FREIBERGER BEITRÄGE ZUR INTERKULTURELLEN UND WIRTSCHAFTSKOMMUNIKATION

A Forum for General and Intercultural Business Communication

Michael B. Hinner (ed.)

# The Interface of Business and Culture

PETER LANG
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The Interface of Business and Culture

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A Forum for General and Intercultural Business Communication

Herausgegeben von/Edited by
Michael B. Hinner

Band 7

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Frankfurt am Main · Berlin · Bern · Bruxelles · New York · Oxford · Wien

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## Dedication

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I would like to dedicate this seventh volume of the *Freiberger Beiträge* to one of the founding fathers of intercultural communication, Edward T. Hall, who passed away recently. Although this volume has been written earlier this year, it was possible to add this dedication prior to the book's official release. For this, I am truly thankful because it gives me the opportunity to thank Edward T. Hall for his participation in this project. I was actually very saddened when I heard the news of his death. The groundbreaking work carried out by Edward T. Hall has inspired many, including myself, to pursue intercultural communication. I will forever be grateful and thankful to him for having opened up this wonderful realm to me. And I am indebted to him for having granted permission to include his seminal work in this series which has been a dream come true. In fact, one of his chapters is included in the sixth volume of this series. For this, I want to thank him posthumously. And I want to thank him for opening a new perspective in human interaction that has truly had a tremendous impact on the world.

"He was a scholar, and a ripe and
good one.
Exceeding wise, fair-spoken and
persuading."
(Shakespeare, *Henry VIII,* 4.2.51-2)

*Michael B. Hinner*

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank everyone who helped make this seventh volume of the *Freiberger Beiträge* possible. First of all, I would like to thank all the contributing authors without whose work this book would not have been written. They have provided the information and insights that help explain how culture influences human behavior. All of them are experts in their fields of specialty, and it is a distinct honor that they took the time to prepare a manuscript for this volume. Some of the authors have already participated in previous projects. I am, therefore, very thankful that they have participated again. And some of the authors are participating for the first time. That they have decided to do so is a distinct honor.

I would also like thank everyone else who helped make this project possible. This includes the people at Peter Lang who provided us with the platform, and the people at the university who helped prepare the manuscript for publication. Your support is greatly appreciated because each and everyone helped make this project possible.

And finally, I would also like to thank the U.S. Consulate General in Leipzig for their most generous financial support of this project in form of a grant. In fact, the grant has provided the funding to cover the expenses associated with copyright clearance and the formatting of the final manuscript.

My thanks, thus, go to everyone associated with this project for their invaluable help!

"Vielen Dank!"

*Michael B. Hinner*

## Preface

This series seeks to demonstrate how communication in general and intercultural communication in particular influences and possibly determines business. This assumption is based on the premise that business people are as influenced by the principles of communication and culture as is any human being. After all, humans need to communicate in order to interact with one another, and culture helps regulate such interaction which is why an understanding of the underlying principles of culture and communication is essential if one wishes to properly analyze such interaction. The same is true, of course, also in the world of business and at the workplace since there, too, human beings interact and communicate with one another.

Having grown up in a particular cultural context, humans learn and internalize culture as they are learning and internalizing their mother tongue. Virtually all language acquisition is also accompanied by the learning of when to say or do what to whom. For example, children are taught not only what words to say as a greeting but also how to greet a particular person. And just as children's linguistic mistakes are corrected, so are their behavioral mistakes. In time, people are able to speak a language fluently without truly understanding the underlying grammatical rules. That understanding is taught to them in school, hopefully. Similarly, people know how to behave in certain situations without needing to think about such behavioral acts because the have repeated the behavior in specific situations so many times that is often relegated to automatic responses. When asked why they greet someone in a particular manner, people often respond that this is how it is done because they had been taught to do it this way. Likewise, when asked why one formulates a sentence the way one does, most people respond by saying that this is how people say it. But in both cases, people are often incapable of explaining their actions. While language is often the subject of school classes, culture often is not. That is why people have at least been made aware that language is based on a set of complex rules and regulations; and even if they do not fully understand those rules and regulations, they are at least aware that such rules and regulations exist. But since culture is often not taught in school, people are not aware that culture also entails specific rules and regulations which is why most people are not aware that culture does influence and determine people's behavior. Intercultural communication seeks to rectify this deficit.

