **Banking Companies in Jakarta**

Several large banking company in Indonesia use sharing method to improve communication between colleagues. One of the major banks says the Doa Pagi or morning prayer. The activity was conducted in the morning for 15 minutes. All employees gathered in one division which activity led by the head of each division. The morning prayer activity is implemented by all divisions within the company. Morning prayer has a lot of benefits of avoiding the problems and provides solutions to problems arising from the work. One of the major banks are also doing similar activities, but only applied by one division. The goal of this sharing is to foster teamwork, improve communication between employees, discuss the work by each employee and draw lessons from the experiences of each other. The one whom makes this activity can be a routine activity is the originator himself, which is the head of the division. When the head of the division invites this sharing forum every morning, all employees are motivated to carry out this.

### **Oil and Gas Companies in Jakarta**

One of Gas Company in Indonesia does sharing activities. They named it Precise. Precise is an activity that is done every morning for 15 minutes in which all employees in their respective divisions get together to talk about or discuss the value of their work. So, Precise prefers the solution to the problem and this activity is not to talk about personal problems of employees.

Some oil companies in Indonesia also have turned out the same activities. There is a kind of informal meeting conducted by engineers to talk many things to each other in a relaxing time. This informal activity makes their communication smooth and forged a trust between them, so this condition creates their job performance better and increased. There is also a form of communication in a company where they formed a chat group using the same device. This kind of group is proven that it can create a cohesive working environment and accelerate and speed up information from their office.

### **Insurance Companies and English Language Institution in Jakarta**

Authors interviewed several employees who work in two large insurance companies and one large English Language Institution in Jakarta. Apparently, these companies have their own communication method to boost employee's working performance. One of insurance company uses sharing program to achieve their goal as an agent. One such company has a program called Anugrah Agency held once a week for two hours and AMX are held three times a week. They get many benefits from this program such as refresh and recharge their energy to work and experiences from their colleague from a different point of view. They talk about problems, difficulties in work and give each other opinion and solution. Usually, there is one or two people share their journey to success as an agent in the forum.

One major insurance company also makes sharing forum which is held two times a week. The program's name is VSM and VM3. The function of this forum is to motivate agents in order to improve their working performance. The company also held monthly meeting unit or meeting group. The goal is to motivate agents, coaching them, and make evaluation to their job. There is also a meeting so-called class role play in order to improve the skills of the agent.

The approach which taken by some agents to their prospects, that they learned from training and meetings, is by speaking face to face with them. They talk about their life, dreams and desires. This conversation also includes achievements in which product that prospects want in their medium and long term of time. Agents dig their needs in a casual way of conversation is considered the most effective approach.

An English non-formal institution that has been outstanding for more than 50 years and has many affiliates throughout Indonesia uses teachers sharing forum as a media to communicate and learning. They call it teacher forum. This activity is held once a week and attended by all the teachers of this institution. The forum was initiated by the teacher coordinator. The purpose of this forum is to exchange ideas of their job or project that has been run, share their problems and solutions. Another benefit of this activity is to increase brotherhood among teachers so that job performance is enhanced.

### **Communities of Practice**

#### **Ministry of Finance of Indonesia**

Siti Zulaiha (2008) speaks on the importance of group discussion of Directorate General of Budget in Ministry of Finance in Indonesia. Since 1998, this directorate general instructed its vertical offices in his domain to form a group discussion to review issues and solutions in each of the office. This group is called Gugus Kendali Mutu (in translation Group of Quality Control). They held this meeting once in a month. This discussion is very effective to the improvement of employees working performance, especially for new employee. The benefit that has been obtained by this meeting is employees could get to know each other and work problems could be solved by sharing to others. By exchanging information and experiences, employees gained much useful knowledge to work in a better ways and by the rules.

## **Holcim**

In various conditions in Indonesian companies, the means or method that is considered effective and good in interpersonal communication is to create a forum for sharing or communities of practice. A community of practice is one of practical tools for fast learning in Holcim. This Swiss cement producing company applies this method of sharing to enhance communication among their employees. Although Holcim employees are scattered across the world, they have often similar task. Communities are a platform where people from different group companies meet around a common topic of interest. They learn from one to another, exchange knowledge, and develop new ideas. (Marius Leibold. 2005)

Instead of the benefit of communities of practices in Indonesian company, there are several obstacles or difficulties that prevent this activity to be a routine or daily activity. Based on the interview with KMPlus, the barrier is the sense of trust among others. Many employees come to the sharing forum just because they know or acquainted with the inviter. When the inviter leaves the company or could not attend the meeting, others will not attend to the meeting either. That is why company needs to build strategy to maintain this sharing forum that works as daily or weekly routine. The strategies are company needs to make some rules, set a champion in the company, show the benefit of the activity and build the members.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on interviews that had been done by author in various companies, it can be concluded that an effective way of interpersonal communication to improve employee working performance is to form a sharing forum, informal meetings or communities of practice. This is the way to talk to each other face to face. This method is considered effective because employees get many benefits from these activities.

Sharing forum is not just a place to communicate about jobs in a professional manner but also to foster a sense of brotherhood, unity and trust among colleagues and superiors. Sense of brotherhood and trust is the highest value for the Indonesian culture. Having a sense of trust and brotherhood has formed the communication barriers or stereotypes that have existed in many parties will be reduced and even disappear. Thus creating the atmosphere of mutual understanding and it can improve the performance of employees.

### **Managerial Implication and future research**

For foreign managers in charge, working or doing business with the Indonesian people, the authors propose the managerial implication of this research. To be effective cross-culturally, it is important to be alert and sensitive to the needs, orientation, values and aspirations of other people. (The Jakarta Post, 2001). While there is no foolproof formula on how to achieve this objective, it would seem critical to listen and observe attentively, sensitively and fairly. Being tolerant, accepting and considerate are equally important. Of utmost value are perhaps persistence, a willingness to be introspective, and an eagerness to examine and learn from failures as well as successes. Westerners must strive to adapt to the culture, taboos, and the language of their Indonesian colleagues. They should give the instruction slowly and clearly in standard English and should ask for a paraphrase to ensure understanding. (Deresky, Helen.2011)

The effective interpersonal approach that must be done by foreign manager or entrepreneur to their Indonesian co-workers is doing face to face conversation. This conversation cannot be done only

once or twice, but several times therefore it can build a familiarity and trust among others. Sharing forum will be a good activity for employees across cultures. Thus, it will create understanding or attainment of something desired by foreign business manager with their Indonesian colleague.

If this activity is done routinely by the presence of all parties, then misunderstandings, stereotyping or mistrust that had been existed for a long time, can be replaced by mutual understanding and sense of brotherhood. This creates a sustainable working environment. Cross-cultural sensitivity works - or should work - both ways. Foreign managers must understand the culture and business customs of Indonesia, and Indonesian managers must understand what will be expected of them by foreign managers. For researchers who will conduct a similar study, it is recommended to look for other factors in finding other challenges in intercultural communication and provide solutions that can be done by both parties to do the same work.

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