

简明商务英语系列教程 ①

A SHORT COURSE IN

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CULTURE

国际商业文化

Building Your International Business
Through Cultural Awareness



CHARLES MITCHELL

导读 许德金

THE SHORT COURSE IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE SERIES



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出版前言

截至 2008 年,教育部已批准对外经济贸易大学、广东外语外贸大学和上海对外贸易学院三所高校设立商务英语本科专业。目前,全国已有近 700 所院校开设了商务英语专业方向或课程,商务英语教学内容由语言能力、跨文化交际、商科知识、人文素养四个课程群组成,如何建设和完善商务英语教材已成为办好商务英语专业的关键因素之一。

上海外语教育出版社经过精心策划,适时推出了商务英语知识群的教材——“简明商务英语系列教程”。这套原版商务英语专业知识阅读教材从美国世界贸易图书出版社最新引进,共 12 本,涉及商科知识的各个领域,包括国际经济学、国际贸易、管理学、营销学、国际商法、商务谈判、商业伦理、商业文化、商业合同、商业支付等。本系列教材的特点是:知识体系完整,内容简明扼要,语言文字流畅,理论联系实际。为了帮助读者更好地理解商务英语学习所必备的商务专业知识,本套教材组织了阵容强大的专家委员会,还特邀对外经济贸易大学商务英语的专家教授为本系列教材撰写导读,相信一定会对学习者大有裨益。

本系列教材可以作为大专院校商务英语、国际贸易、工商管理等专业学生的相关课程的教材,同时也可作为企业各类管理人员的培训教材或辅导资料,以及广大商务英语学习者的自学教程或阅读丛书。

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1 商业文化的定义及其重要性

1) 文化的定义

“文化”一词在中国古已有之。据考证,“文”与“化”合并在一起使用最早见于战国末的《易·贲卦·象传》。而“文化”作为一个词频繁使用则是西汉以后的事情了,如“文化不改,然后加诛”《说苑·指武》、“文化内辑,武功外悠”《文选·补亡诗》。在古汉语中,“文化”的含义就是“以文教化”或“人文教化”。其中“文”(包括语言文字)是基础,而“教化”则是行动规范:作为名词它是某一特定人群或社团社会活动的共同规范;作为动词它是共同规范产生、传承、传播及认同的过程和手段。随着时间的流变和社会的发展,“文化”当今已成为一个内涵丰富的立体性概念,成为众多学科争相探究和争鸣的对象。

西方的“文化”(CULTURE)一词则来源于拉丁文“COLERE”,意思是“土地耕种”。英国社会人类学家爱德华·泰勒(Edward Tylor)早在1871年就对“文化”进行了界定,并把“文化”与“文明”(CIVILIZATION)看作是同义:“文化或文明,从宽泛的人种意义上来说,是一个复杂的整体,包括知识、信仰、艺术、道德、法律、风俗以及作为社会一分子所获得的其他任何能力与习惯”,是人类为使自已适应环境和改善生活方式所做努力的回报总和。据阿尔弗莱德·克罗博(Alfred Kroeber)和克莱德·克拉克恩(Clyde Kluckhohn)统计,从1871年至1952年共80余年间,关于“文化”的定义就多达164个(见 *Culture: A Critical Review Of Concepts and Definitions*)。

据不完全统计,目前世界上关于“文化”的定义已达200多种,其中,联合国教科文组织在2002年为文化所作的把脉也许能为我们了解宽泛的“文化”概念提供一种有益的参考:“文化应当被看作是一个社会或社会群体所独具的精神、物质、智识及情感方面的特征。除了艺术与文学外,它还包括生活方式、聚居方式、价值体系、传统及信仰。”而我国的《现代汉语词典》则把“文化”释义为:“人类在社会历史发展过程中所创造的物质财富和精神

财富的总和，特指精神财富。”