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The above observation may help explain why most business people do not consider culture's influence when seeking to understand and explain the actions and behavior of fellow business people. Yet culture has as much influence on people in the world of business as it does in the world at large. That is why it is so imperative that business people realize how culture influences human behavior and communication so as to have a better understanding of not just their own behavior, but also that of their international business partners, employees, and customers. Because just as a better understanding of the underlying rules and regulations of language help improve the formulation of verbal messages, so will an understanding of the underlying rules and regulations of culture help improve the proper encoding and decoding of messages in an intercultural context.

Edward T. Hall identified, for example, different approaches to time which he called monochronic and polychronic. Monochronic cultures, Hall notes, tend to compartmentalize time, scheduling time very precisely, doing one activity after another, and placing great value on punctuality. Hall classifies Germany and the USA as monochronic cultures with Germany being more monochronic than the USA. Polychronic cultures tend to have a flexible attitude towards time and schedules; often performing multiple tasks at the same time while valuing personal relationships above timekeeping because many other factors are more important than strict punctuality. Hall identified Latin American cultures as being polychronic. If, therefore, a representative from a monochronic culture were to meet with a business partner from a polychronic culture, then one could expect certain problems because the representative from the monochronic culture would expect the business meeting to start on time; after all, time is money. The representative from the polychronic culture, though, may not be as punctual and might arrive late without worrying too much about it. Hence, irritating the representative from the monochronic culture. And during the negotiations, for example, the representative from the monochronic culture would expect to go through a contract step by step, discussing each detail in its own place and time. The representative would also expect all deadlines to be met on time. The representative from the polychronic culture, though, might want to return to previously discussed clauses, and not consider deadlines to be too critical. There are other differences, but these few examples clearly demonstrate how the different approach to time can cause irritation among both representatives. The representative from the monochronic culture would probably consider the representative from the polychronic culture to be unreliable and unprofessional whereas the representative from the polychronic culture would consider the representative from the monochronic culture to be pedantic and inflexible. As noted, this misunderstanding is not based on expressly formulated verbal messages, but rather on behavior acquired while growing up in a particular cultural context. This ex-

ample also demonstrates that people tend to view and evaluate the behavior of others from their own perspective. This phenomenon is called ethnocentrism, a topic elaborated upon by one of the contributing authors of this volume.

When a number of colleagues were once again contacted a while back and asked to participate in this project, many responded with manuscripts. As was the case a few years ago, the response resulted in so many texts that it was decided to create two volumes; one devoted to general communication (volume six) and one to intercultural communication (volume seven). The result has once again been a very eclectic mix that should include something for everyone interested in the subject.

The book begins with a chapter on ethnocentrism to establish a foundation on which the other topics build. The next chapters focus on various aspects of culture's influence on management, e.g. corporate governance, management communication, diversity at the place of work, and work appraisal. These are then followed by chapters focusing on how culture influences human interaction in a variety of contexts and situations, e.g. face negotiation in cross-cultural conflict, navigating silence, comparing and contrasting Japanese and U.S. negotiation styles, high and low context communication as well as identity and power in international tourism interactions. The next set of chapters focus on broader cultural topics that seek to determine if generally held assumptions about various cultural groups are true or not, e.g. U.S. Hispanic consumer behavior, traditional Chinese value orientations, and the cultural ideals of Chinese Malaysians. This attempt to determine if previously held assumptions continue to be true is also pursued in the chapters that focus specifically on mass media, e.g. Taiwan's TV programming as a mix of indigenous and global hybrid culture, the effects of culture on perception and purchasing intention, communication technology as an extension of the self in the USA and Germany, and the impact of an intercultural radio program in Peruvian Amazon. The final chapters of the book focus on the adjustment to a new cultural environment, e.g. cross-cultural adaptation of Mainland Chinese students to Hong Kong, a proposed model for intercultural adjustment training, and intercultural personhood amidst globalization as a means of overcoming ethnocentrism.

As is the practice of this series, all chapters are preceded by an introduction that briefly summarizes the contents and also explains how the topic is related and/or relevant to the world of business if the chapter does not do so directly. Another tradition to be continued in this series is the general introductory chapter that sets out to illustrate how culture and communication influence and, to some extend determine, business relationships. Thus, a specific intercultural communi-

cation topic is selected and applied to a business context to demonstrate this interrelationship. In this case, it is stereotyping. This introductory chapter creates a basis for the subsequent chapters that investigate other aspects of culture and communication with relevance to the world of business.

You the reader, are therefore, invited to embark on an interesting journey of discovery. A journey that will take you to different cultures and one that seeks to reveal meanings that may not always be apparent at first sight.

"Tis ever common
That men are merriest when they
are from home."
(Shakespeare, *Henry V,* 1.2.271-2)

*Michael B. Hinner*

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