

Welcome: Socio-cultural Skills for Knowledge Transfer

KTSofSkills - Soft Skills for Knowledge Transfer
Project n. 2022-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000089663



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By the end of this session, you will be able to...

Explain different cultural models at individual and organizational levels to understand their implications for professional interactions.

Differentiate various collaboration models, motivations, and work approaches used across cultures and disciplines.

Assess the impact of socio-cultural differences on team dynamics and collaborative effectiveness.

Demonstrate effective collaboration with stakeholders from various cultural and professional backgrounds.

Agenda

Time	Topic	
20 min	Introduction & Icebreaker Game	Group Exercise
40 min	Cultural Dimensions	Group Work & Mini Lecture
15 min	Break	
30 min	Theories on Socio-cultural Differences	Mini Lecture
60 min	An informal KT meeting	Role-play Exercise
15 min	Wrap up	Group Discussion



Let's get to know each other better!

Check out the list of questions in the next slide.

Pick up-to 3 questions to ask each other.

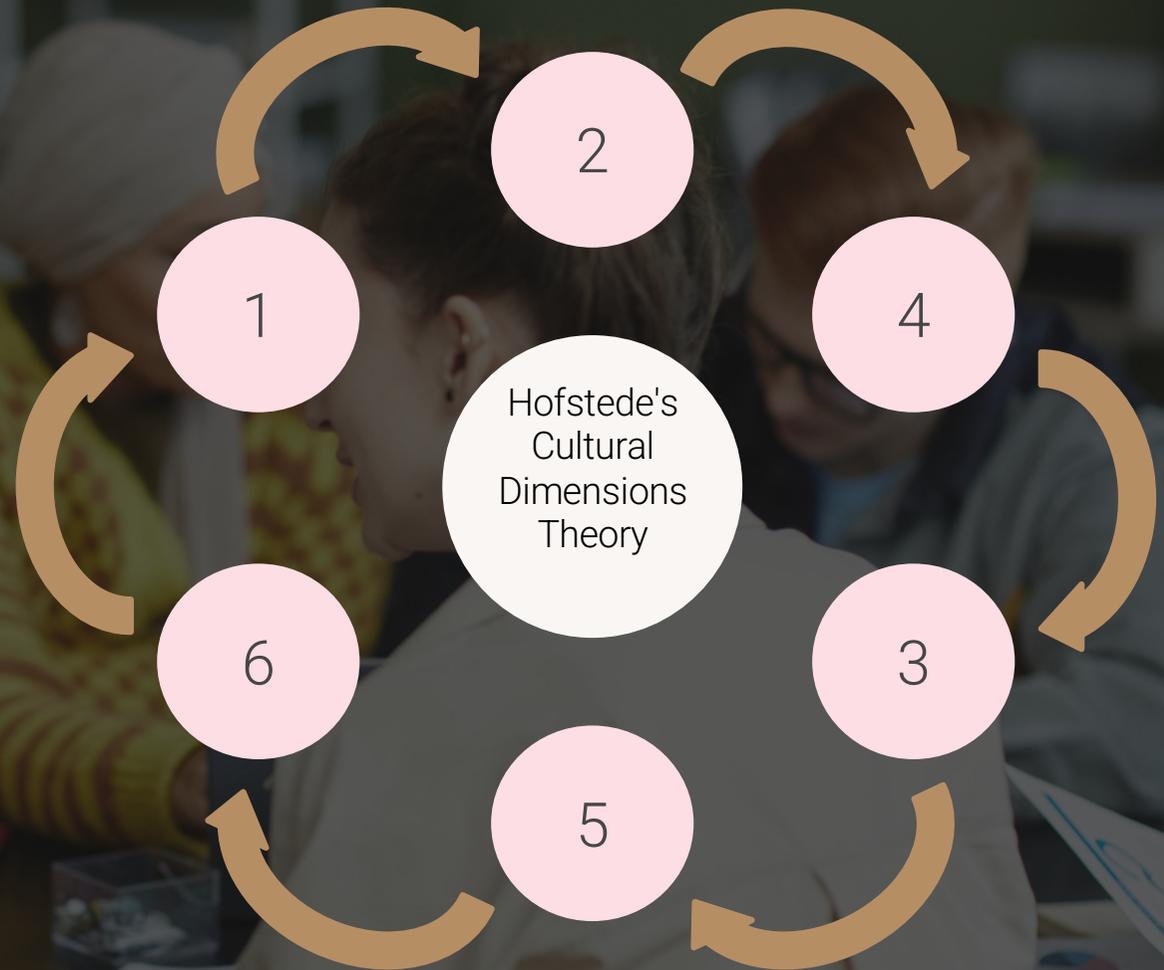
Be authentic!

