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Crossing borders: from Iowa to Argentina : a cross-cultural training program for business professionals

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University of Iowa

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**CROSSING BORDERS: FROM THE UNITED STATES TO ARGENTINA
A CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS**

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Arts degree in International
Studies in the Graduate College of the University of Iowa**

May 2011

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTERS THESIS

This is to certify that the master's thesis of

Lindsey Lea Schneckloth

has been approved by the Examining Committee for this thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in International Studies at the May 2011 graduation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

I am getting my masters in International Studies with an emphasis in business. By nature this program is interdisciplinary and so I wanted to create a project that mixed all aspects of the program as I have built it. I have taken courses relating to negotiation, business environment, culture, foreign languages, teaching methods, political science, and history. All of these courses have taken on an international focus with special attention to the geographic location of Latin America, specifically Argentina. Thus for my final project I would like to combine all that I have taken away from these courses as well as my international experience into creating a cross-cultural training program for United States business professionals who might work in Argentina or have contact with those who do.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cross-cultural training can be defined as a program that's aim is to help people learn and adapt to cultures different from their own. (Hammer, 1999). Intercultural training (Cross-Cultural training) is one application within the domain of intercultural relations which is comprised of cultural anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, sociolinguistics, multicultural education, intercultural communication, and international business management. It focuses on training individuals to be cross-culturally competent. In an international business environment this includes "an individual's effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order

to work successfully with people from different backgrounds at home or abroad” (Black & Mendenhall, 1990 p.530). In other words intercultural training should be designed to teach individuals this set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes (attitudes). This will be the goal of the present training program.

Fowler and Blohm (2004) have created a chart linking activities to the acquisition of one, two, or all three of the components set forth by Black & Mendenhall. My program combines an exercise (knowledge, skills), lecture (knowledge), and a role play (skills, attitudes). One might notice that this program is designed to be learner centered and highly participatory. This is because my clients, U.S. citizens, as a whole prefer this type of training program (Fowler & Blohm, 2004).

In addition to the above criterion research has shown that effective training combines both didactic and experiential methods (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). Table 1, found below, displays how Crossing Borders, the name of the present training program, has managed to incorporate this requirement into the training. Table 1 also differentiates culture-general and culture-specific training methods which will be explored later.

Table 1. Cross-Cultural Training Methods Used in Present Training Program

	Didactic	Experiential
Culture-general	Power Point Lecture	“Contrasting Values”
Culture-specific	Workbook	Storti’s Cross-Cultural Dialogues

Importance of Cross-Cultural Training

International Trade is at an ultimate high and is expected to continue growing. In fact, Gregersen estimates that trade between nations will exceed total commerce within nations by 2015 (Gregersen, 1998). Therefore it is becoming more and more important that as companies begin to work on a global scale that they understand the international environment that they are entering. Companies need to understand international trade and finance, supply chain management, global management, and finally global marketing. In addition to understanding the business functions on a global scale they should be careful to not overlook the cultural differences and work to understand the underlying values of the cultures with whom they plan to work.

Part of going global with a business is the inclusion of overseas expatriate assignments. Over 100,000 U.S. managers are sent overseas as expatriates each year (Baruch & Altman, 2002). Kealey's research suggests that the majority of employees working abroad do not effectively produce high quality work (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). Worse yet, nearly one third to a half of the expatriates return early or fail to complete their given assignments while abroad (Hammer 1999), with each failure ranging from \$40,000 to \$1 million in losses (Hawley 2009; Vogel & Van Vuuren 2008). It is estimated to cost U.S. companies over \$2 billion each year in direct costs due to early expatriate returns (Kealey & Protheroe 1996). In addition to these easily quantifiable costs Storti has described additional costs such as lost opportunities, damaged relationships and reduced productivity. (Storti 2001).

These numbers are frightening for any company that is contemplating sending one of their trusted employees abroad. Why such a high failure rate? Research suggests that

the high failure rate coincides not with low technical skills but with low cultural competence (Hammer, 1999). In other words these individuals are not able to adapt to the foreign environment and survive in a culture that is not their own. Therefore intercultural training could and should be employed to prevent such damaging results. However, one might ask if a training program can really help to solve this problem? Are they effective?

Effectiveness of Cross-Cultural Training

In order to gauge cross-cultural training effectiveness Black and Mendenhall reviewed 29 studies that tested training programs for effectiveness (Black and Mendenhall, 1990). In this analysis there were ten studies that researched the effectiveness of cross-cultural training and its effects on reducing cultural stress. Each of the studies showed a positive relationship between cross-cultural training and the reduction of cultural stress (Black and Mendenhall, 1990). An additional 9 studies found a positive correlation between training and psychological adjustment to a new living environment (1990). Finally they looked at 15 studies that examined the relationship between training and performance and 12 of those 15 showed positive results (1990). In conclusion the majority of the studies that Black and Mendenhall reviewed showed positive correlations between intercultural training and expatriate experiences. Similar conclusions were found in another study, (Hammer & Martin, 1992) showed that participating in a short training program is much more effective than not participating in increasing knowledge about the other culture. They also found that training reduced anxiety toward working with members of the other culture, and increased information exchange between managers from the two cultures. Cross-Cultural training programs can

therefore be concluded as effective and should be used as tools for helping to prepare expatriates for their experience abroad.

CHAPTER 2

THE CROSSING BORDERS TRAINING PROGRAM

Theoretical Framework

“Crossing Borders: From The United States to Argentina” consists of an interactive Power Point presentation, hands-on group exercises, and a supplementary workbook for further learning. In combining cognitive (didactic) and participatory (experiential) learning the program seeks to introduce the trainees to the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to succeed in an intercultural environment. It also employs culture-general and culture-specific exercises and lecture materials. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) suggest that “The culture-general approach prepares for learning how to learn, provides broader experience, and eases the movement to culture specific knowledge” (p 430). Thus, as a whole the program attempts to introduce cultural values that are familiar to the participants so that they can examine their own personal values and how they relate to their own culture. From there the program goes over culture in general and the various values that each culture has while applying these culture-general theories to the targeted cultures of the program: The United States and Argentina. Finally the program moves to a very culture-specific exercise where the trainees are asked to look at conversations between individuals from Latin America and individuals from the United States. They will be asked to locate the cultural values represented in the dialogues and state how they affected the communication.

The program follows Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Lewis, 1986). The theory states that there are four learning style preferences and in order to be effective a trainer should address each one in a certain order. The four

learning styles are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The model is set up into a cycle in the above order and a trainer can start at any point on the cycle depending on the client and subject matter and from then on they should follow that order. J. M. Bennett (Bennett & Bennett, 2003) has developed a list of instructional activities that support different aspects of learning (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). “Concrete Experience” could come from group discussion, examples, autobiography, trigger films, exercises, introductions, etc. “Reflective observation” can be utilized through journals, discussion, brainstorming, thought questions, observations, etc. “Abstract Conceptualization” includes lectures, papers, projects, model building, theory construction, etc. “Active Experimentation” involves homework, case study, practice assignments, demonstrations, projects, etc.

