

The Power of Integrity, Dignity, Efficiency, and Elegance in Behavior and Communication

Four Deal Breakers When Doing Business in Brazil

Excerpts:

1. Focusing the conversation on how Americans do business. It's one thing to talk about how it's done in America; it's another thing if you sound like it's your way or the highway. And careful if the conversation turns to American superiority, warns Anthony Stiso, president and CEO of DEUSA Enterprises, a marketing and communications firm in Miami Beach, Fla. Stiso has been doing business with companies in Brazil for the past 10 years.

"Some Brazilians feel a national pride that is immense and view American ways of doing things as arrogance," he says. "Others realize that Brazil is lacking in many areas and seek out U.S. solutions."

The best tack to take, Stiso says, is the center, agreeing when you can on areas where Brazil bests America.

"Admitting a U.S. shortcoming will give you a lot of credibility among Brazilians and separate you from the arrogant Americans who believe in 'my country--right or wrong'."

2. Discussing business over lunch

Lunch, which can easily stretch out over two hours, is sacred here, Lomoriello says.

"When doing business in Brazil, you should respect and enjoy their lunch ritual. Business is rarely discussed during lunch and is seen as an American stereotype [if you do]. Brazilians hardly ever eat on the run and enjoy personal conversations during their meals. Discussing business during lunch is [considered] bad for digestion."

3. Refusing a cup of coffee. No need to invite your Brazilian colleague to a coffeehouse, but if it's offered, have a cup of joe--a lot of cups.

"Think golf was important in closing a deal in the U.S.?" asks Stiso. "In Brazil, it's coffee."

Sure, you can refuse and ask for a Coke or mineral water, but you'll convey the message that you're not really in sync with Brazil and--not to sound high schoolish--but that you're not all that cool.

4. Not understanding social mores and hand gestures. "People will use words that Americans might flinch at. Calling someone a 'big black man' is not an offensive term," and neither is 'gringo,' so if you're called that, don't take it as an insult, Stiso says.

And while touching and kissing is part of Brazilian culture, and you may get a hug or be patted on the shoulder during a meeting, you could kill all of your progress if someone asks for your opinion and your hand suddenly flashes the OK sign. It's like giving someone the middle finger. Don't do it.

Cultural mishaps are forgivable, of course, but if you want to build a reputation as a serious business owner in Brazil, learn the social norms--coffee cups and all.

URL: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/startingabusiness/expandbeyond/article199916.html>

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Your business card

The first graphic impression for most of us is our business card—our first advertisement. Your business card and how you present it is a very personal part of executive communication. It's like a handshake you leave behind. A handsome card, properly presented, makes a very good impression.

It's more appropriate to wait until someone asks for your card before you give it to him or her. Or you can say, "May I give you my card?" Never force your card on anyone.

Don't offer your card early in conversation. Establish a rapport with the other person and offer the card just prior to concluding the conversation.

Make sure the type face on your card is large enough so others don't have to squint to read it.

Be cautious about handing out your card at a private dinner or a holiday party where you might run the risk of insulting the host.

Don't give out a business card that is soiled or out-of-date. Make sure your card has correct information.

Carry your cards in a card case to keep them fresh and protected.

Carry your cards to all business events. Also, carry a supply when you attend social events where business opportunities may develop.

Present your card with the print facing the recipient. The other person shouldn't have to turn it around to read it.

When you are presented with a business card, take a moment to acknowledge it before putting it away. This shows interest and respect for the person presenting the card. Don't write notes on the back of the card in the other person's presence.

Present your business card to the receptionist each time you visit a company. It helps the receptionist announce your name and company properly.

"The born traveler – the man who is without prejudices, who sets out wanting to learn rather than to criticize, who is stimulated by oddity, who recognizes that every man is his brother, however strange and ludicrous he may be in dress and appearance – has always been comparatively rare".

Hugh and Pauline Massingham, authors of *The Englishman Abroad* (published 1962)

Is Intercultural Business Training Worth it?

I am often wary of "intercultural trainings" *per se* because they are, after all, based on a lot of generalizations and some stereotypes. But, after hearing these experiences and thinking of some others: emails addressed to a university president by first name when no relationship was really established, as another example, I think it might be a good idea.

