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ARE YOU CLUELESS?, Book, 2008, [Kells Castle Press](#).

Review by [Michael Brazzel](#)

Rating: ★★ ★1/2

- *Explains multicultural skills for leaders*
- *Uses scenarios to demonstrates how to apply them*

Are You Clueless? 7 Clues to Profit, Productivity, & Partnership for Leaders in a Multicultural World is a book for leaders and managers in businesses, government, and communities. It consists of compelling stories about the cultural challenges leaders face in working with multicultural employees, customers, and constituents and the cross-cultural skills leaders need to be effective.

The author, Tom Finn, is a veteran consultant and coach who works with organizational leaders in the Americas and Asia.

Finn defines culture as “the behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, language, and ceremonies of a people or group that are transferred, communicated, or passed along.” Contemporary leaders must work with employees and attract customers who can be culturally very different from them in such ways as race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, social class, age, and education.

In answer to his question, “Are you clueless?” Finn concludes that the clues and cross-cultural skills identified in this book can “bring you new customers, solve your need for scarce talent, and resolve community and school conflicts.”

The book has three major parts. The first tells managers' stories about experiences with multicultural customers. Examples include immigrants who are attracted to a hospital because of pictures on its walls from their hometown and a bank viewed by Latinos as a “bank for white people” because it does not have Spanish-speaking employees.

In Part II, *Clues for Cracking the Cultural Code*, Finn identifies seven cross-cultural skills and competencies he regards as essential for making an organization attractive to multicultural employees and customers. Here are a few examples:

- Clue 1 calls for using a company’s diversity statement to help handle cross-cultural issues with employees and customers.
- Clue 3, Clarify Your Cultural Lens, means knowing and being honest with ourselves about how cultural differences influence our behavior toward employees and customers who are cultural insiders or outsiders.
- Clue 6, Coach Performance Cross-Culturally, is a superb description of cross-cultural performance coaching. It makes reading this book especially worthwhile.

Finn describes cross-cultural patterns that repeat themselves in organizations. For example:

- Clueless majorities who are blind to the needs of minority cultures,
- Insider groups who benefit from power and position and outsider groups who are disadvantaged and less valued.
- A member of an outsider group may experience the accumulated impact of being emotionally triggered by an event which taps into emotions built up from repeated experiences over a long time.

In Part III, Opportunities to Turn Clueless to Competent, the seven clues are applied to 10 scenarios about cross-cultural issues that managers and leaders often face. They include glass ceilings, demands for speaking English, political correctness, and cross-cultural conflicts.

Finn concludes, “There is a great deal we don’t know that we don’t know about the diverse people we manage, the customers we serve, and the children we teach.” He calls on leaders and managers to develop and use their cultural lenses “for the sake of our employees, customers, and fellow human beings.”

Recommendation

If you are a leader or manager, buy this book. It is the next best thing to having a diversity coach. If you are a diversity trainer, coach, or consultant, ask your clients to get a copy and read *Are You Clueless?* It will make your work easier.



★★★★★ Outstanding; ★★★★★1/2 Very good; ★★★ Good; ★★1/2 Above average; ★★ Average; ★1/2 Below average; ★ Poor

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