

Crosscultural business communication



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Intercultural, or crosscultural business communication is one of the most critical factors contributing to business growth and success in today's ever more complex global marketplace whether in Toronto, Canada or internationally. The ability of companies to acquire intercultural competence can either make or break their chances of success in an increasingly competitive, international business arena. As a result, many companies and organizations are wisely investing in cultural awareness training for their leaders and employees in order to tap into some huge potential international markets. [Clark 1999]

Even within a single country such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia or the United Kingdom, the population is coming from an increasingly diverse cultural background and many languages are being spoken in addition to a common language such as English. In London alone, the number of cultural backgrounds and languages can run into hundreds while the Hispanics and the Asian communities in the United States of America have become increasingly important as a result of their growing population. [Hyland 1996]

Prior to proceeding further, the question that needs to be asked is what is meant by business communications? Effective business communication occurs whenever someone conveys relevant information in any form. Effective communication involves information that is timely for decisionmaking as well as that which promotes your business through advertising and public relations. Idle conversation about the weather or last night's ball game is not necessarily unimportant in a business setting. Hence business communications is not just about writing memos in an office for a

culturally diverse workforce or letters to other businesses and offices with which a firm may have dealings. Small talk is an important part of employee relations and is necessary to establish the channels of communication. If a business is related to the entertainment or sports industries, it would no longer be small talk, and could be considered keeping up with the competition or market comparisons. Key elements of business communication are conveyance, effectiveness, structure and editing.

Conveying meaning in business communication is of the utmost importance. One has to start with some idea of what the audience or market is required to understand, and this has to be narrowed down to one specific message. In today's hectic and fastpaced business world, no one has the time or patience to figure out a wellintended but obscure purpose. This is particularly true when one is trying to persuade someone towards a line of reasoning, as in an advertisement, sales pitch or job interview. [Clark 1999]

When the sole intent is to market the business, make sure you know the difference between advertising and public relations. Advertising involves paying to promote your business through various media. Public relations don't cost anything and refers to anything that conveys a positive image for a business. [Winters 2004]

Networking can aid a company's public relations effort in talking to potential customers/ clients, council members and others vital to getting the word out. While networking may cost a business executive a lunch here or there, it's main expense is your time and energy. If you are a small business just starting out, it may be more economically feasible to rely heavily on public

relations in the beginning or a novel form of advertising, i. e. if there is a small business that paints portraits, there could be a photoprocessor putting out the company's flyers in with their customer's pictures. In any case, remember to be bold and stay focused with name recognition and wordofmouth promotion. [Winters 2004]

Using a direct approach when structuring communications, whether it is a letter, memo, phone call, or proposal can be important. This does not mean the writer is being blunt or curt in your message. The communication should start with a clear understanding of what is required to be expressed, followed by supporting details, facts and examples. The supporting information should emphasize the main theme of the communication and avoid losing the readers with wordy or flowery prose. Remember that the intent is to convey a specific message and not to entertain or bore the readers. [Hinner 1998]

The choice of words, whether written or spoken, is an important consideration and this consideration may be different in different cultures. When composing a letter, thinking about the next conference call or designing the next advertisement consider the intended audience and the complexity of the topic. Multicultural audiences require a different approach from that which may be required in a Japanese market. A lot of research about Arab values and their society will be required for entering the Arab markets and selling cars that have been manufactured by a Japanese parent company. In an effort to sell those cars, there will be an interaction between the Arab local area office and the Japanese Head office in the form of exchange of memos, letters and office documents as well as face to face

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meetings and interactions which will involve multifaceted communications between two cultures. In such cultural exchanges, care is required to ensure that there is an understanding of both cultures and values in both the societies. [Hinner 1998]

Hence there is a requirement for the understanding of cultural norms and values when selling goods and services internationally or in culturally diverse societies and communities. [Hinner 1998]

In this paper, we consider various aspects of multicultural business communications and why multicultural business communications is receiving increasing attention in business circles.

Diversity in today's workplace and marketplace

Today's expanding racial, ethnic and cultural diversity makes it obvious that it will be nearly impossible in the future to manage a workforce or market products as we have in the past. All forms of business communications are affected. [Walker – Yabarra 2004]

Earlier in this century, immigrants and second generation Americans found jobs that entailed long, grueling hours in steel mills, shoe factories and textile mills. Workers spoke a tapestry of languages, but during the workday these employees learned to speak English. They learned to do whatever it took to conform to the expectations of their employers and society. In a business age defined by mass production and mass marketing, the individual got lost. Workers from diverse cultures and backgrounds learned to assimilate. Immigrants “Americanized” their names. They learned to talk

alike, walk alike, and in so doing many discarded centuriesold traditions and customs. [Walker Yabarra 2004]

As people from all over the world came to America, attitudes evolved. Meanwhile, a host of changes took place in society. After two world wars, the United States was transformed into a superpower. Women and minorities began making strides in the workplace. And a growing interdependence among nations has contributed to the growth of international trade and created the “ global village.” [Winters 2004]

As all of those societal changes took place, America learned to take pride in its identity as home to a rich mixture of a variety of ethnic groups and cultures. And by the 1990s, with the continual influx of new immigrants, second and thirdgeneration Americans, along with some minorities have come to take more outward pride in their very own cultural distinctions.