- What books on your shelf are begging to be read?
- Which do you do more often: hum or whistle? Hum or whistle your answer.
- What's something you intended to do today, but didn't? Why not?
- What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "fun"?
- What's the best New Year's resolution you've ever made?

- What magic tricks do you know? Perform one now.
- What's your favorite item to cook? Why?
- Are you a hugger or a non-hugger? Why?
- Are you ever a high-maintenance person? Explain.
- Are you superstitious? Give an example.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

1	Power Distance
2	Individualism vs Collectivism
3	Masculinity vs Femininity
4	Uncertainty Avoidance
5	Long Term vs Short Term Normative Orientation
6	Indulgence vs Restraint





Cultural Dimensions in Practice: Challenges in Knowledge Transfer Work

Let's explore how Hofstede's cultural dimensions manifest in workplace interactions and decision-making, particularly in the context of knowledge transfer across institutions, industries, or countries.

Cultural Dimensions in Practice: Challenges in Knowledge Transfer Work

In 3-4 people groups

15 min Group Discussion

5 min Presenting ideas

Pick **two** Hofstede dimensions that you think most affect knowledge transfer processes.

Discuss:

- How do these dimensions show up in your everyday work (e.g., during contract negotiation, technology pitching, stakeholder alignment, IP discussions)?
- Have you experienced a cultural mismatch or misunderstanding related to one of these dimensions?

If you have extra time: Brainstorm actionable tips for KT professionals to communicate effectively across different cultural dimensions.

Academic and business logics

Universities and industry represent two different logics that have different goals, cultures, and structures.

The academic logic seeks “fundamental knowledge, research freedom, rewards in the form of peer recognition, and open disclosure of research results”.

The commercial logic “is thought to entail different and partially conflicting practices and norms, including bureaucratic control, restrictions on disclosure, and the private appropriation of financial returns”.

This heterogeneity creates a fruitful basis for developing new innovations and accessing complementary knowledge across institutional boundaries.

However these differences create different socio-cultural environments, which are governed by different rules, norms, behaviors and expectations!

Socio-cultural differences

In the KT domain, socio-cultural differences can be interpreted as **proximity dimensions**

The term *proximity* was originally used in the area of economic geography to denote geographical closeness

In innovation literature, the concept relates to a number of proximity dimensions, which are viewed as important pre-conditions for innovation and inter-organizational collaboration

Proximity dimensions

Cognitive proximity

Actors that are cognitively proximate perceive, interpret, understand, and evaluate the world in similar ways

