

# Take Off Your Cultural Glasses Why Great Leaders Challenge Their Own Definition of Normal



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As presented during Global Revenue Forum Amsterdam 4th June 2026

# Session Summary

## About the speaker



Candida Snow is an international speaker, consultant and expert in intercultural management. She helps organisations improve leadership,

communication and collaboration across cultural boundaries by understanding how culture influences behaviour, assumptions and processes.

## 3 Key Takeaways

1. Culture acts as a lens through which we interpret people, situations and behaviour.
2. Many international workplace misunderstandings are caused by different interpretations rather than bad intentions.
3. High-performing leaders recognise and acknowledge cultural differences. They are able to adapt their approach rather than assuming that their own way is "normal" or the only way to get things done.

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# TAKE OFF YOUR CULTURAL GLASSES

Most people believe they see the world objectively. In reality, we all interpret people and situations through cultural lenses shaped by our upbringing, experiences and environment.

During her keynote, Candida Snow challenged delegates to recognise that what good leadership looks like is not a universal concept. Expectations of a "good leader", a "good colleague" or even a productive meeting can vary significantly across cultures.

What one person interprets as efficient communication may be perceived by another as rude.

What one culture sees as respectful silence may be interpreted elsewhere as disengagement.

These differences become most visible during moments of stress, conflict or uncertainty.

When pressure increases, people naturally revert to the default behaviours and assumptions they have learned throughout their lives.

The most effective leaders understand that differences in behaviour are often driven by different frames of reference rather than poor intentions. Instead of judging behaviour through their own cultural lens, they seek to understand the intention behind it.

This ability to recognise, understand and adapt is known as Cultural Intelligence (CQ), and it is becoming an increasingly essential leadership competence in global hospitality organisations.

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# TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

## FOR LEADERS

- Challenge your own assumptions about what "good leadership" looks like.
- Adapt your communication style to different individuals and teams.
- Focus on understanding intent before judging behaviour.

## FOR COMMERCIAL TEAMS

- Recognise that guest expectations vary across markets and cultures.
- Adapt communication and sales approaches accordingly.
- Avoid assuming that your preferred communication style is universally effective.

## FOR PEOPLE MANAGERS

- Create space for different perspectives and working styles.
- Encourage curiosity rather than judgement.
- Build shared practices while allowing for different perspectives and working styles.

## THE GUEST PERSPECTIVE

Guests bring their own expectations, preferences and cultural assumptions to every interaction. Hotels that recognise and respect these differences are better positioned to create memorable experiences and lasting loyalty.

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# THE CULTURAL GLASSES FRAMEWORK

 Cultural Lens



 Perception



 Understanding Intent



 Adaptation



 Better Performance

## WHY THIS FRAMEWORK MATTERS

People do not experience the world in the same way. Leaders who recognise their own cultural lens, seek to understand different perspectives and adapt their approach create stronger teams, better collaboration and improved business performance.



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# Key Insight

"Not everything is culture, but culture is everywhere."

**CANDIDA SNOW**

Keynote Speaker



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