The training program begins with an exercise called “Contrasting Values” which has been adapted from activities in “Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook” by L. Robert Kohls and John M. Knight (Stringer & Cassiday 2003). The trainer has chosen to start the Crossing Borders program with a “concrete experience” or the “Contrasting Values” exercise because as a general rule U.S. American managers prefer to start at this point in the cycle (Fowler & Blohm 2004). “Reflective observation” is then tackled during the debriefing of this exercise and the participants are able to examine how their personal preferences vary with the U.S. cultural values as a whole as well as how they differ from other cultures. They are also able to reflect upon how these differences could impact cross-cultural interactions in general as well as specifically during their time in Argentina. From “reflective observation” the participants are then introduced to “abstract conceptualization” during

the lecture section of the program where theoretic models of cultural values are introduced and explained. Finally the trainees are led to “active experimentation” by getting into groups to discuss the cross-cultural dialogues created by Craig Storti (Storti, 2001). During this activity they will be able to apply the knowledge they acquired during the first three stages about varying cultural values and figure out how these values could lead to misunderstandings within the dialogues. In following the Kolb Learning Preference Cycle as a basis for the training program the trainer ensures that the information acquired during the workshop is reinforced and that each trainee is able to effectively absorb this knowledge. This knowledge should help in changing attitudes and the acquisition of necessary intercultural skills.

Target Audience (Hypothetical Company)

The training program is designed for 20 business professionals for a medium sized company and will consist of two basic groups of individuals. The expatriates, as well as all company professionals that will have contact with said expatriates, during their overseas assignment. There are believed to be two reasons for international failure: expatriate failure and failure of headquarter management to recognize cultural differences and challenges in international business environments (Johnson, Lenartowicz, Apud, 2006). Therefore, it is not only vital that the expatriates receive training prior to departure but it is also important that the supporting staff does as well. This training is essential in that the expatriates will be looking to the rest of the company for support and guidance during their time abroad. The headquarters staff will need to be empathetic to the experience of the expatriates as well as be able to offer positive and constructive insight. The company has created a team of four executives that will be sent to Buenos

Aires, Argentina to stay for a pre-determined time of one year with the objective of completing a project for the company as well as establishing, building, and maintaining productive business relationships in the area and with their newly found partner company. They will be operating out of this partnering company which is small to medium sized. The expatriates will have the help and support of the employees of the partner company. A considerable amount of time and resources have been put into the development of this partnership and so it is of high importance that these expatriates help to positively build upon this already formed relationship in addition to completing their assigned project. The headquarters staff scheduled to be in attendance will be comprised of 16 individuals and consist of secretaries, middle-level management, as well as top-level management.

Objectives of Program

Given that none of the 20 individuals have had extended international experience, with the exception of vacations, the company has decided to invest in a cross-cultural training program in order to better prepare the expatriates for their time abroad as well as their supporting staff that will stay at headquarters. The professionals have much to prepare and wrap-up prior to their departure as well as spend necessary time with family and friends therefore their time is limited. In addition to this the rest of the staff is reluctant to devote a substantial amount of time to this training session. This type of resistance to intercultural training is quite common and thus many trainers are forced to create short training sessions. For this reason I have kept the actual face-to-face training session to a one-time half-day session. Due to the complexity of intercultural communication I have also included a workbook with supplementary materials in order

for the professionals to look over and learn from during their free time. This will give the motivated individuals the freedom to take advantage of resources without wasting time looking for them on their own. It will also include “Pocket Survival Tools” of items discussed during the workshop in order for them to refer back to prior to departure or while in Argentina. Cross-cultural competence cannot be mastered during a half-day session but the concepts can be introduced and from there can be built upon through experiential learning.

During this half day session my program is designed to meet the following objectives.

1. To shed light and understanding of cultural differences between Iowa and Argentina.
2. To psychologically prepare Iowa business professionals for what to expect abroad.
3. To decrease anxiety and increase confidence within the soon to be expatriates.
4. To develop the building blocks of cross-cultural competence.
5. To increase effectiveness of future intercultural relationships.
6. To instill empathy for the expatriates within headquarter support staff.

CHAPTER 3

POWER POINT PORTION OF PROGRAM

Introduction to the Trainees

The program will begin with the discussion of the billions of dollars that U.S. companies have lost due to expatriate failure as has been previously outlined in the above section labeled “Importance of Cross-Cultural Training.” This will not be done to instill fear in the trainees but to grab their attention and to give them motivation to take this program seriously.

Contrasting Values Exercise (Stringer & Cassiday 2003)

“Contrasting Values” is an exercise that is adapted from activities in “Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook” by L. Robert Kohls and John M. Knight and can be found in chapter 11 of “52 Activities for Exploring Values Differences” (Stringer & Cassiday, 2003). The full exercise can be found in Appendix A of this document. This exercise is designed to introduce the U.S. cultural values and the “Contrasting Values” of other cultures. It allows the trainees to be introduced to cultural values as a whole, reflect upon which values fit with their own personal values as well as which would be classified as U.S. cultural values, and finally examine how these cultural differences could cause difficulties in cross-cultural interactions.

The application of this exercise is quite simple and easy for any group to successfully complete. The trainees will be separated into five groups of four and each group will be given a set of value cards. The trainer will answer any questions that the group has about the values themselves in order to clear any confusion they might have.

They will then be given twenty minutes to work as a group to separate these cards into two categories: The United States Cultural Values and Contrasting Values. After the twenty minutes is up or each group of four feels that they have come to a group consensus the groups will come together as a whole and discuss their findings. As a class they will be given an additional twenty minutes to decide which values belong to each category. After they think that they have the values separated correctly the trainer will show a previously completed chart of these values and where they fall as research shows. The exercise now will move on to a debriefing exercise where the trainer will lead a discussion with the use of pre-written questions. This discussion should last approximately 30 to 45 minutes depending upon the conversation flow. The participants will be encouraged to ask any questions or add any input that they may have.

