HOW TO DRIVE
MULTICULTURAL GROWTH

Through culturally relevant
brand experiences

UNITED LANGUAGE GROUP

Table of Contents

WHY TO INVEST
IN CULTURALLY
RELEVANT
EXPERIENCES

MULTICULTURAL CONSUMERS NOW REPRESENT *42%* **OF THE U.S. POPULATION**. MEANWHILE, NON-US MARKETS REPRESENT *84%* **OF THE WORLD'S PURCHASING POWER**, AND *40%* **OF THESE GLOBAL CONSUMERS** WON'T BUY IN ANY LANGUAGE OTHER THAN THEIR NATIVE TONGUE.

TO AVOID BEING LEFT BEHIND
AS CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
ACCELERATES, **ORGANIZATIONS**
MUST BEGIN THE WORK OF
UNDERSTANDING THE DIVERSE
MARKETS THEY WISH TO SERVE
ON A DEEP CULTURAL LEVEL AND
CUSTOMIZING EXPERIENCES AND
COMMUNICATIONS ACCORDINGLY.

Engaging your multicultural consumers in a culturally relevant way improves customer satisfaction and creates brand loyalty, helping your organization drive revenue growth and achieve sustainable success.

For Example: According to a 2021 survey from Collage Group, advertising misses the mark for a large portion of the US population: only 46% of Black Americans, 43% of Asian Americans, and 53% of Hispanic Americans were satisfied with how their culture is portrayed. A new approach is needed.

Translation or interpretation is a great first step but will never be enough to build meaningful connections that create loyal, satisfied customers. It's not just about the words you use; it's also about adapting your customer touchpoints, from your website layout to your customer service approach.

Our team helped a major health insurer successfully engage diverse consumers to encourage completion of Health Risk Assessments (HRA) by creating culturally relevant experiences to build trust and encourage form completion.

This included:

- Adapting content in five non-English languages to improve engagement.
- Developing culturally appropriate messaging and scripts for live agents, voicemails, and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) activities.
- Member outreach and engagement activities with specially trained bilingual liaisons.

By ensuring that members were presented with in-language and culturally adapted messaging at every touchpoint, **we built the trust necessary to drive a 23% increase in HRA completion in a single month.**

Many companies are just starting to create culturally relevant experiences for diverse consumers. To engage these consumers effectively, you need to deliver culturally relevant messaging and experiences that meet them where they are.

If your organization isn't connecting with your diverse consumers on a cultural level, you may have noticed some of these obstacles to growth:

- Numerous customer service complaints and misunderstandings,
- Products that fail to gain traction,
- Lack of engagement from your target audience,
- Sales goals that go unmet,
- Outcomes that aren't as good as expected, or
- Unclear and ineffective customer service communications.

The benefits of cultural intelligence go beyond just avoiding misunderstandings and complaints to include increasing engagement, sales, customer retention, and improved outcomes. For example, trust is affected: Microsoft Advertising reports that 67% of ethnically diverse consumers trust brands more when they see themselves represented in their ads. These results are powerful incentives to prioritize cultural relevance and create experiences that resonate with your target market.

To help you get started, we've identified five steps that your company can take to build a culturally relevant community engagement strategy:

- Understand Your Customers Using Data And Insights
- Create Culturally Competent Teams
- Design A Culturally Relevant Customer Journey
- Adapt Your Messaging
- Roll Out And Measure

Some of the **world's largest brands** have learned the importance of cultural relevance the hard way.

During the initial rollout of the **Affordable Care Act (ACA) in the U.S.**, California's health insurance exchange struggled to persuade the state's Spanish-speaking population to enroll in health care plans. One issue was that their advertising campaign was translated from English without any adaptation for the target audience. The campaign's focus on pre-existing health conditions didn't resonate with most Hispanics because they had not been educated on the value of health insurance yet. The campaign also ended with a web address, overlooking that this audience preferred to interact in person.

When **Procter & Gamble began selling Pampers diapers in Japan,** their packaging focused on the image of a stork delivering a baby. The company did follow-up research to find out why the diapers weren't selling, and they found that parents were confused by the imagery, which did not reflect Japanese traditions.

