

A Guide to Ukrainian Culture and People

Is your organization hiring refugees who have fled the invasion of Ukraine?

Learning more about Ukrainian culture and people will help you and your teams best support and work with your new colleagues.



Ukrainian People

- 1** Ukrainians are people who value family, education, and hard work. Eastern and Western Ukraine have distinct cultures, differing in their language, religion, and traditional observances.



How you can help

Asking your new colleagues which part of Ukraine they are from and the differences between the two regions are great conversation starters and will give you insight on their values.

- 2** Younger generations gravitate towards individualism and egalitarianism, and tend to believe in democratic values. They have also seen more of the world than people from older generations, as traveling abroad was prohibited during Soviet times. Older generations tend to be more traditional since they weren't exposed to foreign cultures in their youth.

Communication

- 1** Ukrainians are known to be emotional and expressive, and they themselves consider these to be among the most predominant traits of their culture.



How you can help

Be careful to not interpret emotion, expressiveness, and loud speaking volume as rude or unfriendly, rather they can actually be signs of trust.



- 2** For Ukrainians, networking is everything. People have always relied on their connections to achieve change because for so long, the power systems in this region were rigid and lacked transparency.

- 3** Ukrainians are willing to go the extra mile to help you solve a problem, and are generous with sharing their knowledge and resources. Once you have a relationship of trust in place, they expect your commitment in return and may call you unexpectedly or ask you questions at the last minute.

Investing time in after-hours socializing, sharing personal stories, and celebrating milestones as a group can help your new colleagues establish personal relationships and build a professional network.



How you can help



Building Relationships and Teamwork

- 1** Your Ukrainian colleagues will try to show their understanding of the team hierarchy, and may address you formally as a sign of respect.



How you can help

Formal language is also used to indicate distance and lack of trust. If your colleagues continue to address you formally or are reserved in their facial expressions, it may be a sign that additional effort may be needed to create trust between yourself and your Ukrainian team member.

- 2** Ukrainian culture is becoming more individualistic, however their traditional group orientation is still evident in their preference to involve one another in tasks.
- 3** Ukrainians are known for finding spontaneous, creative solutions to tricky situations. It is called “кмітливість” in Ukrainian and “смекалка” in Russian, and there are no direct translations in English or other Germanic languages.
- 4** Ukrainians tend to approach people individually to solve a problem, rather than through an established process that doesn’t involve others. Generally, trust and openness are the best ways to guarantee good results.



How you can help

Be transparent about your work style and how the team cooperates.

Managing Ukrainian Team Members

- 1** Ensure project roles, tasks, and deadlines are clearly defined from the start. Many Ukrainians would rather complete a task well but past the deadline, than poorly before the deadline.
- 2** Education is highly valued and tied to status in Ukraine. Everybody knows about the Ukrainian universities, and parents often invest in private tutors to get their children into good universities.



How you can help

While education is important, it is worthwhile to place value on practical experience, which may speak more to their skills than their prior titles or education, due to the mismatch between the former Soviet educational system and those of other nations.

- 3** Political and economic ineffectiveness of the Soviet system has led many people to prioritize short-term goals and financial planning. Refugees specifically will prioritize their immediate needs in a new nation, and additional employer support would be meaningful.

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