The purpose of this exercise is to introduce the trainees to the values that are inherent to their lives and show how those values vary in other cultures. They will then be asked to discuss which of these values were easiest to define as U.S. values and which were a little more difficult to classify. In addition to reflection of this activity they will be asked to apply these values to real-life situations and discuss which of these values they could foresee as being a problem in the workplace. The application of these values will help to turn knowledge into attitude change which is one of the goals of all training sessions. Finally this exercise will allow the trainees to see differences in their own personal values as compared to the U.S. values as a whole. This will help to shed light that cultural value classifications are generalizations and that not all individuals of the same culture will be exactly the same nor are they constant through all situations. Observation of this should deter participants from stereotyping all Argentines as the same

but instead use the generalizations that they learn during the program as a guide while keeping in mind that individual variances will occur. In other words researched cultural values should be used as a tool toward understanding but should not be considered absolute truth.

Hofstede's "Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind" (2005)

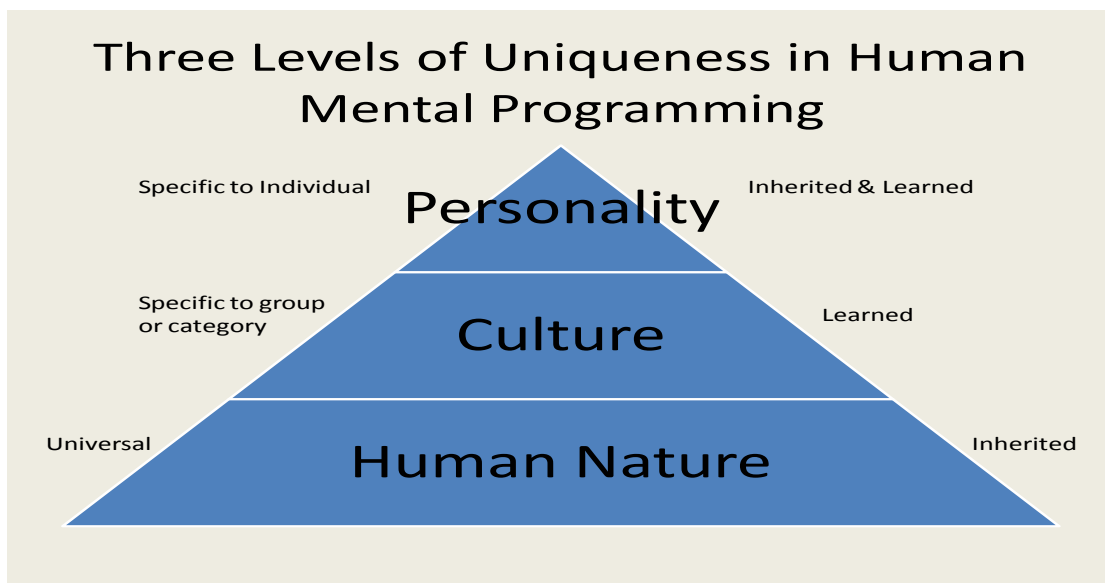
The second portion of this training program is achieved through an interactive lecture. It is interactive in that participants will be encouraged to ask questions throughout the lecture as well they will be asked if they can think of real examples where the following values could be displayed. Lecturing is a great way to cover a lot of ground and explain models and researched theories in the field. That being said, if trainees feel that they are being talked at for too long they can lose focus. For this reason the lecture is not only interactive by nature but also will be covered during a short amount of time. The trainees will later be asked to apply this information while deciphering the cross-cultural dialogues of Craig Storti (2001).

In a noteworthy study of middle class employees within organizations across 74 cultures Hofstede identified "Three Levels of Uniqueness in Mental Programming", "The Onion: Manifestations of Culture at Different Levels of Depth, and five different core value dimensions that can be found universally in all cultures. I have selected to use Hofstede's work as the basis for this cultural training program as it is one of the most recognized and cited works in the field of intercultural relations and thus the field of cross-cultural training.

The training program begins its discussion of culture (general) by using Hofstede's "Three Levels of Uniqueness in Mental Programing. This diagram (figure 1)

shows three levels of a pyramid; going from bottom to top are: human nature, culture, and personality. Human nature creates the base of the pyramid and is deemed both universal and inherited. This is probably where the common stereotypical belief comes from that all humans are basically the same and as such they should not have to learn about other cultures. This idea is obviously problematic in that individuals do differ quite a lot based on their own personality and culture. In fact this is the key point that this pyramid shows. Each individual is comprised of basic human nature, culture, and personality therefore each person is unique due to a combination of learned and inherited qualities that no other individual could have.

Figure 1. Three Levels of Uniqueness in Human Mental Programming



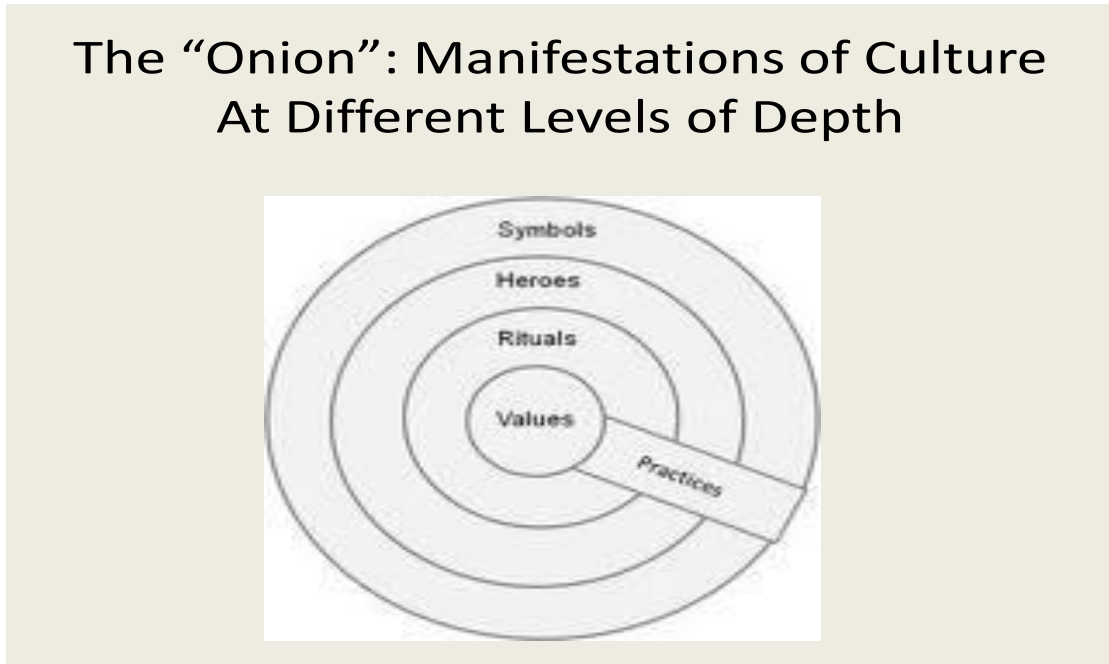
Source: Hofstede, Geert and Hofstede, Gert Jan. (2005). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

The discussion of this pyramid will lead to the need for a definition of culture. Although there are hundreds of definitions that one could use I decided to keep this

program consistent and easy to use so I stayed with the definition taken from Hofstede & Hofstede (2005): “The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (p.4).

