

Cultural sensitivity is
a crucial factor



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Cultural sensitivity.

Culture plays an important role in life of people as it is closely associated with them. It is very necessary to understand what a culture requires and what emotions are attached to it. Different countries follow different culture and because of this some things will be acceptable in some countries whereas the same things will appear to be rude in other countries because of culture difference. People who are culture sensitive will know that the difference between the culture of different people can create differences in their relationship with respect to the way they behave, communicate etc. Hofstede defined culture as “ the manner in which the mind is programmed such that it can differentiate the people of one category with those of other.” a culturally sensitive person should try to adapt the culture of other country, their traditions, their way of living, their lifestyle etc.

Nowadays people are getting closer to each other so toleration, dialogue between people of different culture and respect towards their culture and respect for diversity becomes more important. Learning and trying to understand the customs and culture of the foreign country indicates respect for the other country and for any business relationship to be successful respect for each other is very essential.

Many employers feel and have sensed that cross cultural sensitivity is an important skill and proper care should be taken when dealing in and trading with international market. In domestic market people will know what to do and how to do but to achieve the same motive in different country with the same concept and then getting success by using same interpersonal

professional skills is more important. Proper training should be provided should to the staff about the nature of the place, its scope and language, values and aesthetics.

When people are traveling from one country to another it is necessary that they do a research about the culture of the country in which they are traveling so that they can go well prepared, which can save them and people around them from any embarrassing situation. Doing business internationally means management of culture of different countries and for maintaining international business relations, people will have to deal with that countries norms, rules, values and regulations. Overall people need to involve in the culture of different people and try to adapt to their cultural skills and style. Right type of knowledge for right kind of job is very essential for doing business globally. The ability to negotiate better, understanding the cultural problems and becoming an insider often give a competitive edge in the business. Managers should possess high level of managerial skills as the relationship between various business networks depends upon the manner in which the manger interact and behave with international clients and how much capable they are in dealing with crossing cultural boundaries. Cross cultural training helps in improving success by trying to improve the level of personal cultural awareness and this will help in understanding the culture of other people.

In growing business environment it becomes very essential for the firm to have culturally skilled workers having ability to work in international business arena. In cross cultural business sector trust plays very important role in maintaining business relationship. Trust can conceptualized as a belief which

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is influenced by the way the partners behave and how much reliable they are. The companies should provide training to their staff for each and every situation that they are likely to face as it can also help to develop various strategies that are required for improvement of self development process. It will enable them to see the world with a different concept through the eyes of their foreign partners'. This will help them to learn how to tackle different problems faced from their foreign partners.

In a global economy, culture plays a vital role to make any business transactions successful economically. The firm should be able to cope up with the international differences that arise from different culture and for that the international culture has to be understood by the managers. The partners must be able to understand each others culture and for this a lot of time and effort is required. By trying to understand the partners cultural needs and their culture they will try to solve the cultural differences and in this way they are likely to behave in a more systematic and sensitive towards the culture. Globally, if cultures are not well understood then the chance of the firm surviving internationally is very low.

The neglected role of cultural sensitivity in international business:

In this globalised economy , business is growing very fast and the companies are starting to expand In international markets – advanced technology, strong capital hold, cost benefit, political influence are some of the factors that helps in growth of the business. Increasing competition causes most of the companies to collaborate with foreign partner. Most of the companies fail in understanding the importance of cross culture resulting in to the failure of

cross border partnerships and collaboration. Most of the companies that planning to expand globally face two problems a) identify the qualities and the attributes of a successful global manager b) finding executives with those attributes. Thus executives who are given foreign responsibilities are usually selected on the basis of them having proper knowledge of their language and should have knowledge of international experience. Culture basically shows the kind of the behavior that is accepted by the society.

Given below are some examples that show negligence of cultural sensitivity in international business:

In Spain, coca cola had to withdraw its 2 liters of bottles as Spaniards did not have refrigerators having such large compartments for their storage.

When coloring in 800*800 pixels on an India map, to show disputed Kashmir territory Microsoft colored it in eight different shades and this led to fury in India and they banned the map. Difference in green means that Kashmir is shown as non Indian.

Pepsodent wanted to sell its toothpaste in south east Asia by advertising that it “ whitens your teeth “ but they found out the local there use betel nuts to blacken their teeth .

Gerber, a U. S. firm wanting to sell baby food in Africa, displayed a baby on the packet but soon they realize that the product had flopped as in Africa what the content is in the packet that is displayed on the product.

At African port of stevadores saw internationally recognized symbol of fragile which means broken wine glass and the staff working there assumed that the box contains broken glass and they threw it inside the sea.

McDonalds spent huge amount of money on making advertisement showing Chinese customer kneeling before a McDonalds staff asking him to accept the expired discount coupon. The ad was called off due to lack of culture sensitivity on behalf of McDonalds in china begging is considered to be a embarrassing and shameful act.

Green is favorite color in Pakistan but the same color is considered as a symbol for illness in Malaysia. White is associated with death, sadness and mourn in India, china etc but the same color is brides wedding dress in English country.

Coca cola when was launched in china the name sounded like “ kooke-koula” which means a thirsty mouth which is full of wax naturally this was not accepted by the people and they decided to ban the product.

McDonalds in India

According to Hindu culture cow is considered as divine and sacred and the Hindus sees the cow as a gift given by god. When McDonald entered in India in 1990 it created a big problem as they use beef and small amount of beef extract in the oil. The Hindus considered this as an offence and they protested by refraining from going to McDonalds and asking them to stop the use of beef in their food products.

The company should basically know what is the culture of the country in which they want deal as this will help in setting a company in that country more easily and successfully. For an international business to be successful the company should make all efforts to try to understand the culture and create awareness about their culture and in this way try to solve the cultural differences mutually. From the above examples we can see that many companies have faced failure by not trying to understand the culture of other country but trying to learn from their failure as to where they went wrong is more important.

McDonalds after knowing that beef and pork are considered to holy for the Hindus and Muslims they decided to work on their mistakes and they started using chicken and mutton in their place . they further took special care in keeping vegetarian and non vegetarian food separate by having separate cook and separate kitchen for food. They also apologized to the people for their mistake and the company pledged for doing better job by finding a substitute for beef extract to be used in the oil.

Coca cola was in china in the year 1927 and it was obvious that the company would like to translate the name in Chinese characters. But while doing the research work it was difficult for the researchers to find suitable characters as when they were grouped together the word sounded something weird and different and the meaning of those characters came out to be something like “ female horse fastened with wax “,” bite the wax tadpole etc. then the researchers decided to choose the mandarin language as most of the Chinese people used it and word sounding similar to coca cola was “ k’o k’ou k’o le. This set of characters meant “ to permit mouth to be able to rejoice “

which meant to give pleasure when you are drinking coca cola. This was considered as a trademark and was registered in 1928 and as per Chinese trademark the first two characters meant drink and the next two meant delicious and refreshing.

Conclusion.

Thus understanding the culture of different countries help to develop and establish business in that country. By creating general awareness , and taking extra efforts to know about the culture and to take keen interest in learning it will help in solving the cultural differences between the partners . patience , courtesy and a little bit of curiosity will help in proper communication with each other. Due to lack of cross cultural sensitivity there are chances if business failing to a great extent because what may seem to be right in one country may seem to be not acceptable in other country. So proper research has to be done when a company is planning to start a business in new country. One should do a lot of research work try to study about the culture of that country. This shows that cultural sensitivity plays an important role for company to start a business in another country.