Walmart has also struggled with cultural relevance, most notably when it attempted to expand into Germany. Walmart's corporate culture clashed with German consumer culture at almost every touchpoint. For example, the requirement that employees smile constantly unnerved reserved German consumers and was misread as flirting. In addition, the layout of the aisles frustrated them. The end result? Walmart left the German market altogether.

What these organizations have learned is the importance of not only speaking your audience's language but of understanding their cultural values and preferences, in order to connect and engage effectively.

HOW TO DRIVE
ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CULTURALLY RELEVANT BRAND EXPERIENCES

1. Understand Your Customers Using Data and Insights

A deep understanding of your target market's cultural values is required to effectively communicate, establish brand relationships, sell your product in a new market, or engage diverse consumers.

When getting to know your diverse target audiences, it's important to understand how both demographic and psychographic factors influence their connection with your brand. We refer to these as Cultural Drivers of Engagement (CDE).

These include:

- Demographic characteristics like age, gender, education, and marital status
- Language and linguistics
- Values and beliefs
- Social structures
- Economic status and behaviors

The iceberg model of culture can help you visualize these factors and better understand how they shape engagement. When you look at an iceberg, you can only see the top 10% of it. The rest of it lies hidden beneath the water's surface. In the same way, only the outward characteristics of a culture are easily observed by outsiders such as language, currency, holidays, style, and more.

Hidden further down are the unspoken factors including social etiquette, modesty, or symbolism. Dive even deeper and you uncover unconscious rules like verbal and non-verbal communication and concepts of right or wrong.

Demographic factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity give you only a superficial view of your customers and what might interest them. But tapping into psychographic factors such as lifestyle, social class, and beliefs helps your brand engage and motivate consumers on a deeper level. To understand how psychographic factors apply across cultures, you need to understand the Cultural Drivers of Engagement.

This knowledge can be acquired through broadly published guides, custom research, and even artificial intelligence (AI). AI, when guided by a human who can cross-check for bias, can gather insights to support culturally relevant communication and effective hyper-local experiences. This can provide a budget-friendly way to get to know your audience's preferences and needs.

But having data is only the beginning. It takes insight to make data actionable so that you can apply it to your organization effectively. Once you've gathered the data, you need to develop detailed buyer personas and apply the relevant Cultural Drivers of Engagement, such as demographics, family structures, values, and beliefs, to your strategy.

Sometimes there's so much information available that it's difficult to sort through and understand. If this is the case, you may benefit by joining forces with an expert team from a language services provider (LSP) to help you synthesize and utilize that information in a meaningful way.

If an organization can effectively understand and apply these Cultural Drivers of Engagement, their content and approach will resonate with the audiences they serve, resulting in greater success and stronger relationships with local communities.

2. Create Culturally Competent Teams

Fostering a culturally intelligent organization is essential to effectively reach your diverse audiences. This requires formal training to ensure that internal teams are well-versed in the cultural nuances of your target market personas, including their behaviors, preferences, and other Cultural Drivers of Engagement.

There are several approaches to educating staff, but all successful educational programs have certain characteristics in common.

These include:

- Cultural Intelligence assessments
- Cultural Drivers of Engagement insights
- Culturally competent communication skills

In addition, you want to establish ongoing educational opportunities to keep staff abreast of current best practices. Also, aligning everyone on your team creates consistency across the teams as they develop strategies and plans with the Cultural Drivers of Engagement in mind. This investment in training is the only way to enable all parties involved to understand the effects of culture on your audiences. This understanding facilitates the creation of personalized experiences that resonate with the target audience, resulting in greater success in the new market and stronger relationships with local communities.

Who needs training? When it comes to creating culturally relevant experiences, the following customer-facing and internal departments should be involved:

IT: to help them understand audience needs as they build the underlying tech that supports the experience.

Sourcing/Procurement: for building a diverse supply chain.

Data & Analytics: for meaningful data collection and analysis.

Customer Service and Support: to create culturally relevant scripts and messaging.

Marketing, Creative, and Communications teams: to inform brand messaging and collateral creation and execution.

Sales: to know how to address

customers in a culturally appropriate way that resonates.

Human Resources: to empower employees and build an inclusive organization.

Front-line employees: to ensure culturally appropriate interactions.