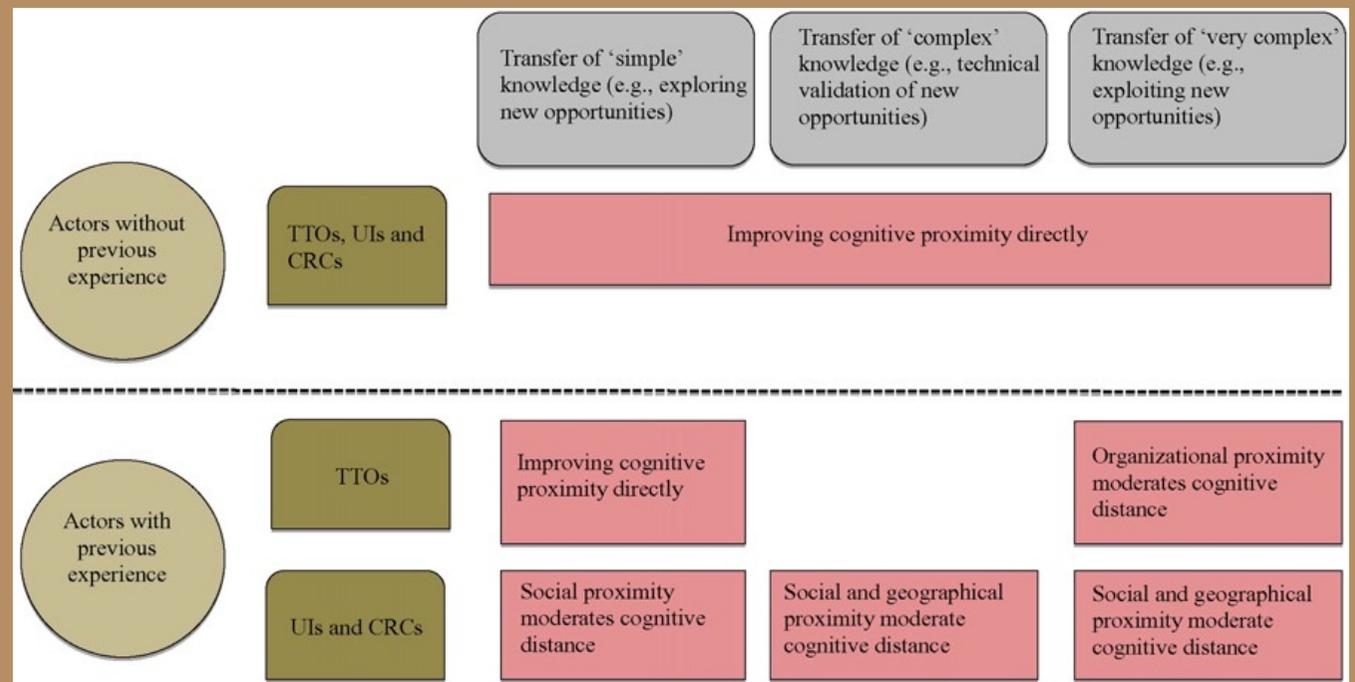
Organizational proximity

Organizations with similar routines and rules may collaborate more easily because of organizational proximity

Social proximity

Actors that have developed trust, friendship, kinship, and common experiences are socially proximate

