



Quick E-Tips



INTERNATIONAL
ADVANTAGE

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*Enjoy some tips on **global business culture and language learning...***

Business Culture Tip: Negotiation Across Cultures

Suppose that I want an airline ticket more than I want my \$1000. The airline and I have different interests, so we both win. A successful negotiation, then, exploits the differences between two parties. The objective of negotiation is to leverage different needs and wants for mutual gain.

It is logical, then, that the more different any two parties are, the more opportunity exists for mutual gain. So when we negotiate across cultures – when the number of differences increases – why is success often more difficult to obtain?

Whenever we negotiate, we need to know – and prioritize – what our counterpart really cares about, so we will know what is negotiable relative to our own needs. This is more difficult when we are less familiar with a region or culture.

In addition to the content of the negotiation (price, terms etc), we also must remember to agree on the process or perception of negotiation. These less tangible elements often stem from cultural paradigms. The challenge is that we can only satisfy these needs (or at least address them) if we become aware of them and understand them.

One example is our understanding of the word “contract”. To oversimplify, we might agree that in the U.S. the contract is the relationship. If a personal relationship does develop before or after the signing, it likely would be considered a “bonus”, but not a requirement for a successful future working relationship.

In other cultures, the relationship is the contract. The contract is an outline of the agreement, but serves as a guideline or starting point. The relationship is the “rock” that each party relies upon when issues arise.

Indeed, negotiating across cultures is a perfect opportunity to exploit our differences, but this will only be possible with a good understanding of who is across the table.

Tips:

1. Make a list of your assumptions relative to the negotiation process. Discuss those items before you start negotiating the “content” of the negotiation.
2. Specific assumptions to examine might include:
 - Overall purpose of the negotiation
 - Behaviors I project when negotiating in order to reduce psychological barriers
 - Indication of current misunderstandings or lack of trust
 - Standards that I consider legitimate
 - Parties who will help decide
 - Problem-solving approach if an issue arises later

Language Tip: **Is your accent important? Function vs. Form**

In June, I was with a native English speaker in Mexico who expressed himself in Spanish extremely well, grammatically-speaking. Let's call him "Jim". Jim tends to have a pragmatic approach to communication, and places little emphasis on replicating a Mexican accent.

One day, while I was chatting with Hector, a Mexican acquaintance who knows Jim, Hector flatly stated to me that Jim "did not speak Spanish well at all" and that Jim "hardly speaks Spanish".

This anecdote – among others like it -- might suggest that without an accent that approximates that of the local speakers, native speakers may evaluate your language ability as less advanced than is warranted.

Implications? If your objective of being in a foreign culture is to exude cultural competence (maybe you work with clients in that country), your counterparts may make global judgments about you based on how you sound. Also consider that studies suggest that the more you can do to reduce psychological differences (within or across any culture), the more you break down subconscious barriers. Mirroring your counterpart's behaviors is one strategy off- mentioned.

Suggestions to improve your accent?

Consider using the "shadowing" technique. "Shadowing" is when you listen to a speaker (usually from television or radio) and repeat exactly what the native speaker is saying within a few seconds of hearing it. Follow their intonation and accent as closely as possible. Don't feel that you need to understand all of the words. Even humming the intonation of the sentences helps. Consider making a goal of 20 minutes per day to practice this skill and you will be surprised at how quickly your accent improves.

Recent Recognition

- **Lisa Koss was presented with the Desert Diamond Award, Bridge Builder of the Year, by the Phoenix Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners on June 30, 2004. Thank you to NAWBO, Margaret Rodriguez, co-chair of the Strategic Alliances, Cammi Bailey and Annette Alvarez, current and former President of NAWBO, and to all our Alliance Partners who made the year a great one! It was a team effort!**
- **Lisa completed the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School in May, 2004.**

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To your continued success around the globe,
Lisa

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