3. Design a Culturally Relevant Customer Journey

Now that your team understands how your target audience thinks and where they go for information, it's time to make each step on the customer journey relevant to them, so that they feel understood and valued.

Start by defining all the touchpoints in your multicultural consumer journey.

How and where do they interact with your brand?

Keep in mind that this is not limited to only owned channels. Think about all the places where your target audience likes to get information and determine which of those channels are right for your brand as well.

Here are a few common channels to get you started:

- website
- marketing content
- in-store
- over the phone
- chatbot
- mobile apps
- social media
- TV
- community events
- email and more.

With the right tools and approach, you can create an experience that resonates with your target market.

Here are some examples of what culturally relevant experiences could look like at different touchpoints in the customer journey:

- When someone calls in to receive your services, they receive in-language phone support from start to finish, starting with an IVR in their own language and moving to an interpreter if needed, with culturally appropriate customer service scripts.

- When your team is proactively contacting customers, you use in-language outreach to ensure you're reaching non-English speakers in their native language.

- At global events, on-site interpreters are available.

- When someone visits your website, they see content in their language, with images, slang, idioms, and references appropriate to their culture.

More examples of culturally relevant customer touchpoints:

- When they encounter your content such as eBooks, blog posts, ads, or brand messages, they have the content in their language, and they see imagery and slogans that resonate with them on a cultural level.

- When they download your app or software, the UI, layout, and design are culturally appropriate.

- When they interact with your team in person, they get an experience that takes into account cultural norms and preferences.

- When they listen to the radio or a podcast in their language, they hear culturally relevant ads for your brand.

Optimizing touchpoints in your multicultural customer journey based on the Cultural Drivers of Engagement makes your consumers feel understood, fosters loyalty, and drives long-term success for your brand.

What does this look like in action?
Booking.com demonstrates how a focus on cultural relevance at every touchpoint can benefit organizations with a diverse or global customer base. All Booking.com customer service representatives speak English and at least one other language. When customers call in with questions or concerns about their reservations, they're able to receive in-language support easily.

Booking.com also considers cultural factors when staffing, including the following:

- Which customers are more likely to call in; i.e., customers from emerging markets like Brazil and China.

- Cultural preferences for phone interactions. For example, South Americans tend to stay on the phone longer.

- Preferred accents. For example, Americans tend to prefer American representatives, British customers prefer to hear a British accent, and Japanese customers prefer Japanese speakers from Japan over the U.S. or Singapore.

The result? Booking.com is the largest online accommodations platform in the world, with industry-leading conversion rates.

4. Adapt Your Messaging

It's time to use the knowledge about your target market's cultural norms, preferences, and practices to adapt your messaging to be culturally relevant. By implementing culturally adapted messaging, you can build brand trust, loyalty, and engagement.

There are three key tactics you should focus on to ensure your messaging is adapted to cultural preferences and practices:

Translation is the most basic action you can take to adapt your messaging: transferring written text from one language to another. It's a linguistic process in which the result accurately reflects the meaning of the original text. Expert, bilingual knowledge of the language is required.

Transcreation goes beyond translation into adapting the message, emotion, and meaning behind the words to align with that specific culture's beliefs, motivations, and values. It is a creative process and intimate knowledge of the culture is required. In transcreation, a linguist adapts things like concepts, examples, statistics, idioms, slang, and local references to meet the needs of the target culture.

Localization means adapting and customizing the content, format, and function of a website or product to meet the needs of a specific location, language, or culture. It includes translation, but adds modifying graphics, adapting layout, changing colors, incorporating local payment options, and adjusting details like date formats and currency.

These tactics, shaped by an understanding of the CDE, provide a firm foundation to help you adapt your content to ensure all the messaging and experiences that consumers encounter are culturally adapted at every touchpoint.

For example, white Americans are motivated to take care of themselves so they can 'live their best life', while for Hispanic Americans the motivator for self-care is so they can be there for their family. Content must be adapted to accommodate these motivations.

Localization is critical for increased engagement, higher customer satisfaction, and improved brand recognition. The results of localization speak for themselves.