With globalization and technology becoming more and more influential there is a popular idea that all cultures will begin to diverge and eventually the world will be comprised of a single culture. This argument is not based on any empirical research nor truth and in fact is quite extreme. Others have a little less extreme idea that cultures are continually changing. Although it is true that the practices of cultures may be changing over time one must keep in mind that these are just the practices, symbols, rituals, and heroes. These elements are the most visual part of culture and throughout history have changed over time however the cultural values have and will remain constant according to Hofstede. He (2005) states, “there is no evidence that cultures are converging and changing over time in respect to the core values” (p. 12). Figure 2 shows a diagram that represents the different layers of culture and shows that the core of the “onion” or culture are the values. The program then moves on to discuss the value dimensions that Hofstede first identified from his comprehensive study of middle class employees within organizations across 74 countries. These dimensional values are: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and individualism/collectivism. Each dimension can be thought of as a continuum in that countries will fall on the low or the high end of these values uncovering various traits and patterns for each culture. The program goes in the

Figure 2. The “Onion”: Manifestations of Culture At Different Levels of Depth



Source: Hofstede, Geert and Hofstede, Gert Jan. (2005). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

stated order and covers each dimension individually before moving on to the next. For example, the dimension is first defined and then shows the countries that score the highest and lowest on the continuum as well as where the United States and Argentina fall in both score and rank in comparison to the other nation states. Moving from culture-general to culture-specific the slides show how this dimension is demonstrated in both of the targeted cultures.

The Power Distance Index (PDI) is the first dimension to be covered and represents the accepted level of inequality within a society. Countries that score low on power distance tend to value the minimization of inequality, they value informality, rank is earned by merit, vertical mobility is possible, respect for the individual, decentralized

decision making, and modesty is valued. Countries that score higher on the scale for power distance value hierarchy, status, titles and formalities important, centralized decision making, and finally privilege and status symbols are popular and accepted. The United States has scored only mildly lower on this continuum than Argentina however one can see the greater importance placed on formalities and status in Argentina than in the United States.

The Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) follows the power distance dimension and is defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 167). Cultures that score high on this dimension are change adverse, view things that are different as dangerous, prefer well-defined rules, like formalization, and are less optimistic of people in general. Argentina has scored quite high on this dimension and it is one of the biggest differences from the culture of the U.S. as a whole in that the United States scored relatively low. The countries, like the U.S., that score low on the UAI think of change as a generally positive thing, are optimistic of people in general, more willing to take risks, and prefer broad guidelines to strict rules.

The Masculine Index is next represented during the training program. Both the United States and Argentina are classified as Masculine Societies where emotional gender roles are thought to be clearly distinct. The United States scored slightly higher in masculinity than did Argentina and as a result the culture as a whole tends to have more work centrality in their lives, exhibit aggressive behavior, be earnings/promotions oriented, and be performance driven. Argentina shows some of these qualities as well in that they are performance driven, management is decisive and driven, and is motivated by

material things. However, in general, they tend to place more importance on value of life and in turn have less centrality of work in their lives (like their other Latin American compatriots).

The last values dimension covered is the Individualism/Collectivism value and is arguably the most important in the field of cross-cultural training. This will be seen during the cross-cultural dialogues created by Storti later on in the training session in that this dimension is typically the root of or at least part of the reason for the misunderstandings that take place between the two cultures. Research shows that 2/3 of the world is collectivist oriented and 1/3 individualist (Ting-Toomy, 2004). This makes sense when one takes into consideration that India and China are both collectivist cultures and when their populations are combined they total almost 1/3 of the world. The United States scores the highest on the Individualism Index and this can be showcased through their focus on the importance of the self, emphasis on achievement, hiring procedures based on merit, perceived value of networking, and finally the importance of task over relationships. The Argentine culture scored in the middle of the other nation states. This is exhibited by lower occupational mobility, a greater focus on the relationship over tasks, employer/employee relationship is similar to a family link and finally hiring and promotions tend to be more relationship based that skill based.

Edward T. Hall's "Beyond Culture" (1976)

The next portion of the culture lecture is devoted to the communication styles outlined by Edward T. Hall (1976). Hall describes that there are two general ways to communicate. In a high context format where less explicit information is shared and more depends on the context. In a low context format more information is conveyed

through what is actually said (1979). Therefore, low context cultures focus more on explicit content of a message and high context cultures focus more on implicit context. Implicit context could have to do with nonverbal aspects, (body language, tone, etc), who says the information, how it is said, and in what situation/when it is said (Requejo Hernandez & Graham 2008). In low context cultures, which are what the U.S. is, it is more acceptable to openly disagree with someone including a superior. In higher context cultures, which Argentina would fall into this category, it is much less acceptable to openly disagree with others. Individuals of these cultures have learned to hint at disagreeing or saying no to something or someone without explicitly saying it in order to maintain group harmony. High context cultures are concerned with saving “face” or preventing public embarrassment.

Hall also discusses the concept of time which is perhaps one of the more visible cultural values. Americans have a very strong attachment to time in that it is considered a valuable resource that can be saved or spent. This resource is not to be wasted and can be considered a direct insult if someone does not respect our time. In other words punctuality is highly valued. U.S. citizens are monochronic by nature and think of time as money. They tend to concentrate on one thing at a time and have become very skilled at compartmentalization. On the other hand Argentines tend to be more polychronic by nature. They are used to doing several things simultaneously and are not all that impressed by punctuality. In fact it could be considered rude if one arrived at someone’s house on time for dinner as the host would then feel very rushed. Polychronic cultures allow more time for relationships to build in order for a context to build. For this reason

there is usually a very strong correlation between polychronic and high context cultures as well as with monochronic and low context cultures.

In addition to the above stated connections there is a strong correlation between these two values and Hofstede's PDI and Individualism/Collectivism dimensions. Hernandez and Graham (2008) have created the following table labeled Table 2 in order to show the correlations. The table separates cultures into two types: Information-Oriented (IO) and Relationship-Oriented (RO). As one looks at the two categories and their classifications it becomes evident that the United States falls under the IO category and Argentina would fall under the RO category. This table shows the fundamental differences between the cultures of the two nation states although this is not to say that similarities between the two do not exist.