The KT Professional can improve *proximity* between University and Business



From Villani et al., 2017

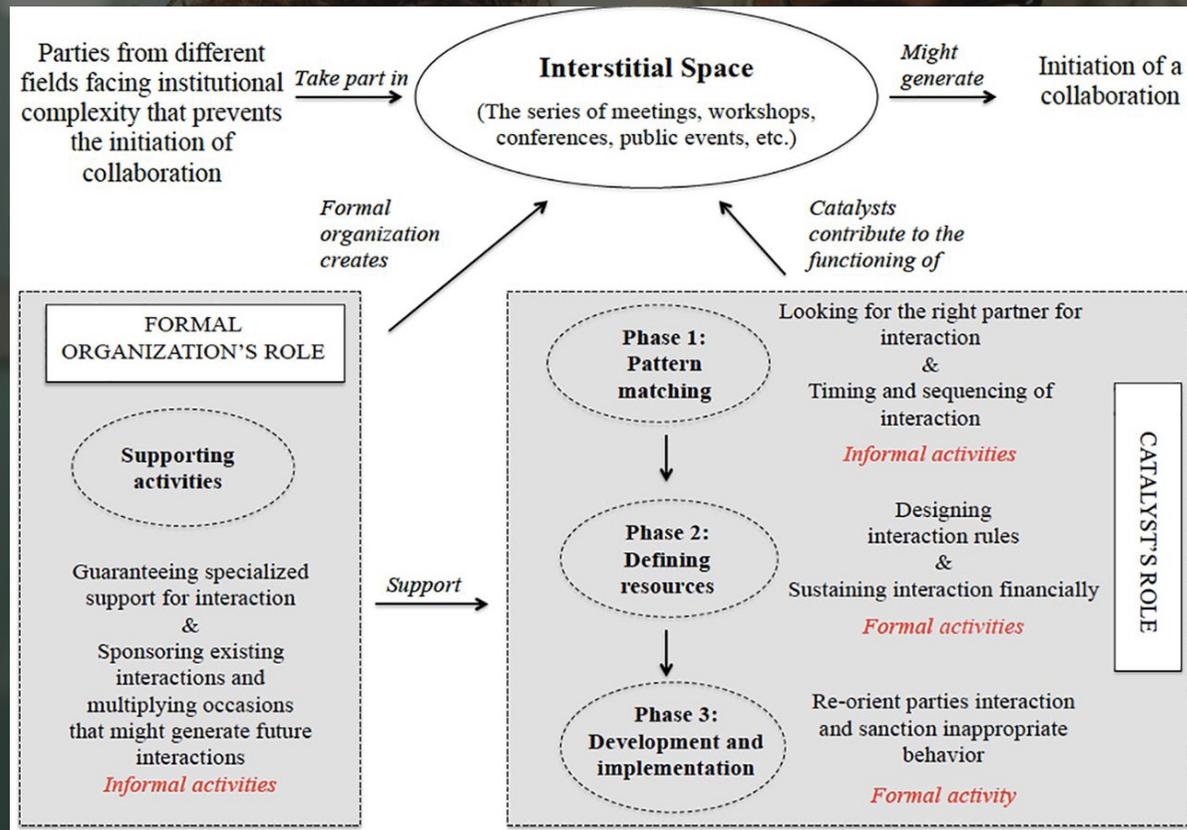
The KT Professional can improve *proximity* between University and Business

The KT Professional has different opportunities to reduce cognitive proximity that characterizes KT activities.

The most effective mean depends on:

1. Whether actors have previous experience of KT collaboration
2. The degree of complexity of the knowledge being exchanged

The KT Professional as a Catalyst



From Villani & Phillips., 2021

Types of business collaboration

Open innovation has paved the way to different types of business collaboration models.

The business collaboration models can be divided into four main models.

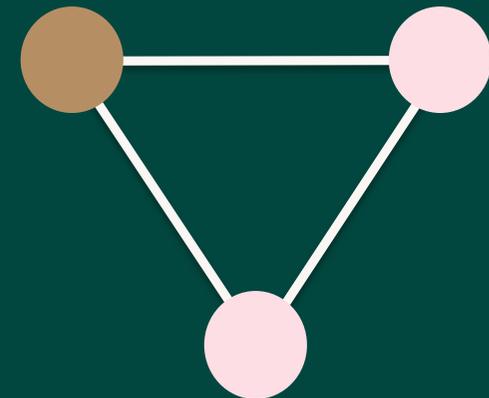
1. Strategic alliance
2. A portfolio of collaborators
3. Innovation networks
4. Partner ecosystems

Types of business collaboration

Strategic alliance

Agreement between two or more independent parties that temporarily combine resources and efforts to reach their strategic goals.

Strategic alliance creates value by improving current operations, changing the competitive environment and easing entry and exit.

