

Workshop Decision making across Cultures

Sunday October 15 VVAO organized an English language workshop titled “managing across cultures” in Grand café 1^e klas wachtkamer on Amsterdam Central Station.

The event was attended by 27 women, VVAO members who brought international friends and non-members who found us on Eventbrite.

The age range was quite widely distributed as you can see from the pictures.

Diete Swierstra (responsible for the International portfolio in the national VVAO board) opened the meeting by expressing how pleased she was with the international attendance. Chinese was spoken, and various other languages: Spanish by attendees from several South American countries, Portuguese, Dutch and English in many regional variations.

VVAO offers a welcoming environment for women of all cultures and with this workshop we made a start with forming an international network within VVAO.

Sophie Witteveen (VVAO Country president) described the VVAO history in context to the international relations maintained by VVAO in the last century.

The workshop was led by the Brazilian management consultant Fernando Lanzer who has done many workshops of this kind worldwide. He started out by writing down the learning needs on a flip-over. These were:

- how to change
- why cultural prejudices are so stubborn
- how to blend different cultures together
- how to include and expand different nationalities within an organisation
- is everyone open minded?
- much depends on the background
- what blind spots do we have?
- why do we encounter gaps?
- can we influence situations?
- country, company or personality as the basis of culture

Based on specific questions we were able to construct our own cultural profile along 5 different cultural indicators: Power Distance, Individuality versus Group identity, Performance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Adherence to Rules.

Comparing the resulting cultural profiles led to many interesting discussions among the participants. Fernando confessed that he liked to live in the Netherlands because inside every nordic looking Dutch person there is a tiny Brazilian lurking.

We also looked at groupings of different cultural values and how groups can be made based on shared cultural indicators.

As a follow up to the workshop a private Linked-In group is being formed for the participants to share ideas and relevant posts.