对文化所作的名目繁多的定义或解释实际上既反映了不同国家、不同学派对“文化”理解的不同，也反映了东西方地域性差异所带来的理解上的某些不同之处。但无论是过去还是现在、东方还是西方，“文化”作为人类所共同体验的事物还是有其共同的特性的。具体而言，就是①从时间上来看，文化是人类历史的产物，具有历史发展性和当下性；②从表现形式上看，既有纯物质层面的展现，如吃喝玩乐的生活方式，也有诉诸人类心理需求或精神层面的展现，如文学、艺术等。我们在使用“文化”这一概念时一般涉及文化的三个要素：历史性、群体性及影响性。而当今对文化的研究也自然包括如下几个方面的内容：①意识形态，如宗教信仰、价值观念、法律政治等形而上的东西；②精神财富(产品)，如文学、艺术及其他形式的知识成果；③物质财富，主要包括人类的各种群体性的生活方式，如衣食住行、民情风俗、生老病死以及社会生活的其他方面。

2) 商业文化的概念与应用

基于上述分析，商业文化的概念当然也离不开文化所共有的三个要素，即意识形态、精神财富(已物化为各种文化产品)及物质产品。在国际贸易活动中，人们对文化这一商业要素的重要性的认识经历了一个过程：过去企业往往把文化看成是一团乱麻，根本无法管理，正所谓“剪不断，理还乱”，而现在则认为文化是以行为为基础的，是可衡量的，在有意识的领导下是可以管理的；过去认为文化是自然发生的，无法预测和控制，现在则认为文化，尤其是企业文化，是有意领导、有价值导向以及涉及整个机构朝着某一既定方向发展的一种结果；过去认为即使在有时间的情况下去思考文化也是一种奢侈，现在则意识到文化问题对企业尤其是国际企业而言具有重大的战略意义。借用布迪厄的说法，商业文化也是所有企业的一种文化资本，是当代全球化背景下企业的一种软实力的具体体现。企业必须要管理好这种文化资本以最大限度地积累软实力，从而在面对经济危机时能维护自身的利益，最终确保企业价值的成功实现。

正是对商业文化的日益重视，尤其是意识到全球化背景下文化对企业国际化的重要意义，上海外语教育出版社才引进出版了一整套简明商务英语系列教程，而《国际商业文化》即为其中重要的一本。

2 本书的特色

1) 作者简介

查尔斯·米歇尔(Charles Mitchell)毕业于美国宾夕法尼亚大学，现为总部在

纽约的专门研究全球经济预测与管理问题的研究机构——美国经济咨商局(The Conference Board)出版主任。这个组织是一个非营利性的经济和商业研究机构。

作者多年驻外工作, 阅历十分丰富, 亲眼目睹和经历了许多国家的商业、社会和政治的变化。查尔斯最早从事的职业是在南非约翰内斯堡《兰德每日邮报》做记者, 后来成为美联社国际分社(UPI)驻南非的新闻记者, 之后又被指派到莫斯科, 担任美联社莫斯科分社主任。

2) 本书特色

本书是从事国际商业活动、了解国际商业文化的敲门砖, 为从事国际商务活动的人士指明了避免文化误区的道路, 以及如何培养商务活动中的文化意识问题。该书描述了国际商业文化所涉及的各种基本知识, 指出理解文化差异对国际商务活动的重要性所在, 并结合具体的例证, 从性别、种族及阶级的差异等诸多方面对国际商务活动(如国际会议、谈判、营销及团队的建设等)中可能遇到的文化差异及文化震惊问题进行了简要的剖析, 并提出了一系列避免各种文化误区的建议。

全书共 21 章, 从内容上看由三大部分组成: 第一部分即第一章, 为该书的引言, 主要介绍了文化的含义、文化的差异、文化的要素以及本书所要探讨的与文化相关的其他各种商业要素。第二部分为全书的核心, 共由 17 章组成(第二到第十八章), 包括文化的基本类型、文化对商业的影响、企业国际化过程中文化的作用、如何进行跨文化交流与合作、跨文化商务活动中女性应注意的事项、跨文化商务交流活动中幽默的应用、企业文化与企业道德的建构等等。内容涉及企业全球化的方方面面, 可以为从事国际商业活动的人士提供一种避免文化误区的普遍性指导。第三部分为附录(第十九到第二十一章), 提供本书涉及的关键词汇、进行国际商业文化活动所需要的网络资源以及一些相关的参考书目。具体章节内容见下文。