I recently had an encounter with some Americans who worked closely with German colleagues — not very well. They felt that their hard work and efforts were underappreciated by the Germans and that they were regarded as a bunch of cowboys. They felt that compared to their Asian and European counterparts in the same company, they were the only ones following the rules. Meanwhile, the German headquarters did indeed think that these Americans were making up their own rules. The glaring stereotypes of cavalier American butting heads with straightlaced, humorless Germans popped in my mind. This seemed to be a clear case of intercultural communication problems. More...

<http://german-way.com/blog/2010/04/29/is-intercultural-business-training-worth-it/>

A group of people meet at the National Geographic Society in London and decide that, for the next meeting, everybody has to present a treatise on the elephant. They all return the following year and present their volumes.

The German has a 700-page dissertation "Description of the Male Elephant of East Africa, Part I"

The Englishman has a small, black leather-bound book entitled "Elephants I have shot"

The American has an 8-page booklet in color "How to make bigger and better elephants"

The Frenchman has a small tastefully presented book on "*L'amour des elephants*" ('The love life of elephants').

The Pole presents a book called "The Elephant and its Relation to the Polish Problem"

The Swede has a grayish book called "Elephants and How to Address Them"

The Dane presents a book of recipes: "100 Ways to Cook an Elephant"

Cultural Misunderstandings in Marketing

- When Kentucky Fried Chicken entered the Chinese market, to their horror they discovered that their slogan "finger lickin' good" came out as "eat your fingers off".
- Chinese translation proved difficult for Coke, which took two tries to get it right. They first tried Ke-kou-ke-la because when pronounced it sounded roughly like Coca-Cola. It wasn't until after thousands of signs had been printed that they discovered that the phrase means "bite the wax tadpole" or "female horse stuffed with wax", depending on the dialect. Second time around things worked out much better. After researching 40,000 Chinese characters, Coke came up with "ko-kou-ko-le" which translates roughly to the much more appropriate "happiness in the mouth".
- When Pepsi entered the Chinese market a few years ago, the translation of their slogan "Pepsi Brings you Back to Life" was a little more literal than they intended. In Chinese, the slogan meant, "Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave".
- In Italy, a campaign for "Schweppes Tonic Water" translated the name into the much less thirst quenching "Schweppes Toilet Water".
- The American slogan for Salem cigarettes, "Salem – Feeling Free," was translated in the Japanese market into "When smoking Salem, you feel so refreshed that your mind seems to be free and empty."
- General Motors had a perplexing problem when they introduced the Chevy Nova in South America. Despite their best efforts, they weren't selling many cars. They finally realized that in Spanish, *nova* means "it won't go". Sales improved dramatically after the car was renamed the "Caribe."
- When Ford introduced the Pinto in Brazil, and after watching sales go nowhere, the company learned that *Pinto* is Brazilian slang for "tiny male genitals." Ford pried the nameplates off all of the cars and substituted them with "Corcel," which means "horse".
- When the Nippon Tourist Company changed its name, the company didn't change the name of all its divisions. Visitors to Japan still have the opportunity to take a ride on the Kinki Nippon Railway.
- When Braniff translated a slogan touting its upholstery, "Fly in Leather," it came out in Spanish as "Fly Naked."
- Coors put its slogan, "Turn It Loose," into Spanish, where it was read as "Suffer from Diarrhea."
- The Dairy Association's huge success with the campaign "Got Milk?" prompted them to expand advertising to Mexico. It was soon brought to their attention that the Spanish translation read "Are you lactating?"
- Scandinavian vacuum manufacturer Electrolux used the following in an American campaign: "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux"
- Clairol introduced the "Mist Stick," a curling iron, into Germany only to find out that *mist* is slang for manure.
- An American T-shirt maker in Miami printed shirts for the Spanish market which promoted the Pope's visit. Instead of "I Saw the Pope" (*el Papa*), the shirts read "I Saw the Potato" (*la papa*)
- An American supervisor on an oil rig in Indonesia shouted at his timekeeper to take a boat to shore. Since one never berates an Indonesian in public, a mob of outraged workers chased the supervisor with axes!
- Managers at one American company were startled when they discovered that the brand name of the cooking oil they were marketing in a Latin American country translated into Spanish as "Jackass Oil."
- Pepsodent tried to sell its toothpaste in Southeast Asia by emphasizing that it "whitens your teeth." They found out that the local natives chew betel nuts to blacken their teeth which they find attractive. Some were also offended by the slogan, "Wonder where the yellow went..." interpreting it as a racial slur.
- Ignorant of foreign language, 3M introduced its scotch tape in Japan with the slogan, "It sticks like crazy." The Japanese interpretation of the slogan was "it sticks foolishly."
- Columbia Pictures produced a movie in Egypt that resulted in all Columbia pictures being banned from the country due to the inaccuracies: accents were Pakistani, clothes were Moroccan, and behavior was American. Most offensive was the portrayal of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian President, kissing his wife in public--highly unacceptable in Islamic countries.

