

Cultural challenges of opening a business in haiti research paper

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Introduction

Planning to set up a new American business in one of the most historical cities in the Caribbean is not a very bad idea. This paper will discuss the different cultural and economic challenges and barriers an American may potentially face if ever he has plans to start up a new or a locally known line of business in Haiti. In terms of population and opportunities for success, Haiti could be one of the best choices especially for investors and businessmen coming from the Dominican Republic, which only lies adjacent to Haiti.

A brief background about Haiti's profile as a country

Before we could fully identify and then understand the potential barriers an American may face if he plans on setting up a new business in Haiti, we should first have good background knowledge about Haiti's history and its citizens. Factors like how Haiti was controlled by the French colonizers before and how they managed to regain their independence and drive away slavery from their nation would be two good points where we could start.

Haiti is one of the most historical nations in the Americas. One thing that would be pertinent for investors and businessmen to know would be that Haiti is the world's first republic that is led by black people. In all areas of the Caribbean, it was also the first one to finally claim freedom when they successfully drove the French colonizers after a series of wars for freedom and anti-slavery movements. This event happened somewhere around the 19th century (BBC, 2011).

So what could the data stating that Haiti had been previously colonized by

French colonists and that many of their citizens were enslaved imply? Of course, they would tend to have a more degraded morale towards themselves. Even though the act of enslaving was already gone from the sight of Haiti's citizens, there is a great chance that they were able to instill some of the usual practices, behaviors and mindsets during that time and this could serve as a negative factor for Haitian citizens.

But why would it be? One of the most rational reasons would be that a workforce that could serve anyone like a slave (working for 8 or more hours for relatively low wages) could be seen by abusive investors and

businessmen as a great way to increase their company's productivity.

Because of the decades of poverty, social and environmental degradation, violence and crime, dictatorship and instability that this country experienced, Haiti became known as one of the poorest nations in the world (Anonymous, 2010). The country is currently the 25th poorest country in the world according to UN's Human Development Report ranking in the year 2010.

Cultural Barriers and Differences

With regards to the culture, the culture of Haitians could be considered as a very different one when compared with the culture of the citizens of Dominican Republic and the Americans. If an American business owner is to plant a new line of business somewhere in Haiti, he would really have a hard time adapting to the new practices, beliefs and environment Haiti could present him and that could of course, be painful for the business.

This is the toughest thing an American businessman who is planning to set foot in Haiti could face so far. With a high degree of cultural differences

between the employer and its employees, conflicts could arise and this could greatly affect the productivity and other processes of the company.

However, what's nice about Haiti is that there is quite a good chance that positions for laborers and workers could be immediately filled because of the relatively high unemployment and underemployment rates there. As of 2010, the rate plays somewhere around 40% (CIA, 2010).

Haitians practice of Voodoo arts could also serve as a cultural barrier for someone who plans to put up a business there. Voodoo usually emits a negative stigma or view especially for Protestants and Roman Catholics. A significant percentage of the population is reported to have practiced voodoo arts. Americans are usually baptized as Protestants and Roman Catholics and for these 2 religions. In line with that, the practice of Voodoo is perceived as something that is wrong or could be considered a sin. The possible workers' religion is of course a significant factor for a businessman to consider whenever he starts to make up plans for expansion and this is why Haitian's practice of Voodoo is a significant cultural barrier to consider. And last but not the least for the possible cultural barriers an American businessman may encounter is the Haitian's perception about the word responsibility. A book by Harrison (2006) states how responsibility is not internalized well in Haiti.

Some of the evidences that his book used to support his statement are Haiti's unusual child-rearing practices. Having a strong sense of responsibility could be considered as one of the integral factors an individual should have whether he is a contractual worker or someone who has an executive position in a certain company.

Interview with a Businessman in Haiti

This is a short interview with a Haitian businessman named Patrick Morison. He is an owner of a small chain of supermarkets in Haiti. The interview is composed of a short series of questions that could help determine some of the live and actual possible cultural barriers the country may present businessmen with.

In your own words, how could you describe managing a business in Haiti?

The business community in Haiti is amazing. If you are a businessman here, you do not have to worry about high vacancies for laborer and merchandiser positions because almost everyone is looking for a way to earn money. In my years of managing a small chain of supermarket here, I could say that even though the country is poor and you could basically see evidences of that there, it is still a place where a businessman could enjoy different opportunities.

Can you cite some of the cultural challenges you encountered along your way?

One of the most terrible I had with Haitians is their being too attached with slavery. Well, it does not affect my business in any negative way but I just feel bad about their being attached with it. Another challenge I encountered is the level of corruption present in the country. You could see how already elite personalities here hunger for power and they are even willing to do bad things just to have more power (influence).

Type of Business

Since working directly inside Haiti could be a great challenge for an American businessman to handle, it would be logical to think that an export business would do best in this scenario. A good example of that type of business would be one that sells premium products from Haiti and then exporting it to another location for a higher price and then vice versa. This way, the impact of the presence of cultural barriers could be lessened to a significant extent.

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