Cross-Cultural Dialogues (Storti, 1994)

Directly following the lecture the trainees will be separated into ten groups of two and will be given one of Storti's cross-cultural dialogues. They will be given fifteen minutes to read the dialogue and discuss possible misunderstandings that occurred and why those miscommunications happened. Each pair will then present their dialogue to the group as a role play and will then present their ideas as to what happened. The group as a whole will be asked to add their input as to what possibly could have happened, if anything. The trainer will then reveal Storti's explanation for the group to read silently to themselves. The group will be given a couple of minutes to read this explanation and then brainstorm possible connections to the values previously presented during the lecture portion. Afterwards, the trainer will reveal the values outlined within the dialogue with a specific explanation. This will be followed by the trainees being asked how these

misunderstandings could have been predicted and how they could have been avoided.

This process will happen for each of the ten dialogues.

Table 2. Dimensions of Culture, A Synthesis

Information-Oriented (IO)	Relationship-Oriented (RO)
Low Context	High Context
Individualism	Collectivism
Lower Power Distance	Higher Power Distance
Bribery less common	Bribery more common
Low distance from English	High distance from English
Linguistic directness	Linguistic indirectness
Monochronic Time	Polychronic Time
Internet	Face-to-Face
Foreground	Background
Competition	Reduce transaction costs

Hernandez Requejo, William and Graham, John L.(2008). *Global Negotiation: The New Rules*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fowler and Blohm (2004) list the strengths of this exercise in their “Analysis of Methods for Intercultural Training” found in the Intercultural Handbook. One of the strengths is that “Dialogues show that culture is real and shows up in casual conversation as well as in business discussions” (2004, p. 71). Storti (1994) adds that the cultural dialogues are ideal for those who believe that everyone is basically the same and cultural

differences either do not exist or will not cause problems and or matter. He states, “Dialogues leave people who do not believe in culture with no place to hide” (Storti, 1999, p. 206). Storti also provides very detailed explanations that unveil deeply rooted values which can be tied back to the lecture. As previously stated one of the goals of cross-cultural training was to instill cultural competence which includes a combination of knowledge, personal attributes, and intercultural skills. “Storti’s situations help the participants to analyze tangible interactions, which will in turn help them to predict misunderstandings and fashion adaptive behavior which are the abilities that represent the intercultural skill set” (Bennett & Bennett, 2004 p. 149). In addition to these reasons for including the cross-cultural dialogues it was important to find a final exercise that provided an opportunity for active experimentation in order to complete the Learning Preference Cycle (Kolb 1984; Kolb & Lewis 1986).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Crossing Borders: From Iowa to Argentina is designed for the hypothetical company and its employees that are stated above. This was done with the intention that I could be more specific with descriptions, explanations, and rationale. Cross-cultural training demands that each program should be tailored to fit the individual needs of each company and therefore I wanted to give an example of how this tailoring would help shape the program. That being said, this does not mean that The Crossing Borders: Iowa to Argentina Program is limited to this hypothetical company. It is merely one of the programs that one could create following its general framework. This program has been built on empirically researched theory and could be expanded upon or shortened according to the client's needs. For example the beginning exercise of "Contrasting Values" could be substituted for a self-assessment test or any other type of discussion or activity that meets the requirements as a "concrete experience" (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Lewis, 1986). "Contrasting Values" is designed to introduce values and culture as well as analyze self-behavior and preferences and as such is an excellent starting point for a training program. Following this "concrete experience" in Kolb's Learning Preference Cycle would be "reflective observation" which is achieved by a class discussion of the above stated exercise. Next in the model comes "abstract conceptualization" which is achieved through a power point lecture on theoretical models of culture. The participants are led to complete the Learning Preference Cycle with "active experimentation" using "Storti's Cross-Cultural Dialogues".

In addition to following Kolb's theoretical model the program also combines a mixture of the four different intercultural training typologies: Didactic culture-general, Didactic culture-specific, Experiential culture-general, Experiential culture-specific. This has been done with the intention of making the program as effective as possible. Studies have shown that the combination of more than one type of methodology is more effective than a "mono-method" type of training (Early 1987, Gudykunst Hammer & Wiseman 1977, Harrison 1992,). Therefore this training program follows a framework that could be adjusted to specific needs of other clients by simply replacing or substituting any of the activities with others that fit into the above stated models. If a client wanted an entire day program a game-simulation could be introduced instead of or in addition to Storti's Cross-cultural dialogue. Notice that a game-simulation would fill both the requirements of experiential culture-specific typology and active experimentation of Kolb's Learning Preference Cycle. To provide a more extensive program any part of the workbook could be elaborated upon and made part of the workshop through interactive lecture or with the additional use of other training methods/activities. By following theoretical frameworks that have been empirically tested the training program has become inherently flexible.

The aim of this intercultural training program is to give insight to general cultural differences that the expatriates will encounter during their time in Argentina. It is designed to help them understand the idea of culture and how it affects every part of our daily lives in a way that we are not conscientiously aware. It is through these generalizations that differences are brought to light however it should be stressed that individuals within a culture vary just as much as the cultures themselves. It is important

to understand how the differences in cultures may play into how an individual acts but it is perhaps more important to understand that stereotyping based on nationality can be extremely dangerous. One must remember to take the context, content, the individual, and the culture all into consideration when entering a situation. Not all individuals will act exactly how research has found their culture as a whole tend to react nor will these behaviors remain constant through all situations. Instead, the things that the expatriates learn during this training program should be used as a starting point to understanding generalized cultural characteristics/values and remember to remain flexible and adapt to any changes observed.

APPENDIX A

CONTRASTING VALUES¹

Time Required: 70 to 85 minutes (20 minutes for small group work, 20 minutes for large group consensus process; 30 to 45 for debriefing)

Objectives:

1. To identify cultural values that are widely accepted in the United States
2. To contrast US values with those held in other countries
3. To identify the implications of cultural differences when conducting business across national values differences

Process:

1. Prepare values cards by photocopying the “Contrasting Values” on card stock and cutting them into individual vales cards. One complete set should be provided to each small group.
2. Place participants in groups of 3-5. Give each group a set of values cards, tape and a flipchart page with “US Values” printed on the left side and Contrasting Values printed on the right. Ask the group to tape each values card to the side of the easel page on which it belongs. Decisions should be based on the group’s beliefs about dominant US Values

¹ Cassiday, P. A., Stringer, D. M. (2003). 52 Activities for Exploring Values Differences. Intercultural Press.

3. In the large group compare similarities and differences in the placement of each values card and try to reach consensus.
4. Discuss the potential implications of working or negotiating with people whose cultural values are not the same as US Values. Identify specific behavioral modifications that will increase effectiveness with groups who hold those contrasting values. (Start with my own examples.)

Debriefing Questions:

1. For which values sets did you find it easiest to achieve agreement? Which were the hardest? Why?
2. Which values would be the most difficult for you to adapt to?
3. How could these value differences influence intercultural interactions in the workplace?