该书各章节开篇先导入或提要, 使读者可以对该章的内容要点有必要的准备或预期。从内容上看, 各章既相对独立, 又相互补充, 形成一个有机的整体。本书重点突出商业活动中尊重“文化差异”的重要性, 这是企业全球化发展和成功的重要原则和条件。本书具有较好的可读性和启发性, 能为我国企业如何走向全球化提供文化方面的有益提示和帮助。本书语言简明, 内容易懂, 适合作为国际商务活动中文化类的普及型教科书使用。

3) 使用对象与使用方法

可作为大中专院校国际贸易、商务英语、商务管理等专业学生的国际商业文

化知识的教材,同时也可作为企业各类管理人员的商业文化入门教材,以及对商务文化感兴趣或学习商务英语的读者作为学习参考书。在使用本教材进行教学时,应将重点放在如何培养国际商务交流活动中的文化意识,避免文化误区,并结合案例,对企业全球化过程中可能遭遇的文化问题进行重点指导。

3 本书主要内容

本书共分为21章,前18章为探讨国际商业文化的正文,后3章则为附加性内容,分别为“词汇表”、“资源”及“参考书目”。

第一章 理解文化差异

本章重点讲解理解不同文化间的差异对于企业国际化的重要性和必要性。作者不仅通过迪斯尼在法国设立欧洲迪斯尼项目失败的案例来说明文化差异对于企业国际化项目设立所可能产生的重大影响,还通过剖析文化所具有的要素来具体阐发抽象的文化概念:除了语言、宗教及文化价值观这三大要素,文化这一概念还包括礼仪风俗、艺术、教育、社会性情(幽默)及组织等。本章直接切入全书的正题,没有解释抽象的文化概念,而是以例说理,变抽象为具体,使读者开篇就领会到理解文化差异对国际商务活动的重要性。

第二章 基本文化类型

本章主要归纳和介绍了各种各样的文化类型,采用的是荷兰研究者和商务顾问 Geert Hofstede 的四分法框架理论,即把文化归纳为四个主要的问题:1)个人主义 VS 集体主义;2)权力距离;3)不确定性规避;4)男性 VS 女性。本章同时还涉及其他的一些基本文化类型或亚类型,如一时多用文化 VS 一时一用文化,高语境文化 VS 低语境文化,关系导向型文化 VS 任务导向型文化,以及不同文化对未来的不同看法等等。在本章的结尾作者还为读者提供了许多具体而有益的提示,以增加读者成功从事跨文化交流的可能性。

第三章 文化的影响

本章主要探讨不同文化对于商业活动的巨大影响。作者先从一个国家文化的地区差异谈起,具体剖析了国际文化交流中常被忽视的一种文化差异,即一国文化中的地区文化差异。由此作者又进一步探讨了文化的脸谱化问题及其成因,文化冲击的后果及其应对方法,以及反向文化冲击等问题。

第四章 商业全球化

本章主要探讨有关企业全球化的问题,具体包括:技术规则、开放市场、全球质量控制、全球化的悖论、全球标准的统一、商业文化的融合、全球化中

商业文化的美国化和文化殖民问题、商业全球化与地方文化的关系问题等等。

第五章 风俗习惯、礼仪与规则

本章重点探讨企业国际化或全球化过程中风俗礼仪及礼节所扮演的角色，如在国际化过程中该遵守哪一方的礼仪、名字游戏问题、面对面交流问题、商务名片礼节及规矩、会话禁忌、社交礼仪、社交喝酒规矩、着装原则、宴请规矩等等。在探讨这些规则时，作者都配以大量例证来说明抽象的礼节问题。