One case in point is the 25millionstrong U. S. Hispanic market. It is estimated that this market will grow to 30 million by the year 2000. This represents \$215 billion in purchasing power, which is expected to rise to \$477 billion by the turn of the century.

Yet, the numbers don't tell the whole story. U. S. Hispanics have different habits and tastes, depending on cultural values and customs deriving from their respective national origins. Mexican Americans, more prevalent in the west and southwest, respond differently to certain marketing techniques and messages than Cuban Americans in the southeast and Puerto Ricans in the northeast. [Walker – Yabarra 2004]

As a result of changes in the composition of the workplace, our poll found that most public relations executives believe that the industry will have to become more “sophisticated in multicultural communications techniques.” These techniques might include training or other measures. Organizations currently offer employees special training programs that cover ethnic diversity issues, gender issues, and issues centered on the disabled.

[Simpson 2004]

In a business where the supply of good jobs vastly outnumbers those seeking communications jobs, the public relations industry has to approach recruiting, training and communicating to a diverse range of audiences in a more sophisticated manner. And like the organizations we serve, we are only slightly ahead of the curve on marketing to a multicultural society that no longer demands that individuals assimilate to become accepted. [Walker - Yabarra 2004]

The path we must follow is well marked. It starts with our hiring practices. And it continues with the training programs we conduct, the communications programs we create and implement, and the audiences we include in all of our communications. Diversity is a process that begins with an open mind and never ends. [Walker - Yabarra 2004]

Cross cultural communication

Businesses that hope to sell to or work with clients on an international level, or work with or manage staff members located here in the U. S. or in a company location abroad who may also be from varying cultural background will require that their managers, HR directors, and sales forces

possess the specialized knowledge and skills to make the most of internal, as well as external business relationships. [Winters 2004]

As in any relationship, effective communication skills play a pivotal role. Even in the advertising industry, unless you understand your target market and possess adequate research and data on its demographics and psychographics, your odds for success are greatly diminished. The same is true when managing a diverse workforce, or selling products and services to peoples of other cultures the more you know about them, the better! [Simpson 2004]

In California for instance, a unique marketplace encompasses a melting pot of businesses that are not always American owned or based. And even if they are, these businesses often employ people from varying cultures and provide services to people and companies across the globe. This is why heightened understanding and methods of communication are so important in today's business world and the main reason why many universities and institutions have focused on providing cross - cultural education courses.[Simpson 2004]

The new dimensions of communications

Today's global, networked computing environment creates the potential for adding new dimensions to the processes of communication. These include: [The Knowledge Management Connection 2004]

Semantic precision and disambiguation. Words are the very imprecise means by which we painfully encode and try to transfer the multidimensional knowledge in one brain to another brain ... where they are painfully and imprecisely converted back into knowledge. Consuming content — in the <https://assignbuster.com/crosscultural-business-communication/>

form of oral conversations or email or many kinds of documents — entails continuous reinterpretation of words, introducing costs of both time and accuracy. Descriptions, examples, and continuous refinement of content alone are not enough — and certainly not efficient enough. Examples of new precise semantic information in communications include Yahoo and other web directories as well as corporate taxonomies.

Integration of structural knowledge. Billions of dollars can be saved every month by detecting the similarities among online queries, email exchanges, and other forms of informationseeking ... and by providing shortcuts to disambiguation of meaning and accurate retrieval. For integration of structural knowledge, concepts in communications need to be explicit and precise.

Continuous connection to application of knowledge. Authority on new business problems ultimately comes from application, not theory. Knowledge seekers must be able to move directly from experiences to authority — with or without interpretation, but always with comprehensive, reliable memory.

“ Doubleloop communication.” Valuable knowledge emerges from the sum of all questions, answers, the processes of exchange, and those who engage in that exchange — not just from the sum of all answers. Acts of communication are themselves sources of knowledge. Questions and answers are not dissociated. Questions constitute value themselves.

The emergence of patterns as expertise. Newness and heterogeneity of tasks means there simply are no experts on many topics. But the construction of an explicit resource with precisely modeled semantic content

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ultimately enables us to detect patterns within that structural knowledge. In the knowledge-driven business environment, such patterns will often be the only resource for expertise on some problems.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be stated that there are new and emerging changes going on in the field of communications resulting from changing demographics of the communities in which the business must operate. Another force which is changing the way business communication, knowledge retrieval and storage as well as the way in which business is being conducted is the advent of computers and associated technologies in business. The business communication milieu must, therefore, be researched and has assumed a far increasing level of importance in the present age.

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