Debriefing Conclusions:

1. Identifying common U.S. cultural values can allow an individual to contrast her or his personal values with those of the larger culture.
2. Identifying contrasting cultural values can prepare us to be more effective working cross-culturally by adapting our behavior
3. Identifying cultural values – both our own and those of others can also help us to avoid stereotyping others (recognizing that there are individual differences within every culture) and to be more understanding when others may stereotype us.

4. Identifying the specific behaviors associated with values can also help us understand that the same value can be demonstrated in different behavioral ways.

Table A1. Contrasting Values

Rules Rigid	Rules flexible
Change Positive	Tradition/Stability
Gender Equity	Male Superiority
Equality	Rank/Status/Hierarchy
Individualism	Group Welfare
Status Earned	Status Given
Competition/Individual Achievement	Cooperation/Group Achievement
Focus on Future	Focus on Present or Past
Action/Task-Oriented	People/Relationship-Oriented
Informality/Casual Interaction	Formality Status Interaction
Directness	Indirectness
Direct Eye Contact	Eye Contact Avoided
Frankness/Honesty	Harmony/Face Saving

Source: Cassiday, P. A., Stringer, D. M. (2003). *52 Activities for Exploring Values Differences*. Intercultural Press.

APPENDIX B

STORTI'S CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUES²**1. Class of '97**

Karen: How did you make out at registration?

Carmen: Quite well. I got into every course I wanted. But one thing confused me.

Karen: What was that?

Carmen: They said I was in the class of '97. I don't understand what that means.

Karen: That's easy. You'll graduate in 1997, four years from now.

Carmen: But that's just what confused me.

Storti's Explanation (Storti, 1994):

To Karen, it's rather straightforward: If you enter college in 1993, you will graduate four years later, in 1997. This is the presumption, unless the unexpected happens. But Americans don't put much stock in the unexpected. Indeed, if the unexpected should happen, chances are we will manipulate the situation to reach our original goal, providing it still matters to us. This is the American norm of self-determination, captured perfectly in the expression "Where there's a will there's a way."

From Carmen's point of view, it is arrogant, if not preposterous, to say with any certainty what is going to happen four years from today. Carmen could die tomorrow, get married next week, or move to Japan next year. Alternatively, the university might burn down,

² Storti, Craig. (1994). *Cross-cultural dialogues: 74 Brief encounters with cultural difference*. Yarmouth, Me. Intercultural Press, Inc.

go out of business, or stop offering Carmen's major. Americans start from the presumption that we can control external events and stand up to forces of nature—that come hell or high water, we can achieve our stated goal. But hell and high water count for much more in Carmen's culture, which starts from the presumption that many events are beyond our control. One can go ahead and make plans, of course, but one shouldn't become too fond of or come to depend too much on them. Whenever it wishes, fate can intervene. Americans believe in fate, but on the whole we're not terribly impressed by it.

2. Helping Miss Thomas

Roberto: Miss Thomas! How nice to see you.

Miss Thomas: How are you, Roberto?

Roberto: Fine, Fine. Thank you. What can I get for you?

Miss Thomas: Well, to start with I'd like half a dozen eggs.

Roberto: Yes

Miss Thomas: And then I'd like 500 grams of butter.

Roberto: Yes. Ah, Octavio! Good to see you. Como estas?

Octavio: Bien, gracias. And you?

Roberto: Bien. How can I help you?

Octavio: I need some bananas.

Roberto: Of course. Rosita! Como estas? I haven't seen you in a long time. How is that little boy of yours?

Rosita: He's very well.

Roberto: What can I do for you?

Miss Thomas: Roberto, I thought you were helping me.

Roberto: But I am helping you, Miss Thomas.

Storti's Explanation:

Miss Thomas comes from what has been called a monochronic culture (as opposed to the polychronic world of Roberto). Among the prominent features of such a culture are lines at the post office, precise schedules, and one-on-one conversations. In a monochronic culture, you get the exclusive attention of whomever you're talking to, and your business is completed before the business of someone else is started. (Note, in passing, how small children in a monochronic culture deviate from this norm and are always interrupting Mommy or Daddy, which is to say talking to Mommy when she is talking to Daddy.)

Polychronic cultures are less linear and more dynamic; several transactions are carried out at the same time. It's rude for Roberto, for example, to ignore Octavio—who has, after all, walked into the store—just because he hasn't finished Miss Thomas's business yet. (Miss Thomas, were she a Latina, would find Roberto's ignoring of Octavio very unusual and feel quite uncomfortable.) It's not so much that Roberto has stopped helping Miss Thomas, but that he has now started helping Octavio and Rosita. If you are meeting with someone in a polychronic culture, don't expect him or her to close the door and have all calls held.

3. **Falling Behind**

COL. GARCIA: Yes, we know that, Colonel Wilson.

COL. WILSON: This battalion has not been doing as much as it could.

COL. GARCIA: Yes, yes.

COL. WILSON: I've told Sergeant Diaz that if we don't get a few projects started before the end of the year, we'll be falling behind some of the other units.

COL. GARCIA: Yes, some units have fewer projects

Storti's Explanation:

Colonel Wilson is trying to light a fire under Colonel Garcia, but he's using the wrong fuel. He's trying to appeal to Colonel Garcia's sense of competition, goading him with the suggestion that if he and his men don't get cracking, their unit is going to fall behind some of the others—in that great race to win.

Colonel Garcia sees things rather differently. If some other units are doing quite well in the area of projects, then his unit need not work so hard. They're all in the same army, after all; why should they compete against each other? For its part, perhaps his unit can distinguish itself in some other regard, in an arena some of the other units might not choose to enter. In any event, competition, at least for its own sake, is certainly not a virtue. On the contrary, an appeal to the spirit of cooperation would probably be more potent in this case.

Competition tends to be better developed in more individualist societies like the United States. In cultures where people identify more with a primary group than with the self, competition may threaten group harmony, and that, in turn, threatens the very survival of the group.

4. A possible candidate

MS. MILLER: Have you finished writing that job advertisement yet?

MRS. DeJESUS: Not quite.

MS. MILLER: Don't take too long. Filling that vacancy is a priority.

MRS. DeJESUS: I agree. Actually, I think I know of a possible candidate.

MS. MILLER: You do? Who?

MRS. DeJESUS: He's my youngest nephew, Eduardo. A good boy.

MS. MILLER: Great! Tell him to apply

Storti's Explanation:

There's a good reason why Mrs. DeJesus hasn't finished writing that job advertisement yet: advertising is a mighty poor way to fill a vacancy. After all, *anyone* can respond to an ad, and what company wants just anyone working for it? What you want is someone you can trust and rely on, someone from the right background, with the right values and the right style and manners. And it goes without saying that you don't *find* such people, you *know* them. Or someone you know knows them and can therefore vouch for them.

