



Quick E-Tips



INTERNATIONAL
ADVANTAGE

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We hope you enjoy this newsletter brought to you by International Advantage® LLC - Leading Across Cultures™. Every month we bring you tips to help your team and organization, especially those operating in culturally diverse environments, reach their business goals.

Topic of the month:

Giving out your home phone number...and other topics about trust across cultures

A month ago I attended a conference in Veracruz, Mexico. Before leaving town, I was hired to facilitate a half-day session for a Mexican executive and 20 members of her team to resolve several issues regarding follow-through and customer service. At the end of the session, the owner said to me, "Lisa, you need to give me your phone number!" I reminded her that I had given her my business card, to which she replied, "No, I mean your home phone number, so we can really be in touch!"

In Mexico, giving out your home phone number to a client or customer – which includes the real possibility that you will be called in the evening -- is a sign of confidence and trust. Of course, any hesitation on your part can send a message to your client or customer that the relationship is lacking, so I gave it to her immediately. In the U.S., off-hours tend to be reserved for family and sharing a home phone number for business-to-business purposes is uncommon and not perceived as a reflection of lack of trust.

I am reminded that much of the time we really don't know what messages we are sending – especially across cultures. For example, not long ago when I facilitated a feedback session between a director and his team, the leader was astonished to learn that his team resented how he occasionally spoke proudly about the highlight of his career with a prior leadership team. The current team felt these statements revealed a lack of pride and trust in them. He couldn't believe it.

A great way to discover these messages of trust and distrust is when organizations establish and discuss their values. Sometimes leaders don't feel they have time to work on values. But by going beyond identifying the values by actually naming the associated behaviors, teams and leaders learn a lot about current feelings and perceptions. For example, one group I facilitated picked "Work Ethically" as a value. When I asked them to list what "ethically" meant to them, the theme of lack of trust showed up twice, namely: "no playing favorites" and "equal opportunity and treatment". Getting specific made the exercise invaluable.

So my question for leaders of multicultural teams: what messages might you be sending that indicate trust or lack of it? A "values" exercise is one way to get your answer.

Inspired to agree, disagree or otherwise comment? We hope you will! Write a comment [here](#).

Tap our expertise! Here are some relevant services we provide to clients, as it relates to this topic:

- Assess your current communication processes and make recommendations based on your current strategy and resources
- Facilitate a brainstorming session with leaders about communication strategies based on organizational priorities (to increase retention, improve quality, gather process improvement ideas, etc.)
- Assess employee satisfaction (in Spanish or English) and provide recommendations based on gaps between what you have and what you want
- Assess current leaders in their cultural competence and provide resources where needed

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Exciting news:

1. See a newspaper article or 1 minute video clip of my November keynote presentation on diversity. Click here. The hour presentation was selected to be run periodically in its entirety during the next two years on the local cable station, sponsored by the city of Dubuque, Iowa.

2. I was so honored to receive the Ana del Valle Award on Oct 29th from Sonia Rovere, President of the Roberto Rovere Foundation (<http://www.funrobertoarovere.com.ar/SITIO2.swf>) in Argentina. The statue is awarded annually to women who display tenacity and dedication in support of equality of women in society. The award was presented in Veracruz, Mexico at an Intercontinental Women Business Owner's Conference, where my role during the last three years has been liaison for the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) in bringing together women business owners in the U.S. and Mexico. See photo.

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To your success around the globe,

Lisa

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