

THE CROSS-CULTURAL BUSINESS POCKETBOOK

By John Mattock

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

“On our business development courses, we emphasise cultural sensitivity, because we know it pays off! This pocketbook is a good starting point.”

Evy Claesson, Ericsson Radio Systems AB

“A real understanding of cross-cultural issues has proved invaluable, both for developing our own global network, and for serving clients operating around the world.”

Chris Sermon, PricewaterhouseCoopers

“Leaders in our company face many complex issues, including cultural diversity. This book offers a practical approach.”

Sven Gatenheim, SCA Hygiene Products

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In a shrinking world, we must be less insular - better at dealing with unfamiliar perceptions and behaviour



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How to resolve cross-cultural issues by listening and talking better, how to be clear, how to be convincing, how to make the right impression



A HANDFUL OF CULTURES

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N.W. Europe, Latin Europe (& S. America), C. & E. Europe, Arab world, N. America, Asia-Pacific



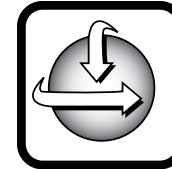
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Nurture your curiosity, befriend people, read a book, take a course

WHY CULTURE COUNTS

CULTURE INFLUENCES PERCEPTIONS



The way you see the world is directly influenced by your background: your parents brought you up, your teachers educated you, and your friends conditioned you *according to the tacit rules of your local culture.*

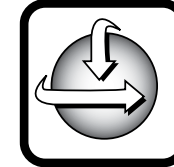
Your views on right and wrong, duty and pleasure, order and chaos, reason and emotion, pride and shame - are coloured by the filters of culture.

As a manager, you need successful interaction with others: sharing ideas, anticipating their needs, and helping them improve performance. If they see the world through the same filters as you, that's fine. But if they have different ... *foreign ... ALIEN* perceptions and attitudes, then you have a trickier job to do.

*'If I want to succeed
in guiding a human being ... I must find him where he is ...
to help a person, I must of course understand more than he does, but
above all I must understand what he understands.'*
Kierkegaard

WHY CULTURE COUNTS

CULTURE AFFECTS BEHAVIOUR



Racial prejudice is a bad thing:

*'Any of those people
is intrinsically inferior to any of these people,
and so has fewer human rights.'*

To dump a national stereotype on an individual person is destructive:

'She's late again; typical!'

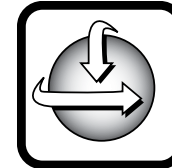
*'He's good on the detail, but a creative zero.
What can you expect?'*

'He's busy covering his back - they all do!'

Yet, you can predict with some accuracy how a person from a given culture is *likely* to behave. And if you plan *without* taking culture into account, your project will be under threat.



WHY CULTURE COUNTS



CASE EXAMPLE 1

The Swiss chief executive addressed a conference of managers from various national subsidiaries, describing his ideas for the future. Comments in the bar that evening:

'For me there was too much pie-in-the-sky. Thirty minutes he talked, and we got practically no concrete facts.' **The German**

'I'm concerned that he seems to know so little about our local client base ... the way they really are. We have so many small customers who don't fit the statistical projections.' **The Italian**

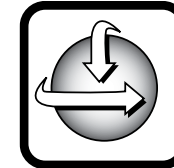
'Well, if that's his view of the future, I'm outa here. No drive, no determination, no leadership, no vision.' **The American**

'I don't know why you're all taking it so seriously. Surely you were expecting that sort of twaddle, weren't you? I propose to ignore it and carry on as normal.' **The Briton**



WHY CULTURE COUNTS

CASE EXAMPLE 2



The English manager was frustrated: he was getting on well with his Hungarian staff but now they had suddenly turned unco-operative.

He had taken the 40 of them away for a teambuilding weekend. There was a great party on Friday night and all seemed very positive. At noon on Saturday he announced: “Thanks for working so hard this morning. Now we’ll break a little early for lunch, so you can enjoy the sunshine. BUT PLEASE, come back prompt at 2 o’clock. If you are late, you will miss the start of an important and entertaining exercise. So 2 o’clock PLEASE. Jó étvágyat!”

At 2 o’clock there were half-a-dozen Hungarians assembled, staring at their shoes or smoking in the corridor. Another five or six trickled in over the next half-hour. It was all rather embarrassing.