第六章 跨文化交流

本章主要探讨如何在认识到文化差异的基础上成功地进行全球化商业活动中的跨文化交流和有效沟通。作者在前几章的基础上，进一步对跨文化交流中的思想范式、价值观念、社会规范及不同文化背景的个体如何采用不同的处理信息的方法进行了强调，并结合商务活动全球化的语言问题、电话交流等具体问题进行了探讨和剖析。

第七章 非言语交流

如标题所示，本章主要探讨国际商务活动中非言语交流行为的重要性。现有的研究业已表明，一个人所说的话可能远没有其所表现的身体语言重要。作者特别强调文化差异对于理解非言语交流行为的重要性，并具体分析了非言语交流的种类、基本身体语言，以及学会在不同文化语境中读懂不同国家的不同体态语与反应。作者还以常见的体态语如手势、眨眼等为例，分析了不同国家、不同文化中相同手势可能具有的不同含义。

第八章 书面交流

本章重点探讨书面交流的重要性、行文方式或方向、准确用词、术语使用、商务写作的窍门、交流的对象、翻译的诀窍、国际书面交流的方式如传真、电邮、国际信函邮寄等。本章还提供了其他一些有关书面写作的有益建议供读者参考。

第九章 女士文化雷区

本章围绕女性如何在男性主宰下的国际商业活动中保持权威并同时成功做成跨文化的生意而展开，重点针对男权商业社会的现状，为女性国际商务活动家提供量身定做的文化生意经。针对女性在国际商业界的弱势群体地位，作者就如何与男性谈生意、交往、吃饭、送礼物、聚会、娱乐，乃至穿着打扮、避免性骚扰等问题提供了建议。作者还在本章末为女性商务工作者提供并介绍了6个著名的国际妇女联合会组织，以方便她们在做跨国生意时可以随时求助。

第十章 礼品赠送

本章重点探讨国际商务交往活动中礼物赠送的问题。作者结合不同的文化语

境对礼物赠送的重要性、方式方法、内容、价值等展开了讨论,为读者提供了送礼、收礼及拒礼的礼节和方式等方面的建议。针对不同地区的不同文化,作者也指出了部分文化中送礼的怪癖,并以日本为例,说明了送礼在该文化中所具有的特殊地位。

第十一章 跨文化幽默

幽默是全球化的现象。作者在本章集中探讨了幽默对于国际商务活动的重要性和必要性。为此,作者首先区分了“笑”与“幽默”的区别,探讨了幽默与文化的关系及幽默对于跨文化商务交流所可能产生的效果(或好或坏)。作者认为幽默虽然具有民族性,但也可能具有跨文化性而成为不同文化相同的笑料。

第十二章 跨文化会议

本章主要探讨跨文化会议的有关问题:从开始准备到会前安排、捐客的使用,从会议的精心安排如日程、地点、参会到翻译的使用及小窍门,作者都提供了一些相关的建议。末尾还为读者提供了一个成功会议所应具备的一些条件和应该进行的准备。

第十三章 跨文化谈判

本章集中探讨了跨文化谈判的有关问题,分析了跨文化谈判的两种心理范式:“双赢(共赢)”与“一输一赢”。作者还探讨了跨文化谈判中“面子”的概念与重要性、解决冲突的途径、决策方式因文化的不同而不同以及跨文化谈判的小诀窍等问题。

第十四章 企业文化

本章重点探讨企业文化的重要性。作者分析了企业文化的组成要素,如回报制度、雇佣政策、管理体系、冒险策略等。企业文化当然会受到所在国家文化的影响,不同国家和地区的文化肯定会影响到那个区域内企业的文化观念和价值观。作者还从企业文化的构成、成功观、理想的企业文化以及企业公民的概念等方面对企业文化进行了阐释。