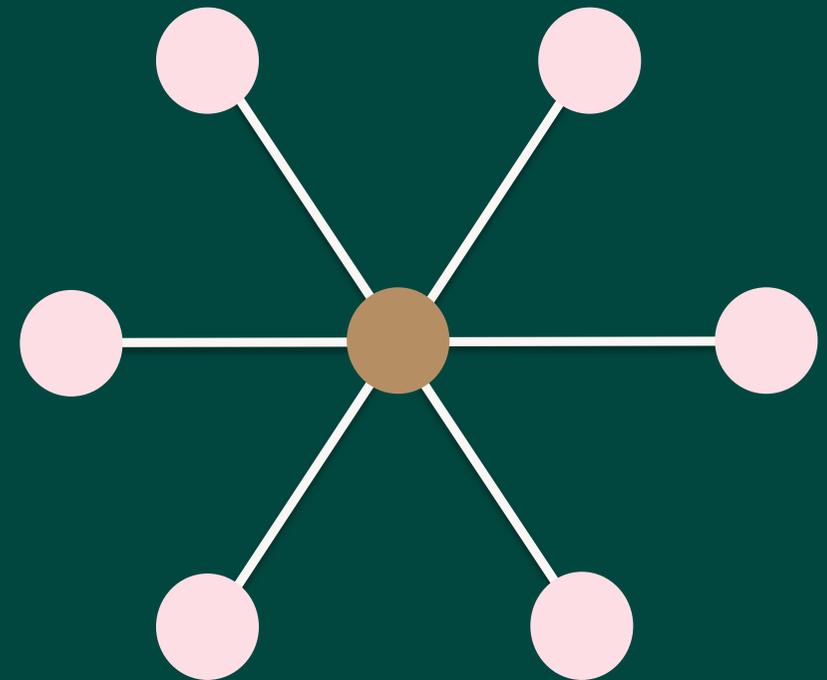


Types of business collaboration

A portfolio of collaborators

Portfolio management allows to extract the best practices from partner experiences, assimilate knowledge and spread those internally.

Portfolio is the base of more advanced collaboration models.



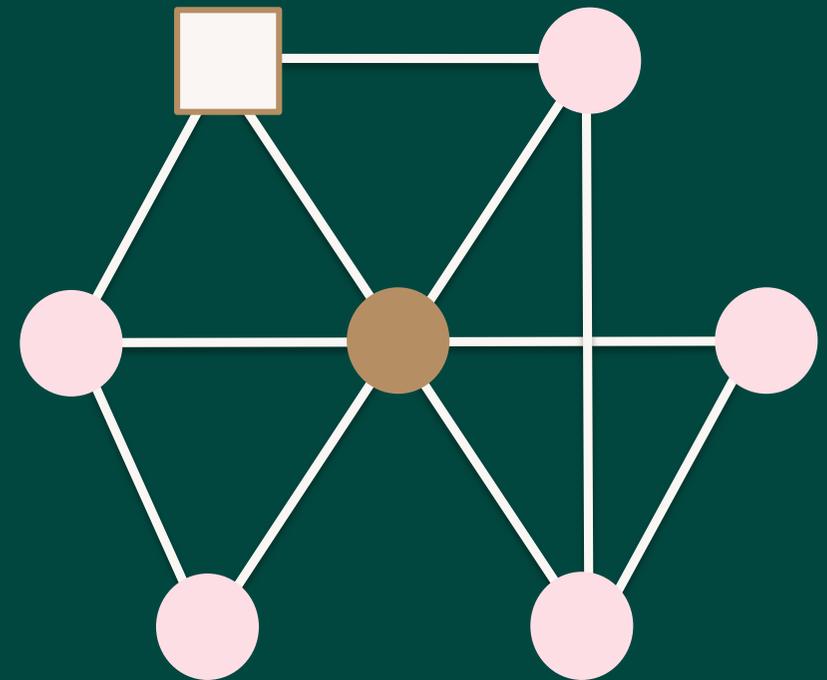
Types of business collaboration

Innovation networks

Networks include groups of stakeholders that share R&D goals and interests related to products, processes or business models.

In innovation networks, all stakeholders are interconnected, orchestration is less strict, and competition is lower compared to previous models.

Innovation networks help quick development and secure long-term survival.

