

# Case Study

## Thames Water Asian Culture Course

As a Tax Manager in the Tax Dept, my contact with people of different cultures in the workplace is generally limited to colleagues, outsource partners and advisors. Not knowing the correct behaviour towards people from different cultures and backgrounds, I had always been careful about what I said, how I said it and how I acted. Never really knowing what that person would find acceptable or consider offensive. This often meant that I was perhaps more reserved than I would be with someone from my own background.

My manager advised that a new programme of Diversity and Inclusion was in the process of being rolled out across Thames Water and asked whether as part of this, I wanted to attend the Asian Cultural Awareness Course. He said that he wanted a representative from the department to attend and feed back to the rest of the team.

I gladly accepted as I have always been curious about other cultures but have never had the opportunity to learn about them on a face to face basis. I was looking forward to the Asian Cultural Awareness course but also slightly apprehensive as I had very little knowledge of the Asian culture. However, any nerves I had soon disappeared with Sadi's friendly and energetic manner.

The test at the beginning was daunting as I could answer very few questions and made me realise just how negligible my knowledge was. But I was there to learn wasn't I? So I put my fears aside and threw myself into the programme.

The course itself was very relaxed and informal. When Sadi made it clear at the start that we didn't have to worry about political correctness, this put us all at ease. The course content was amazing; full of interesting country and religious facts, definitions, advice on dietary requirements and even dressing up in traditional costumes. Best of all, I learnt a few basic words and how to greet a Hindu, Sikh and Muslim in their mother tongue.

At the end of the day we had another test. I was amazed at how much I had learnt and retained during the course of one day.

Since then, I have looked for obvious signs to see if I can identify an Asian's religion and have even greeted colleagues in their native tongue. This was met with enthusiasm, curiosity to find out where I had learnt this and an appreciation of my efforts.

This course has improved my knowledge of the Asian culture tremendously. It has taught me how adapting one's behaviour can build positive relationships. This in turn has given me confidence and improved my interaction. I even feel a connection towards Asian colleagues that was missing before. I'm no longer blighted by ignorance. I've gone from not knowing the difference between a Hindu, Sikh and Muslim to, where possible, being able to recognise the different dress or religious symbols. I've gained a new skill and can even say a few Asian words.....how cool is that ?!

I cannot praise this course or Sadi highly enough and would strongly urge everyone to go on this course where possible. One word.....Fantastic!



**Ann Hickley**  
Direct Tax Manager  
Thames Water

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# Reinforcing

RELATIONSHIPS

Enhancing  
Cultural  
Awareness

**Noble  
Khan**