Localized websites get:

47% more
search traffic

70% more
website visits

20% higher
conversion rates

Imagine the difference between a Japanese and North American web page: Japanese websites often have a cluttered appearance full of flashy banners and columns, a great deal of text, and small images. That's a completely different experience from the clean aesthetic most North Americans prefer, and it's because Japanese consumers desire as much information upfront as possible to drive their purchasing decisions.

CDE in action:

Our team used the Cultural Drivers of Engagement to design a six-month program to increase awareness and acquisition during open enrollment for a major U.S. health insurer entering the Texas market, which has a high percentage of Spanish speakers.

By partnering with local influencers, utilizing the preferred channels of their customers, and holding community events, *we helped the insurer achieve the following results:*

- 4X increase in member acquisition.
- 24% conversion rate.
- 14X return on investment in new membership.
- But we helped the end customer too by improving healthcare insurance literacy and education about the availability of low-cost plans.

5. Roll Out and Measure

All your previous strategic and tactical efforts come to fruition when you roll out all the experiences and content that you've adapted.

Depending on your organization, this could include:

- Launching a new website.
- Publishing content marketing in a new locale, including localized content like blogs or podcasts.
- Engaging in a multicultural social media influencer campaign.
- Launching a multilingual call center or upgrading your interpretation call flow.
- Releasing your product or service in the new market.
- Community engagement or partnerships to build trust and credibility.
- New customized touchpoints for diverse audiences.

Yet despite the best intentions and most informed efforts, brands do not always get it right the first time, and **consumers are constantly evolving. To continue to build momentum after your initial launch, establish ongoing methods to measure the effectiveness of your efforts and continuously improve your approach.**

Key performance indicators that you can track include:

- Market share
- Sales in the target market
- Web metrics such as page views, conversion rates, and SEO keyword rankings
- Social media engagement
- Customer support cases

Technology can also play an important role in measurement, including analytics tools, marketing automation software, and CRM systems, among others. With the right tools, you can even estimate how much new revenue a particular piece of content or culturally centered experience generated. For example, HubSpot was able to confirm that a single eBook localization project contributed $144,000 in annual recurring revenue.

By regularly monitoring your performance and making data-driven improvements, you can continue to grow your business and build lasting relationships with your multicultural consumers.

START DEVELOPING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S
CULTURALLY RELEVANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

A CULTURAL RELEVANCE STRATEGY BASED ON THE CULTURAL DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT IS NOT JUST A NICE-TO-HAVE. IT'S ESSENTIAL FOR ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD. TO TRULY CONNECT WITH YOUR MULTICULTURAL AUDIENCE AT HOME OR ABROAD YOU **MUST BE ABLE TO ENGAGE WITH THEM IN THE PLACES AND WAYS THAT ARE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR THEM.**

You now have the insights and tools you need to begin developing your organization's culturally relevant engagement strategy.

But you don't have to do it alone. A localization partner with deep cultural expertise in all your target markets can help you through this process.

At United Language Group, we are fluent in the world's cultures. We help companies connect deeply with their diverse consumers by applying insights such as the Cultural Drivers of Engagement to maximize the effectiveness of their translation, interpretation, and localization programs.

For additional support in gaining the required cultural intelligence to better serve your customer community or applying the Cultural Drivers of Engagement to your go-to-market strategy to better connect with your target audiences, **contact ULG here.**

*Here's a glossary of the terms we use
in this eBook...*

Culturally centered experiences: any experience of your brand (i.e., content, an interaction, your UI) that is customized for a specific culture.

Culturally competent: the developed ability to understand cultural factors and apply them to your messaging/experience design.

Cultural Drivers of Engagement (CDE): the factors within a culture that affect how a customer engages with a company, such as their demographics, their belief system, and the way they research, shop, and purchase.

Cultural fluency: understanding the target culture deeply enough to be able to customize your approach.

Cultural intelligence (CI): the ability to understand the influence of culture on behavior, and to use this knowledge to engage effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Cultural quotient (CQ): the measurement of cultural intelligence.

Culturally relevant: appropriate for and specific to one culture.

UNITED LANGUAGE GROUP

www.unitedlanguagegroup.com
+1 855-786-4833

United Language Group (ULG) is a leading translation, interpretation, and localization provider, serving customers in over 200 languages. For more than 40 years, our team has utilized cutting-edge technology and linguistic expertise to provide results for customers across multiple industries around the world.