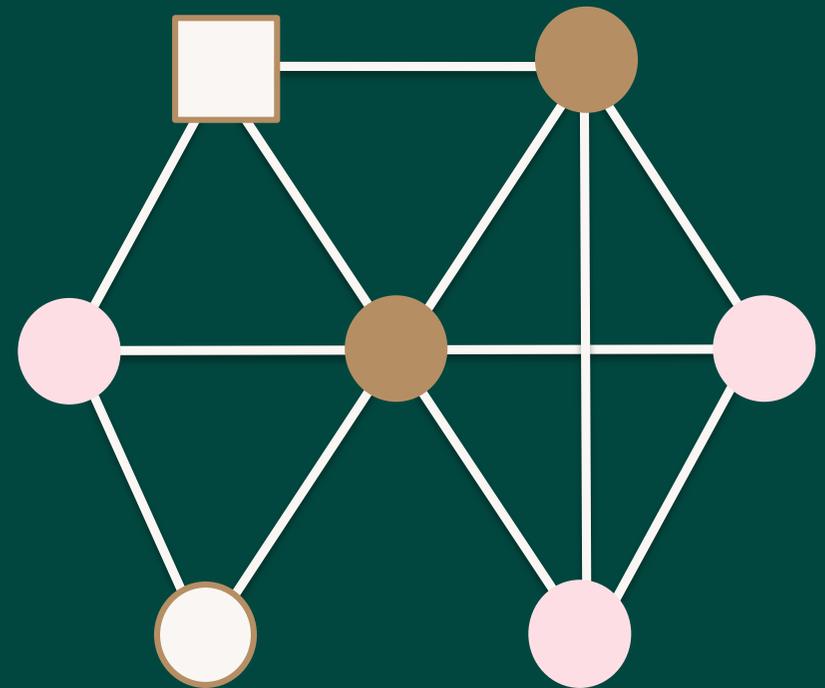


Types of business collaboration

Partner ecosystems

The most advanced type of collaboration. In ecosystems, value is uniquely determined by the collaborators and/or customers.

Ecosystem takes the innovation out of a single, local company and makes it a joint orchestrated activity.



Time for role-playing!

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 20 min | Preparation: Reading confidential briefs of your role |
| 10 min | Role-play: The First Impression (Research & Investor) |
| 30 min | Debriefing |

Just to keep in mind...

Make sure you understand all the details of your role. Feel free to ask if you have any questions.

Never break your role in the simulation. It's the only way to fail this exercise. Take the simulation seriously.

React authentically to the communication style and proposals of your counterpart.

	Researcher	Investor
Background	Italian, highly specialized in medical AI, seeks funding but is cautious about giving up control. Eager to talk about technical details.	American, interested in business potential. Wants to learn about serious market threats.
Goal	Arrange a formal meeting when the lab results are confirmed in 6 months with the investor. As the investor has a senior position, you prefer to continue talking with the same person. Not with the juniors.	Here to find good investment leads. Direct potential investment opportunities to junior colleagues. Very busy and doesn't prefer to attend the first meetings until the process is mature.
Communication style	Respects hierarchy and authority. Emphasizes his/her own authority and position in the research team. As a senior leader, makes all the important decisions.	Prefer flatter, informal structures. As a senior leader, delegates the important tasks to the lower-level experts.
Triggers (Negative influencers)	Offended by being addressed informally with the first name, confused by silence, sees directness as rudeness.	Dislikes answers that are always optimistic and not specific. This approach triggers a feeling of distrust.
Building rapport (Positive influencers)	If the investor recognizes the hard technical work behind the results, you'd be impressed.	Time is money; punctuality and speed are appreciated. Direct communication is appreciated.



Debriefing

- What strategies did you use to advance your goals?
- Were there any moments of misunderstanding due to cultural or communication style differences?
- How did you respond to being pushed outside your comfort zone?
- What could be done differently to improve mutual understanding and negotiation outcomes?