Preservation of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures.

Cesar Chavez (1927-1993)

Mexican-American farm worker, labor leader, and civil rights activist

Intercultural Business Ethics

Know what you are up against. Writers of ethical guidelines need to understand the cultural contexts in which these will be disseminated. One resource is Transparency International, a German consulting group, which publishes an annual *Corruption Perception Index* of 85 countries based on surveys of global business travelers.

Have a clear strategy and realistic compliance goals. Recognize that long-distance control is limited. Carefully chose the degree of control (ranging from enforcement to guidance to persuasion to encouragement to suggestion) depending on the importance of the rule and the local acceptance of it.

Provide intercultural orientation to those responsible for enforcing compliance. Include intercultural ethics in the training of expatriate managers. Help country managers understand how best to position and explain the ethics standards to minimize potential resistance.

Write and review ethics guidelines with local cultural factors in mind. The wording should reflect an awareness of the specific issues likely to be encountered. More explanation of rationale may be needed in some cases and more strictness and authoritativeness might be required in others.

Use the local language. Translate the ethics conduct statements into the local language. Then have them independently translated back into English to check if the meaning was lost or distorted.

Avoid being ethnocentric. Remember that your own cultural values pertaining to ethics and morals are not universally accepted. An attitude of moral superiority is sure to cause offense and create resistance.

Engage all stakeholders. Educate local employees, suppliers and clients. Merely distributing a written set of ethics statements is very unlikely to be effective. Actively involving local people in training and/or focus groups is much more likely to gain the assent and compliance that will make a difference.

Identify and defuse "time bombs." Determine which situations, relationships and arrangements have the greatest potential for blowing up into ethical problems. Focus on these as a first priority when establishing compliance and enforcement measures.

Consult with colleagues. Compare ethics guidelines with other multinational companies.

One company's five-year effort to apply cross-cultural insight to its international business ethics code produced two significant results. There were virtually no violations of the standards, and the local country codes of conduct met the spirit of the worldwide guidelines while incorporating local practices and values. Such results can be a competitive advantage in today's international business arena.

Gary M. Wederspahn is an intercultural business coach, trainer and consultant. His book, "Intercultural Services: A Worldwide Buyer's Guide and Sourcebook" is available online at Amazon.com.

IBM decided to have some parts manufactured in Japan as a trial project. In the specifications, they stated that they would accept three defective parts per 10,000. When the delivery came in there was an accompanying letter. "We, Japanese people, had a hard time understanding North American business practices. But the three defective parts per 10,000 have been separately manufactured and have been included in the consignment. Hope this pleases you."

U.S. State Department career diplomat:

"Showing cross cultural respect is an important part of diplomacy, but the rules of protocol have evolved over many centuries to ensure that official communications are delivered and received without allowing personalities and cross-cultural issues to cloud or confuse the clear communication of the formal positions of the governments concerned. Informality and personal rapport are appropriate and can be a critical element of diplomacy, but there also are examples of situations where informal or personal communications created misunderstandings and confusion, sometimes with tragic consequences".

The greatest discovery of my generation is that man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind.

James Truslow Adams, 1878-1949, American writer and historian

Humanity has the stars in its future, and that future is too important to be lost under the burden of juvenile folly and ignorant superstition.

Isaac Asimov, 1920-1992, Russian-born American author and professor of biochemistry

FAQs on Etiquette and Protocol

What is the proper time to arrive for an appointment? Always arrive on time. Never late. Arrive no more than five minutes early.

What is the proper way to display flags? When displaying flags at business, civic or social events, the host country's flag is placed on the speaker's right. State and organizations' flags are placed on the speakers left or to the audience's right.

Can I hold a drink when in a receiving line? Beverages are inappropriate in a receiving line. Both the greeters standing in line and the guests being introduced should not have a drink in hand.

Should I send a gift to the host of a dinner party? If attending a party in a private home and you are the guest of honor, it is appropriate to send flowers to the host's home earlier in the day. If you are not the guest of honor, an appropriate gift to take with you could be a bottle of wine, flowers, or a small item for the home.

