

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Communicating Across Cultural



Overview

- ▲ The Importance of Cross-cultural Communication in Business
- ▲ Problems of Cultural Differences
- ▲ Problems of Language
- ▲ Some Solutions for Improved Communication

Why is communicating across cultures important to business?

- ▶ Technological advances have made doing business more global.
- ▶ Understanding those who buy and use a company's products or services helps you design ones that fit your customers' needs.
- ▶ Successful communication improves productivity and creates a comfortable workplace.
- ▶ Communicating with those from other cultures enriches your business and personal life.

Dimensions of Cultural Differences

- ▲ Three major factor that affect culture
 - ▲ Topography of the country
 - ▲ Country's history
 - ▲ Role of religion in the culture

Problems of Cultural Differences

- ▲ Body positions and movement
- ▲ Views and practices concerning factors of human relationships
- ▲ Effects on business communication techniques

Body Positions and Movement

▲ Body Parts

▲ Gestures

▲ Eye Contact

▲ Touching and Handshaking

▲ Facial Expression

Some Gesture Differences

| <i>Gesture</i> | <i>Meaning 1</i> | <i>Meaning 2</i> |
|---|--|---|
| Hand up, palm out, wrist stiff, back and forth motion | Good-bye (America) | No (Europe) |
| Raised hand with index finger extended, head high | Come here (America) | Rude to point a finger (Japan) |
| Raised hand, fingers in "V" position | Victory or peace (with palm out) (America) | Double, sexual, insulting (with palm in) (England) |
| Vertical horns | Hook'em Horns (Texas) | Your spouse is unfaithful (Italy) Good luck (Brazil and Venezuela) |
| Thumbs up | Fine, Good going, Everything is okay (America) | Strong, sexual insulting (Nigeria and Australia) |

Attitudes Toward Factors of Human Relationships

- ▲ Time
- ▲ Space
- ▲ Odors
- ▲ Frankness
- ▲ Intimacy of Relationships
- ▲ Values
- ▲ Expression of Emotions

Effects on Business Communication Techniques

- ▲ Our communication techniques are not universally acceptable.
- ▲ Our techniques do not work with all English-speaking people.
- ▲ Problems can be overcome by learning about other cultures.

British English vs. American English

Spelling Differences

Meaning Differences

| | <i>British</i> | <i>American</i> |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| | Labour | Labor |
| | Generalise | Generalize |
| | Mum | Mom |
| | Lift | Elevator |
| | Blokes | Guys |
| | Phones | Called |
| | Chips | Fries |
| | Billion (12 zeros) | Billion (9 zeros) |
| | Tights | Panty hose |
| | Trousers | Pants |
| | Bin | Trash |

Problems of Language

- ▲ Lack of language equivalency
- ▲ Difficulties in using English
 - ▲ Multiple meanings of words
 - ▲ Two-word verbs
 - ▲ Culturally derived words

Language Equivalency Examples

- ▲ No such word
 - ▲ The Japanese have several words to define fine shadings of dependence, obligations, and responsibility that are difficult to translate to English because our culture has not learned to experience them.
- ▲ No need for the word
- ▲ No equivalent grammatical form

Examples of Multiple Meanings

| | | | |
|--------|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| ▲ run | | | |
| ▲ fast | | | |
| ▲ ring | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Substitutes for Two-word Verbs

| <i>Two-word Verb</i> | <i>Substitute</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| cut up | clown |
| keyed up | excited, nervous |
| live down | remove, overcome |
| put away | kill |
| shut out | prevent |
| tie down | hold |
| track down | search |

Avoid Culturally Derived Words

- ▲ Slang expressions
- ▲ Shifted use (sports, computer, science)
- ▲ Idioms and colloquialisms

Some American Idioms to Avoid

- ▲ burn your bridges
- ▲ cold turkey
- ▲ doggie bag
- ▲ fat chance
- ▲ gravy train
- ▲ have your cake and eat it too
- ▲ in a nutshell
- ▲ let the cat out of the bag
- ▲ pot calling the kettle black
- ▲ pull no punches
- ▲ stick in the mud through thick and thin
- ▲ tie the knot
- ▲ tighten one's belt
- ▲ up a tree
- ▲ walk on air
- ▲ wheel and deal
- ▲ worth one's salt

Suggestions for Communicating Across Cultures Successfully

- ▲ Do your research
- ▲ Know yourself and your company
- ▲ Be aware-and wary-of stereotypes
- ▲ Adapt your English to your audience
- ▲ Be open to change

Suggestions for Communicating Across Cultures Successfully

- ▲ Talk or write as simply and clearly as possible
- ▲ Word questions carefully
 - ▲ Avoid double questions
 - ▲ Avoid yes/no questions
 - ▲ Avoid negative questions
- ▲ Use continuous confirmation
 - ▲ Use back translating when possible
 - ▲ Use technology to assist with written and oral communication

“More than technical or infrastructure problems, cultural problems will be the biggest issue that merchants will face in the global marketplace.”

**--Bruce Guptill, Analyst
*The Gartner Group***