Thank you!



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Socio-cultural Skills in Knowledge Transfer

Teaching Toolkit

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Additional Print Out Materials (Not in this document)

-  Confidential Briefs – The First Impression
- Socio Cultural Skills Module - Slides

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Socio-cultural Skills in Knowledge Transfer Syllabus

Duration: Approx. 3 hours

This course is tailored for knowledge transfer professionals that conduct their professional activities in diverse and collaborative settings. Throughout the course, participants will explore various cultural models at both individual and organizational levels, gaining the ability to identify and understand these differences. The course will introduce different collaboration models, examining the various ways work can be conducted effectively. Participants will gain understanding of how socio-cultural differences impact effective collaborations and how they can navigate and manage these differences to effectively interact with others in their team and in complex, knowledge transfer collaborations.

Participants will develop the ability to assess and address the needs, resources, and skills required at different stages of the collaboration process, ensuring that they can support and enhance the effectiveness of their teams. Ultimately, participants will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to create inclusive and productive environments, improving the outcomes of their knowledge transfer activities.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

General objective

Equip knowledge transfer professionals with the ability to understand socio-cultural diversities and plurality of collaboration models they encounter in their work. By enhancing their awareness of differences, context, motivations and backgrounds, participants will be better prepared to effectively interact with others in their team and in complex, knowledge transfer collaborations.

Specific ILOs

- **ILO-1:** Explain different cultural models at individual and organizational levels to understand their implications for professional interactions.
- **ILO-2:** Differentiate various collaboration models, motivations, and work approaches used across cultures and disciplines.
- **ILO-3:** Assess the impact of socio-cultural differences on team dynamics and collaborative effectiveness.
- **ILO-4:** Demonstrate effective collaboration with stakeholders from various cultural and professional backgrounds.

Methods & Materials

Teaching Method(s)

- Group discussions & peer feedback
- Role-playing simulations
- Frontal Lecture

Required Learning Materials (during-course)

- Course slides
- Confidential Briefs for the Role-play exercise

Additional Learning Materials

- “Culture Map” Book by Erin Meyer
- Villani, E., Rasmussen, E., & Grimaldi, R. (2017). How intermediary organizations facilitate university–industry technology transfer: A proximity approach. *Technological forecasting and social change*, 114, 86-102.
- Villani, E., & Phillips, N. (2021). Formal organizations and interstitial spaces: Catalysts, complexity, and the initiation of cross-field collaboration. *Strategic Organization*, 19(1), 5-36.

Lesson Plan

20 min	<p>Introduction & Icebreaker - Introduce the session objectives and timetable. Ask participants to play an icebreaker game to get to know each other a little better.</p> <p>Show the list of questions on Slide 5. Pair participants into groups of 2 or 3 people. Ask them to pick 1 to 3 questions to talk about.</p> <p>Objective: The activity aims to encourage people to get to know each other.</p>	Group discussion
40 min	<p>15 min. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions – Trainer introduces Hofsted's 5+1 cultural dimensions. (can also introduce Country Comparison Map)</p> <p>25 min. Group discussion about which cultural dimensions influence KTPs' everyday work. Participants can quickly share their ideas with the rest of the groups.</p> <p><i>Detailed instruction for facilitating the discussion in the slide</i></p>	Theory & Group Discussion
15 min	Break	
30 min	<p>Theory slides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences between Academy & Business, • Socio-cultural differences in KT, • Proximity dimensions, • KT Professional as a Catalyst, • Types of business collaboration. 	Mini-lecture & Q&A
60 min	<p>Guided Role-Play – An informal conversation in a conference between an investor, KT professional and a University-Spinoff Founder. Emphasis on experimenting with cultural and social friction points that hinder KT process.</p>	Structured role-play