Thus it is that when Mrs. DeJesus mentions her nephew to Ms. Miller, she expects that will solve the matter of the vacancy and make the advertisement unnecessary. Clearly Mrs. DeJesus wouldn't mention her nephew if the young man weren't the right sort of person, and if Eduardo *is* her nephew, then she will know he's the right sort of person. But unaccountably, Ms. Miller tells Mrs. DeJesus to ask Eduardo to *apply* for the job, implying that Eduardo will be subject to some other set of criteria. For Mrs. DeJesus, Eduardo meets the only criterion that really matters.

For Ms. Miller, of course, there is another issue here: is Eduardo the most technically qualified person available? He may be a nice guy, the right sort of person, from a good family, etc., but the bottom line is: can he do the work? This matters to Mrs. DeJesus too—she wouldn't have recommended the boy if he didn't have the necessary basic skills—but Eduardo doesn't have to be a whiz in this regard so long as you can work with him. It's a question of emphasis: for Mrs. DeJesus, the main thing is the boy's personal qualities; whatever skills he needs can always be trained into him. For Ms. Miller, the issue is the skills; the boy's character, though important, is secondary.

In many American organizations the DeJesus approach smacks of favoritism at best and discrimination at worst—and may even be illegal. This is an excellent example of a fundamental cultural norm being written into the law of the land (*your* land, that is). That's fine, you say, but if my company or employer has this regulation and it conflicts with a local cultural norm, what am I supposed to do? You can't ignore the regulation, of course, but you can try to explain the cultural basis for your company's policy. That is, you should not just leave the impression that this is an arbitrary regulation based on expediency but rather take pains to point out that it derives from a cultural notion of what is right and wrong. Your listeners may not agree with your conclusion, but at least they will see you are trying to be reasonable.

5. The Flu

SARAH: I was hoping we could have that meeting of the sales team tomorrow morning.

FELICE: Actually, my daughter has some kind of flu and I was going to take her to the doctor tomorrow morning.

SARAH: I see. Well, let me check with Bob and see if he can sit in for you. Shouldn't be any problem. I'll let you know.

FELICE: Thank you.

SARAH: Don't mention it.

Storti's Explanation:

In all honesty, Sarah might be insensitive even by American standards; by Felice's, she's downright boorish. To a Latin, one's family comes before one's work (and one's boss would, of course, understand this). The least Sarah could have done was to express her concern about Felice's daughter. The next thing she could have done was to postpone the meeting. And beyond that she should have offered to help in any way that she could. Sarah may have thought she was helping by arranging for Felice to miss the meeting, but all she was doing was communicating that the real emergency was the one here at work—not the one at Felice's home.

6. An Opportunity in Monterey

MR. MARTIN: Hector. Come in and sit down.

HECTOR: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

MR. MARTIN: I've got a little proposition for you. A friend of mine up in our Monterey branch needs a production supervisor. He asked me if I knew of anyone who might be interested.

HECTOR: I can ask. We don't have any relations up in Monterey, but I know a few people.

MR. MARTIN: I was thinking of you.

HECTOR: Me?

MR. MARTIN: Yes. It would be a nice promotion for you. We'd miss you down here, but we wouldn't want to stand in your way.

HECTOR: In my way? Are you not satisfied with my work?

MR. MARTIN: Are you kidding? I wouldn't recommend you if I didn't think you were the best.

Storti's Explanation:

Mr. Martin assumes that if Hector is at all normal, he will be interested in getting ahead in life, which—as we all know—really means getting ahead in his work. In such a world, a promotion is one of the best things life can offer, and Mr. Martin has thoughtfully just dropped one in Hector's lap.

Hector might be interested under the right conditions, but certainly the lure of a promotion, in and of itself, is not sufficient reason to move to Monterey. As he points out, he hasn't got any family in Monterey. To uproot his own family and move to where they have no relatives, merely to get ahead in one's work, is not appealing. Indeed, the notion is so foreign to Hector that he now begins to suspect that Mr. Martin, who can't possibly expect Hector to take this offer seriously, must be trying to tell him something. All Hector can think of is that Mr. Martin is not pleased with his work and wants to get rid of him. Indeed, he may even be asking Hector to quit and has only mentioned the move to Monterey as a gesture to save Hector's face.

The cultural value here is once again the American preoccupation with work and the centrality of work to one's happiness and overall sense of self. It's not so much that Americans don't care about friends and family, about quality of life, but that they see

quality of life as inextricably linked to satisfaction and opportunity on the job. Because we identify with doing (as distinguished from being) or, rather, because we see *being* as a function and result of *doing*, anything associated with one's work (especially promotions or, conversely, firings) automatically has repercussions which extend well beyond the workplace, to the very heart of one's self-worth.

7. Dr. De Leon

MS. PORTER: I heard the board has chosen a new CEO.

MR. DOMINGO: Yes, they've appointed Dr. Manuel Cabeza de Leon of the de Leon family.

MS. PORTER: Who is he?

MR. DOMINGO: It's an old family with large landholdings in Guadalajara Province.

MS. PORTER: But what's his background?

MR. DOMINGO: I just told you.

MS. PORTER: I mean does he know anything about the textile industry.

MR. DOMINGO: I don't know.

MS. PORTER: Do you think he's a good choice?

MR. DOMINGO: Dr. de Leon? I'm sure.

Storti's Explanation:

Ms. Porter assumes the CEO will at least know something about the textile business, that one's knowledge and expertise—one's experience—are at least part of what qualifies a person for a job. But that doesn't seem to be the case in this culture, at least not at the top levels of a company. What matters here is who Dr. de Leon is, not what he knows. In a

culture with a strong class system, the most important qualification for an executive position is one's personal background. Mr. Domingo makes this clear from the very beginning, when he rattles off Dr. de Leon's distinguished family name. The right name, after all, guarantees access, and access means clout. Another Latin would understand at once that we're dealing with someone of substance here.

But Ms. Porter, having just been told, now asks: "Who is he?" Mr. Domingo, no doubt taken aback, elaborates about the family to fill in the picture. Once again Ms. Porter, who evidently has a hearing problem, asks the question that's just been answered: "But what's his background?" And so on. You get the point (even if Ms. Porter does not).

8. A call to Personnel

HAROLD: I was wondering if we could hire two temporary people for the next month, to get through this peak period?

RICARDO: I think we'll have to.

HAROLD: I could speak to personnel today.

RICARDO: Did you mention this to Señor Ramos?

