

Intercultural memo



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Memorandum Foreign Business Development Section ME, MY POSITION

Intercultural communication protocols with Punjabis June 13, 2011 Our

company is about to initiate business with a large trading concern based in

Punjab, Pakistan. To ensure that our communication with the Punjabi

delegation is effective, I have drafted a few communication protocols to

dispel confusions. Relevant cultural differences are discussed below. Cultural

Context The Punjabi culture is a high context culture which means that

certain symbols are used along with words for communication. The company

we are dealing with is a family concern. Family structures in the Punjabi

culture are tightly knit. It is highly probable that we will see members of the

other delegation use non verbal gestures for communication. In case you

notice such a situation, please do not be offended as it is normal cultural

practice in that part of the world. Negotiating Styles A prominent concern will

be the negotiating style of the other delegation. Being a consanguine

culture, negotiations will be slow to proceed because extensive consultation

is part of the culture. Moreover, as the other delegation will be staffed

largely by family members so convincing each and every member will be

vital. During consultation in the Punjabi culture, especially in the families, the

issue of social repercussions is eminent. For example, if a member of the

other delegation feels that the deal with our company is detrimental, he may

behave like a single issue voter and use social pressure to convince the

other members not to deal with our company. Therefore, try not to be

offensive during negotiations as the Punjabis rely on impressions a lot.

Another thing to keep in mind is that Punjabi is known as a rude language.

People use high tones and volumes during communication which essentially

makes the language seem rowdy. If you find someone talking loudly to you

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during negotiation, it is merely common practice in the Punjabi culture.

Please do not feel offended and negotiate as you normally would. Another issue that is of primal importance is the role of gestures of good will. Being a consanguine culture, the Punjabis feel inclined to develop long term relationships given gestures of good will. If during negotiation you feel that some concession can be given to the Punjabi side, dole out the concession and use it as a gesture of good faith. Social Differences The Punjabis are not highly punctual so finding that the other delegation is half an hour or even an hour late should not surprise you. The culture has largely agrarian roots with a lax attitude prevalent as per punctuality. Do not feel offended by these misgivings as you may even find your hotel chauffeurs a little late.

Roles and Statuses The Punjabi culture is male dominated. There is little to no chance of finding a woman delegate on the other delegation team.

Moreover, the Punjabi culture emphasizes on age being the only qualifier for merit. The leader of the delegation will probably be the oldest guy in the room so you should expect to negotiate with an older person. You might find more brilliant younger people on the other delegation but they can only be appealed to reason with their delegation's head. They cannot be expected to exert a decisive influence on the final outcome. Socialization Styles Deal or no deal, the Punjabis are very hospitable. You will probably be invited over for lunch and dinner. However, Pakistan is dry so do not expect alcohol to be served either during meetings or during food. Use the social gatherings to better understand the business objectives of the other side. The Punjabi people are open to any kind of conversation so as long as it is not religious.

Religion is a highly sensitive issue given the recent spate of extremism and terrorism. Bibliography Punjabi Cultural Society of Chicago. Home. 2011. 17

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