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	<p>20 min. Preparation 10 min. Role-plays (other participants watch) 30 min. Debriefing & Discussions</p> <p> Confidential Briefs – The First Impression</p> <p>See Trainer Instructions - From The First Impression below.</p>	
15 min	<p>Action Planning & Closing - Participants create action plans for their learnings in real-life situations.</p>	Personal reflection

Trainer Instructions: How to run the “The First Impression” roleplaying exercise

Before the Session

- Read all the materials
 - Confidential Briefs (2 Roles)
 - Trainer Introduction to Role-Play Exercise (below in this document)
 - Slides
- Print out confidential briefs for the class
- Set up the room
 - Ideally, arrange separate spaces for each group
 - Make sure participants keep track of time

During the Session

Introduction (5 minutes)

Explain the purpose of the simulation.

Preparation (20 minutes)

Give confidential briefs to each participant. If the number of participants is different than 2 people you can make groups of 3 people (2 people will have the same role).

Emphasize the importance of active engagement, confidentiality, and staying in role. Participants should not disclose their confidential briefs to others. They can ask you questions if needed.

Simulation (10 minutes)

- Clarify the simulation time.
- Let participants engage freely without interruption.
- Walk around, observe dynamics, but avoid intervening unless needed.
- If necessary, give a 5-minute warning before time is up.

Debriefing (30 minutes)

- Show the summary table
- Give participants feedback
- Show the debriefing questions (Slide 19) to initiate further discussions

Scenario Overview for the Trainer

A university researcher from Italy has developed a promising AI-based diagnostics tool for breast cancer. They're meeting for the first time with a venture capitalist (VC) from the United States interested in funding early-stage health tech ventures in European markets. Both are exploring the possibility of forming a partnership.

Check out the summary table on the next page.

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Confidential Brief – Researcher

You are a senior academic and the lead scientist at a research lab in Northern Italy. You've spent over 15 years working on AI for medical imaging, and your latest breakthrough is a tool that could dramatically improve the detection of breast cancer. You are protective of your work and careful about whom you partner with.

Your objective today: You attended a health-tech conference to network with investors. In the conference, you arranged a 15-min meeting with a U.S. investor. It's your first time with this investor. You want to build trust, but you're not ready to disclose everything. Your goal is to secure a formal follow-up meeting in six months when your lab results are confirmed. Ideally, that conversation will be with this same senior investor – not with someone junior.

How to approach this conversation:

- Be formal and respectful. Use titles and maintain a structured tone.
- Emphasize your authority in the project. Make it clear that you are the key decision-maker.
- Propose a follow-up meeting with the same person. Politely push back if they try to refer you to a junior colleague.
- Highlight the technical sophistication of your tool, but don't reveal full details about your business plan.
- Avoid rushing. Mention that your lab results will be ready in six months. You're cautious and want to understand the investor's intentions.

What impresses you: If the investor acknowledges the difficulty and value of your research, you will be more open.

What bothers you:

- Being addressed by your first name.
- Long pauses or silence – they make you uncomfortable.
- Overly direct, fast-paced business talk that seems disrespectful or superficial.

Confidential Brief – Investor

You are a senior partner at a U.S. venture capital firm. You specialize in early-stage investments in European health tech. Your job today is to screen potential opportunities – quickly – and decide if they’re worth passing along to your junior team for deeper review.

Your objective today: Determine whether this project is a good lead. If it is, your next step will be to involve your analysts. You don’t usually attend early meetings yourself, so this is an exception.

How to approach this conversation:

- Be informal and efficient. Get to the point quickly.
- Try to uncover business potential, especially risks, timelines, and barriers to market entry.
- Don’t worry too much about formalities – focus on facts and value. Offer a next step: a technical review with your junior colleagues.
- Let the researcher know your time is limited and that your analysts handle early-stage evaluations. Mention that your involvement depends on their initial analysis.

What impresses you:

- Clear, direct answers.
- A sense of urgency and practicality.

What bothers you:

- Vague or overly academic responses.
- Avoidance of business questions.
- Conversations that drag on without real insight.