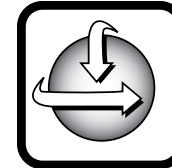
He turned to his Hungarian deputy: “What did I do wrong?”

“Although you don’t realise it, you gave them a choice: either to arrive on time and prove nothing, or to be late and demonstrate that we are a free people now!”

This was one year after the Soviet withdrawal.

WHY CULTURE COUNTS

DEVELOP A STRATEGY



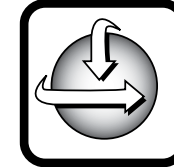
If you are convinced of the importance of cross-cultural issues, then develop a strategy for dealing with them.

Code of Cross-cultural Conduct

1. We appreciate and enjoy cultural diversity
2. We accept that our own perceptions are coloured by our upbringing, within our native culture
3. We try to empathise with the other's view, knowing that it will be influenced by his or her background
4. We do some homework to understand that background better
5. We are open-minded; we do not dump a national stereotype on an individual



WHY CULTURE COUNTS



EXERCISE: ASSIGNMENT IN RUBOVIA

You are on your first trip to Rubovia. In your briefcase is a wad of information about the business aspects of your visit, to read on the plane.

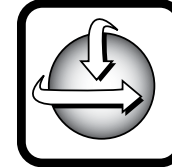
As you board the Air Rubov flight, you notice that the chap just in front of you is greeted by the crew as a familiar face - in a language you have never heard before (Rubovian, presumably).

Now you find yourself sitting beside him, and he wishes you good afternoon in excellent English.

Over the next couple of hours, you have a wonderful opportunity to benefit from a free 'seminar' on Rubovian business culture. (Most people are very happy to talk about their national way of life.)

What sort of subjects will you try to explore? (Our answer is on the next page.)

WHY CULTURE COUNTS



ASSIGNMENT IN RUBOVIA: OUR ANSWER

These are the sort of questions you might ask your Rubovian informant (not in any order of priority):

- How do you say 'Hello'/'Thank you'/'Cheers!' in Rubovian?
- What's the local style of handshakes/hugs/kisses?
- Is it expected to offer gifts? What is appropriate?
- What's best to eat and drink?
- Are there any religious taboos I should know about?
- Do Rubovians attach importance to personal relationships when they do business?
- Do they worry about deadlines and punctuality, or are they relaxed about such things?
- Do they admire quick, bold decisions or do they favour a cautious approach?
- Is documentation important in business life, or is it 'My word is my bond'?
- What do Rubovians find amusing in my national culture (if they know about it)?
- What's everybody in Rubovia talking about at the moment?

About the Author

John Mattock

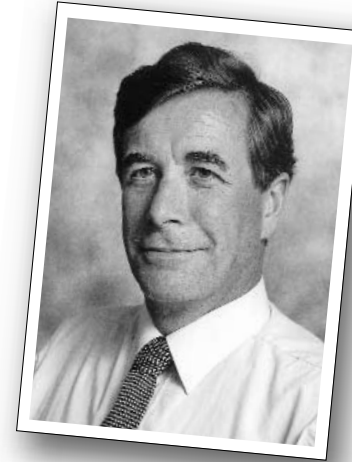
John is an independent management consultant and, with his wife Susanna Lyddon, runs Right Brain Training Ltd, www.rightbrain.org.uk, from their home in Hampshire.

RBT works the 'soft side' of management training, delivering in-house courses across all sectors. Events are tailored in consultation with clients; common themes are presentation technique, assertiveness, negotiation skills, team building, cross-cultural sensitivity and conference facilitation.

John has clients from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and from the Pennines to the Urals, with occasional projects in Asia and the Americas. He has written several books: 'The New International Manager', 'Powerful Presentations', 'Russia - the Essential Guide for the Business Traveller' and 'How to be a Better Negotiator' (all Kogan Page).

His satisfaction comes from making poor communicators adequate, and good communicators great; he has changed many people's working lives for the better.

He dedicates this book to Cecily and Kit, who are teaching him so much.



A handwritten signature of John Mattock in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the portrait photograph. It consists of the first name 'John' and the last name 'Mattock' written together.