第十五章 企业道德

企业道德是一度被企业所忽略而仅为学者所探讨的重要问题。本章主要探讨了当前国际商业活动中企业道德的重要性:它不但是企业文化不可分割的一部分,而且还是能给企业带来利润或损失的重要因素。企业的道德操守从某种意义上来说为企业的国际化提出了一个新课题和新挑战。如何在全球化的过程中狙击行贿和腐败的商业行为,建立世界范围内的企业道德操守已成为世界企业界的重大问题。

第十六章 跨文化团队

本章集中探讨跨文化团队的建立对企业国际化及国际商务活动的重要影响。作者认为在全球化的今天,企业应当建立跨文化的商务团队,尤其对于职业经理人来说,拥有全球化的心态带领跨文化团队去应对全球的挑战是十分必要和重要的。如何成功建立跨文化团队也是作者重点探讨的话题,包括团队的领导、效率及应对挑战的能力培养等等。

第十七章 跨文化营销

跨文化营销在作者看来实际上首先是跨文化交流的问题。如何在全球化的今天与消费者进行交流、建立全球市场是所有全球化企业所面临的重要任务。作者通过具体的数字与案例说明绝大部分市场营销失败的案例是由于跨文化交流中所犯的错误所致。作者还依据研究结果给读者介绍了六类全球消费者,并对全球营销者进行会诊,开出了几剂良药,尤其是关于国际营销网站建立和维护的良方。

第十八章 跨文化顾问

本章集中探讨的是国际商务活动中跨文化顾问的重要性。作者将跨文化顾问分为两类,即负责提供全方位企业服务的内部顾问与只提供对象国文化礼节等方面培训的外部顾问。作者介绍了国内外顾问的不同职能,并为读者提供了如何选择跨文化商业顾问的具体建议。

第十九章 词汇表

第二十章 资源

第二十一章 参考书目

4 推荐参考书

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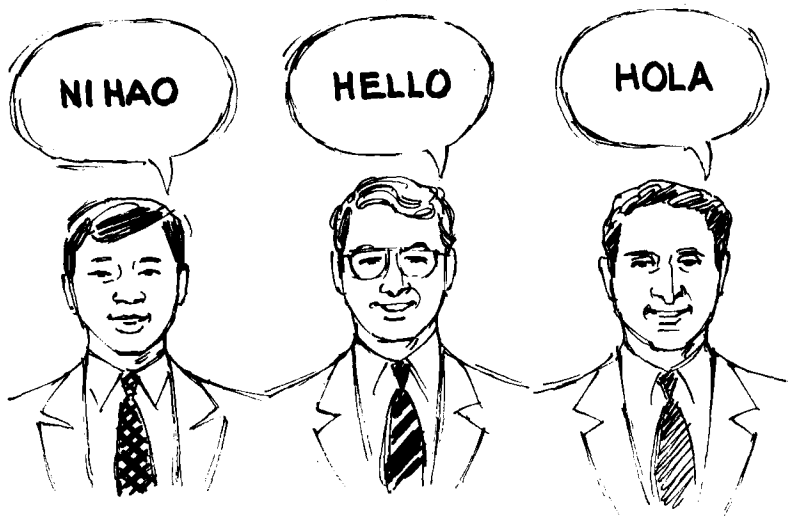
Understanding Cultural Differences

THE ONLY TIME WHEN TRUE SUFFERING OCCURS IS

WHEN TWO CULTURES COLLIDE. — HERMANN HESSE

ANYONE WHO HAS done business internationally knows that dreadful feeling brought on by the blank stares, the forced half-smiles, the murmured comments in a language that seems indecipherable — when what you say doesn't connect, and when something seems missing. The paranoia is inescapable. You had your checklist of cultural do's and don'ts and followed them religiously. You broke no taboos, committed no cultural faux pas, insulted no one — yet you failed to break through. Why?