HAROLD: The chief? I didn't want to bother him. He's got his hands full with those buyers from Japan. Besides, it's your division. He'll agree to anything you say.

RICARDO: Yes. I'm sure he'll approve.

HAROLD: Good. Then I'll call Miss Garcia in personnel.

Storti's Explanation:

The issue here, from Ricardo's point of view, is the importance of respecting the chain of command, especially the need to defer to one's superiors. In this instance that means

referring the decision to hire the temporary workers to Señor Ramos, the chief, for his approval. Harold is correct when he says that Señor Ramos will only ask Ricardo what he wants to do and then agree, but he's missing the point. It isn't so much the substance of the decision that matters, but the form. In other words, it's not a question of who knows best—everyone realizes that Ricardo does—but of who's in charge. While going to Señor Ramos might seem to Harold like an empty gesture—and certainly a waste of time—to Ricardo and the chief (and anyone else who may be watching) it is an expression (albeit ritualistic) of respect for and deference to authority. It may all be highly symbolic, but symbols are more real in some cultures than in others.

Naturally, Harold sees things a little differently; his priority is not the chain of command (respecting the hierarchy) but getting these people on board so he can get the job done. If he were in Señor Ramos's position, he would expect Ricardo to seize the initiative and take decisive action. And he would certainly not appreciate being interrupted in the midst of sensitive discussions with Japanese buyers.

In the United States we regard hierarchies as artificial, self-imposed structures that are often quite convenient, and we respect them so long as they suit our purposes. But when they stand in the way of getting the job done, we think nothing of going around them. In one study, 68 percent of American managers said they agreed with the statement that “in order to have efficient work relationships, it is often necessary to bypass the hierarchical line.” And in a related question, managers were asked whether they agreed with the statement that “the main reason for a hierarchical structure is so that everybody knows who has authority over whom.” Only 18 percent of the Americans said yes (Laurent, 1983)

The American attitude toward hierarchies is of a piece with our antipathy toward rank and status. Hierarchies remind us of class systems, where some people think they're better than others. And as we have noted elsewhere, if there's anything Americans can't abide, it's people who "put on airs," "pull rank," or otherwise "lord it over" others. Egalitarianism is so much a part of our culture it's become firmly embedded in idiomatic expression. There's also the problem that respecting the chain of command takes time—and that can be inefficient.

Needless to say, this attitude toward hierarchy and the chain of command can vary greatly from one organization to the next, and even within the same organization, depending on the circumstances. In the government, for example, the pecking order is closely respected, and in the military it's a way of life. But even then, it's curious how those higher up the ladder are not respected if they act superior.

Andre Laurent, "The Cultural Diversity of Western Conceptions of Management," *International Studies of Management and Organization*, vol. XIII, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer, 1983), 75-96

9. Feedback

LETICIA: What did you think of the new design?

BILL: Very nice. I'm quite pleased.

LETICIA: It's good then?

BILL: Yes. There's one drawing that needs to be worked on a little, but that's about it.

LETICIA: I see.

BILL: What about that other piece you were working on? Any chance I could see it soon?

LETICIA: We can make it a priority, if you'd like.

BILL: Great. Thanks.

LETICIA: So you want us to scrap this design then?

Storti's Explanation:

Latins are inclined to be indirect so as not to embarrass one another. Criticism, accordingly, has to be handled with the utmost delicacy and in any case must never appear to be what it is. In practice, critical comments usually come in the guise of faint or insufficient praise or as outright avoidance of the touchy subject. In either case Latins, with their heightened sensitivity in this regard, note the critical omission and get the intended message, which is what Leticia thinks she is getting here.

When Bill makes only one reference (albeit positive) to the new design, Leticia is immediately suspicious. Even then she checks out this impression by asking Bill if the design is good—and knows there's trouble when Bill cites a minor problem. As if this weren't enough, Bill then drops the subject entirely and brings up another one, proof positive to Leticia that Bill is very displeased with the new design. At which point, Leticia naturally offers to junk the new design altogether.

Bill's mistake, clearly, was not to be effusive in his praise. In a culture where faint praise is damning, slightly exaggerated praise is simply the norm. Most Americans, given to directness, are suspicious of effusive praise (except where clearly warranted) and take faint praise for nothing more (or less) than what it is. We don't read between the lines, in

other words, because we usually say what we mean in the lines themselves—and expect everyone else to.

10. The Workers Speak

MS. PARKER: Efficiency is falling in the quality-control division. What can we do?

MISS RAMIREZ: The workers may have some ideas.

MS. PARKER: Good. Why don't we call a meeting and ask them.

MISS RAMIREZ: A meeting?

MS. PARKER: Yes. And I'll run it myself and let them know how much we value their input.

MISS RAMIREZ: You'll go to the meeting?

Storti's Explanation:

This is our old friend, the concept of face, showing up in yet another guise. Ms. Parker wants to get to the bottom of things, and as quickly as possible. That means going directly to the workers in quality control and asking for their ideas.

Miss Ramirez knows this won't work and delicately tries to make this point (she must be delicate because this is her boss, and the ideas of one's boss are inevitably quite shrewd). Miss Ramirez first questions the idea of having a meeting because she knows the workers will be reluctant to present their suggestions—a suggestion, after all, is an implicit kind of criticism—in such a public setting. When Ms. Parker then goes on to state that she will chair the meeting herself, Miss Ramirez is even more surprised, for she knows that even

if the workers could get up the courage to criticize the company in public, they certainly wouldn't do it to the boss's face.

Once again, notice how Miss Ramirez, ever the correct subordinate, doesn't directly deflate Ms. Parker's crazy notion but merely tosses it back to her for further reflection ("You'll go to the meeting?"), which then allows the boss to make the right decision seemingly all on her own. If Ms. Parker comes out of this looking good, Miss Ramirez comes out looking even better: not only has she saved the boss from herself, she's done it so quietly that no one will ever know—except for Ms. Parker, of course, who will no doubt express her gratitude in a suitable and most satisfying manner. (The irony here is that Ms. Parker, unlike a Spanish boss, has probably missed most of this, and Miss Ramirez may wait in vain for some sign of her boss's gratitude.)

APPENDIX 3

WORKBOOK

As previously stated the clients have limited time to devote to intercultural training prior to departure for Argentina. Therefore the trainer thought it important to provide supplementary material in the form of a workbook that the individuals could look over when they had a couple moments of free time. This workbook is designed to focus more on the specific-culture practices of Argentina as these were not highlighted during the face-to-face training session. It will include “Pocket Survival Tools” covering the key cultural differences, dos and don’ts, general facts of Argentina, negotiation styles, and basic conversational Spanish.. The workbook also includes the exercises done during the training session in order to review what they learned as well as further reading recommendations.

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