When should a gentleman remove his hat? A gentleman always removes his hat when entering a home, restaurant, theater, or church.

I have been asked out to lunch with a potential employer. I assume he will pay the check, but should I offer to pay it, or at least my portion? It is always polite to offer to pay for the meal and shows goodwill on your part. However, it is customary for the individual who extends the invitation to cover the check.

What is considered appropriate and customary dress for men and women for a dinner party when the invitation states "Cocktail" attire? A dark well-tailored suit for men and a knee-length dress for women.

What is the correct way to sneeze or cough in public? Cover your mouth with your left hand (if you are right-handed) thus leaving your right hand clean for shaking hands, opening doors, etc.

To which side should a gentleman seat a female? A gentleman at a social dinner party holds the chair and seats the female on his right.

What is the proper distance to stand from someone when introducing yourself? It depends on the culture. In most middle/northern European countries, the UK and the USA stand at about one arm's length from an individual when introducing yourself.

What are the proper forms of address when the lady is higher ranked than the man? When a woman is higher ranked than a man—Dr. Susan Smith and Mr. Mark Smith (if they are married) or Dr Susan Johnson Mr Mark Smith (placed on separate lines and omit the "and" if they are not married).

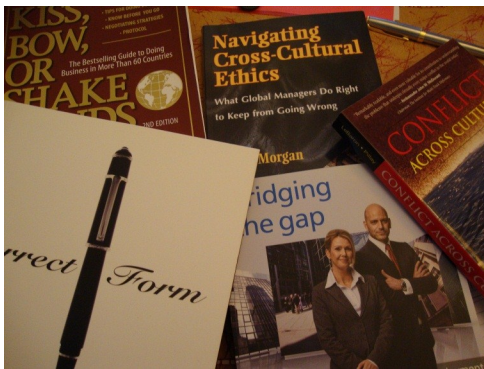
With the changing gender roles in our society, who opens the door, the male or the female? In this day and age, the person who reaches the door first, regardless of gender, is responsible for holding the door open for others.

Is it proper to send a gift basket to a client at their home address? In most cases it is more appropriate to send a business gift to the company address. However, if you know the client well and he has given you his home address, then the gift may be sent to the home.

When should a thank-you card be sent after receiving a gift? Within two weeks of receiving the gift.

Who calls back when disconnected on the telephone? The individual who originated/initiated the call is responsible for calling back the other party.

When is it appropriate to address someone by their first name? Only after being asked to do so.



Books, links, and other resources:

The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn: <http://www.albertkahn.co.uk/>
International Addresses and Salutations <http://www.bspage.com/address.html>
English grammar: http://www.edufind.com/english/grammar/grammar_topics.php
Arts & Letters Daily – writings on every possible subject
<http://www.aldaily.com/>
WorldHum - best travel stories <http://www.worldhum.com/features/>
Poodwaddle—world time, population, statistics by the second
<http://www.poodwaddle.com/worldclock.swf>



Photos: Andy Dabilis

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We encourage you to contribute articles, thoughts, ideas, resources to the next issue of Our Business Times.



Photos: Andy Dabilis

Albert Khan and his Archives of the Planet

In 1909 the millionaire French banker and philanthropist Albert Kahn embarked on an ambitious project to create a color photographic record of, and for, the peoples of the world. As an idealist and an internationalist, Kahn believed that he could use the new autochrome process, the world's first user-friendly, true-color photographic system, to promote cross-cultural peace and understanding.

Kahn hired photographers and cameramen to travel the globe between 1909 and 1931 to record for posterity the differing customs of the human race, often at crucial junctures in their history, when age-old cultures were on the brink of being changed for ever by war and the march of twentieth-century globalization. He also promoted education at the highest level through traveling scholarships.

Kahn called the project "The Archives of the Planet," and was committed to internationalism and believed that leaders in finance and the arts and sciences could break down the world's cultural barriers.

From every corner of the globe – which still seemed so vast and was not yet fully explored and mapped - Albert Kahn's teams of cameramen brought back testimonies of human life, in color photographs and on film. These were not works of reportage or ethnography nor an attempt to produce works of art. The aim was simply to record human beings in all their diversity, living humble lives worthy of respect. And from this respect would, Kahn hoped, arise the universal peace to which he aspired.

Kahn's lifetime was not a happy one for a pacifist, since it included three terrible wars that involved his homeland. Yet he retained his faith in humanity and believed firmly in his mission, pursuing it to the full.



Vietnam 1919