Distance and time were once the biggest obstacles to doing business internationally. They are now among the least of concerns for any organization that has decided to go global. Today, international businessmen and businesswomen increasingly find themselves working in multi-cultural environments, dealing with real differences in everything from communication styles to social etiquette to core values. While many savvy international business travelers may not be able to give a textbook definition of what constitutes culture, they know it when they see it. And they also know they had better be prepared to deal with it beyond a superficial level. After all, winning acceptance from foreign colleagues and turning cultural differences into a competitive advantage means more than making sure you know how to properly accept the business card of a Japanese colleague or avoid serving cocktails to a Moslem banker. People from



different cultures process information in different ways, value different traits and measure the concepts of time and space in dramatically different fashions.

Why is cross-cultural knowledge and understanding so important? The American statesman and inventor Benjamin Franklin wrote that time is money. Globe-trotting businesspeople would add that being aware of cultural differences and sensitivities is money, too. Failing to grasp the subtleties that lie beyond such public cultural displays like greeting rituals and seating arrangements can make the difference between a truly successful international business transaction and one that fails to connect. Culture affects the most basic forms of personal and business interaction from decision making to management style. National culture, in turn, determines corporate culture, affecting a firm's internal structure, its marketing behavior and its view of foreign business partners and contracts. The business world is littered with "international" projects that failed to overcome cultural barriers. If you have doubts that cultural insensitivity can translate into business problems on a megascale, consider the case of The Disney Corp's French adventure — EuroDisney.

Monsieur Mickey

Bringing the wonders of Disneyland to a foreign country must have seemed like old hat for Disney. After all, only a few years earlier the company had successfully opened a Disney theme park in Japan, bridging the enormous differences between Japanese and American cultures. EuroDisney, at least initially, proved to be another story entirely. The company, it seems, failed to do its cultural homework on everything from French business negotiating styles to employee flexibility and dress habits to consumer spending patterns and eating preferences. The company had a system that worked in the United States and Japan — two very diverse cultures — and evidently saw no good reason to change it to adapt to European sensibilities.

Day one began with a nightmare. The French people, who tend to wear their cultural hearts on their sleeves, howled about Yankee cultural imperialism when Disney managed to buy 1,950 hectares (4,400 acres) of prime farmland for a fraction of the market price after the government used its right of eminent domain to find Mickey and friends a home. The farmers whose families had worked the land for centuries were bounced. French newspapers railed at the American invaders in a very public display of anger and insult. Before a single building foundation had been dug or a brick laid, the company had managed to alienate the community, partly because it had underestimated the attachment to the land of one segment of French society.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Next, Disney offended French sensibilities and created a wellspring of ill will when it used lawyers rather than its executives to negotiate construction and other contracts for EuroDisney. It was simply not a French thing to do. In France, lawyers are considered a negotiating tool of absolute last resort. The use of lawyers early on in the process was a sign of mistrust and backhand rejection of French ways. Then, according to the French trade and popular press, the company insisted during the construction of Disney-run hotels that a

sprinkler system be included. While required under American law, such a system was unnecessary under French law which demands only adequate fire escapes and alarms and access to an emergency water supply. Disney's insistence on the sprinkler system was perceived as a negative comment on French safety standards and an assertion that the "American way" was better. The battle ruffled the feathers of Disney's French partners and management, generating even more ill will made public in a stream of negative press reports.

In terms of operations, Disney's ignorance of European culture and French working norms caused more problems. The company, which prides itself on the squeaky clean All-American look of its employees, instituted a strict dress code for its local employees, barring facial hair, dictating a maximum length for fingernails and limiting the size of hooped earrings. The staff and its unions rebelled at this perceived attack on everyday French fashion. Morale plunged.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Disney got several other important details wrong. For example, the company believed that Europeans do not generally have sit-down breakfasts. Relative to the normal workday lifestyle of the European commuter, they were correct. But the exact opposite is true when Europeans vacation. As a result of this incorrect notion, hotel dining rooms at Disney hotels were kept small, creating logjams and angry customers when the overcrowded rooms that seat a maximum of 400 guests tried to serve upwards of 2,500 sit-down breakfasters every morning. Lunchtimes inside EuroDisney also bordered on disaster. While Americans visiting Disneyland prefer to graze, that is, eat at irregular intervals, as they wander the park confines, Europeans are used to set lunchtimes. As a result, the park's restaurants became jammed at the lunch hour as everyone tried to eat at once and were empty the rest of the day. Customers complained of long lunch-time lines and pressure to eat quickly. The staff complained of being overworked at lunchtime and underworked during the rest of their shifts. To top it off, Disney, in keeping with the "family friendly" theme, barred the serving of alcohol — perhaps the ultimate insult in a country where the consumption of wine at mealtimes is a birthright.

HOSPITALITY HEADACHES

The company committed other marketing foibles. While the park did hit its initial attendance target of more than 10 million visitors in the first year, its revenue projections were way off. The reason: unlike Americans or Japanese visiting Disney parks in their home countries, the European visitors to EuroDisney did not spend money on souvenirs. Europeans, it seems, are more used to taking month-long vacations and as a rule do not go on short spending sprees like the Americans and Japanese when they visit a theme park. Finally, Disney found that checkout at its official hotels had turned into a nightmare because of different consumer patterns. Unlike the Americans or the Japanese, the European visitor to EuroDisney tends to stay only one night at a hotel, not the three or four nights common at other Disney parks. The result: the hotels had too few computers to handle the irate guests as they all tried to check out of the hotel at the same time after a single night's stay.

"It was so unlike Disney to get so many details so wrong," says one U.S.-based securities analyst who follows the company. "Maybe it's not such a small world after all. The company's cultural insensitivities cost it a lot of money and

goodwill. I think it is a good reminder to any company or individual doing business in another country — the devil is often in the cultural details. They can make or break you.” But for Disney at least, all’s well that ends well. After making some significant “cultural adjustments,” EuroDisney is no longer the economic drain it once was on company coffers.

CULTURE CAUTION: It should be noted that for all of Disney’s faults the French government was more than happy to have them set up shop. The government also bears some responsibility for not making Disney’s transition smoother. The French have claimed for centuries that Americans have no culture but nowadays, it seems, they believe Americans have too much and need to export some.

What Is Culture, Anyway?

It may seem obvious but culture is what makes the Japanese, Japanese; the Germans, German; and the Brazilians, Brazilian. The noted Dutch writer and academic Geert Hofstede referred to culture as “the software of the mind” — the social programming that runs the way we think, act and perceive ourselves and others. In other words, your brain is simply the hardware that runs the cultural programming. The implication is that culture is not innate. There is no gene that forces Americans to treasure individualism and brashness, or Germans to value rigid order. It is learned behavior and hence can be changed. Just alter the internal programming and you, too, can think like a Yank, a Brit, or a Kuwaiti. While this is certainly a useful and encouraging metaphor for anyone dealing in global business affairs, it is more difficult to implement than it sounds. It takes study, a keen sense of observation, and, above all, a willingness to learn and relinquish the notion that one’s native culture is superior. When was the last time you heard a foreign colleague admit that their way of doing things is inferior to yours? It doesn’t happen. When dealing in a multi-cultural environment the “adapt or die” philosophy is a good one to remember.

A more formal definition is that culture is a set of learned core values, beliefs, standards, knowledge, morals, laws, and behaviors shared by individuals and societies that determines how an individual acts, feels, and views oneself and others. A society’s culture is passed from generation to generation, and aspects such as language, religion, customs and laws are interrelated — that is, a society’s view of authority, morals and ethics will eventually manifest itself in how an individual does business, negotiates a contract or deals with a potential business relationship. Understanding the cultural context and mind-set of a potential foreign business partner or competitor can help in developing sound strategy for negotiations and deal-making. What once seemed mysterious may become more predictable — and can ultimately be used to your advantage.

Cultural Components

Viewing a national culture from the outside can be intimidating. But breaking it down into its components and understanding how each component is related to the whole can help unwrap the enigma and provide some logic and