As commerce becomes more global, greater numbers of people are conducting business across national and cultural boundaries. Culture-clash will continue to vex all aspects of international business as a result of this phenomenon. Culture colors people’s sense of identity and their perceptions of others. Differences in management style and organizational behavior can often be traced back to cultural influences. Cultural miscommunication is costly. Such communication can be intimate, such as the interaction between two coworkers, or can take place in a more public arena, such as in an advertising campaign. With the increased recognition that culture affects all facets of international industry comes the challenge for librarians to provide information that will enable business professionals to operate successfully in culturally-diverse environments.

Cultural diversity in business literature

Examples abound in college textbooks of cultural mistakes made in business. Even the brand-name giant Coca-Cola, now recognized throughout the world, was marketed incorrectly in the 1920s when the Chinese characters that sounded like the word Coke translated as “bite the wax tadpole” (Terpstra, 1991). While social scientists have been examining the relationship between culture and behavior for almost a century, business researchers have been exploring the complexities of cultural diversity as they relate to business for the past 20 years. A wealth of marketing and management literature now exists which addresses the concept of cultural diversity in the workplace and much of it can be traced to the globalization of business.

Influential authors such as Geert Hofstede in his book Cultures and Organizations: National Differences in Work-related Values, published in 1980, recognizes culture as the defining force in understanding work habits. Today, researchers have taken the lead from authors like Hofstede and have constructed theoretical models for examining cultural differences between diverse groups. In recent years, some, like the diversity expert Fons Trompenaars, have criticized the bulk of this literature as written from a narrow viewpoint (Hall, 1995). Trompenaars questions what he views as the trend of management to enforce a type of Anglo-Saxon culture in
international business practices. He stresses the importance of meshing the best qualities of teamwork-focused collective cultures with creativity-based individualistic societies to utilize the skills of a diverse workforce (Trompenaars, 1994).

Adding to the large body of theoretical writings on multiculturalism, are case studies examining real-life situations, affording the professional practical advice. Many companies are presently exploring creative ways of managing across cultural boundaries and are sharing their experiences. One study of Japanese employees stationed in Germany found that the Japanese reluctance to say “no” directly, due to cultural rules of politeness, translates as evasiveness for the German coworkers. Conversely, the German tendency for precision is often perceived as bluntness and rudeness by the Japanese (Lincoln, 1995). The same study questions the practice of placing Japanese workers and their families stationed in Germany in a self-contained community where Japanese is spoken, stores and restaurants offer Japanese cuisine, and the school provides the traditional Japanese education:

Insulated from real exposure to German society beyond their encounters in the firm, the average expatriate Japanese learns far less from his German tour of duty than he otherwise might, even though the benefits of a globalizing experience were probably a factor in the parent company’s decision to despatch him abroad in the first place (Lincoln, 1995).

Another theme throughout the literature is the tendency of Americans to be monolingual. In a world where most well-educated professionals are conversant in at least two languages, this tendency is perceived by non-English speaking peoples as an air of superiority. Until recently the majority of Americans doing business with diverse cultures have not been motivated to learn a second language because English was widely considered the language of business. But in the modern global marketplace, English is losing dominance. Many diversity experts are warning English-speaking business professionals to learn languages. These warnings are often accompanied with successful examples of programs that have aided professionals in bridging cultural gaps. The US-based 3M, which earns $7 billion in annual sales overseas, has been at the forefront of language instruction by sponsoring an in-house Language Society that provides linguistic and cultural support for 3M employees. The program has proven so successful that the French firm Bull has used the 3M model to introduce foreign language activities to prepare employees to compete in the global marketplace (Freivalds, 1995).

The need for more cultural awareness

The prevalence of writings on cultural themes from the business perspective is in response to the great demand among professionals for information that will assist them in conducting business successfully in diverse environments. As the move toward the globalization of business continues, companies are establishing operations in overseas countries and markets. Such practices are challenging employees who find themselves suddenly transferred to countries where they are ignorant of the language and culture. Relocation is but one challenge testing US managers. Video conferencing and the Internet make communication, and the opportunity for miscommunication, easier. Employees who are sensitive to cultural differences in business practices are essential to the success of firms involved in international commerce. Flexibility is key. Trainers working for a large US electronics firm were charged with facilitating at 500 separate team meetings in 41 countries. Originally the company’s plan was to have all meetings conducted in English. But the trainers working with the French teams quickly observed:

From the French team’s point of view, this program easily could have been perceived as a Yank assault on their French-ness, and it was imperative to do everything possible to avoid that impression. We quickly realized that the instruct in English [author’s emphasis] guidelines had to be more than stretched. We decided that presenting the training in French was crucial to the program’s credibility (Hatch, 1995).

These trainers’ sensitivity to the French team’s point of view, and their willingness to change, are qualities essential to any multicultural business undertaking. In spite of the fact that many Americans write about the cultural dimension of international business, the USA lags behind other countries in terms of cultural awareness.
About 68 percent of US companies doing business abroad have no multicultural training programs (Petrick and Russell-Robles, 1992). Subsequently there is a failure rate of 30 percent for US expatriate managers. This compares with the 10 percent failure rate among their Japanese counterparts, many of whom have had some type of cultural training (Petrick and Russell-Robles, 1992). Clearly there is a need for a more aggressive response on the part of US businesses to address the problems associated with a cross-culturally naïve workforce.

Bibliography

This bibliography consists of select books on multicultural themes related to business. It is primarily intended for readers serving the information needs of researchers and practitioners in international business. Because many items listed apply to cultural diversity in the workplace, this bibliography can also be used to locate sources for business professionals needing cultural information on the domestic scene. Those interested in learning about other cultures or who need to travel extensively can also benefit from some of the sources cited. The list is divided into categories to make targeting specific resources easier. The section entitled “Bibliographies” lists extensive works on the cultural aspects of business. Since none of these bibliographies was published later than 1993, they can assist the reader in locating older books and material beyond the scope of this present work. The sections “Multiculturalism” and “Communication” contain sources dealing with broad issues such as language, culture, and society. Books related to specific fields of study are cited in the “Marketing,” “Management,” and “Human resources management” sections. The “Training” segment lists guides and workbooks for the professional involved in educating the diverse workforce. The “Etiquette” and “Relocation” portions include books that will assist the business traveler, and those stationed abroad. Works describing the national characteristics of peoples around the world are in the “Areas studies” section which is divided into five subcategories. Also provided is a list of bilingual and polyglot business dictionaries.

The selection criteria used are:

1. In-print English-language items published in the USA or available through US distributors,
2. Works dealing with broad concepts of cultural diversity in business,
3. Materials exploring multicultural business themes relating to specific fields of study,
4. Books explaining the culture, customs, and business practices of specific cultures, and
5. Materials published after 1990, with the exception of select core sources.

Journal citations are excluded from this bibliography. Multicultural issues associated with international business are topics prevalent in the journal literature, and are readily accessible through searching basic business online indices such as ABI Inform, PT S Prompt, and Infomat International Business which are all available on Knight-Ridder’s DIALOG. Also excluded are books explaining the business practices of other countries and regions where it was felt that such practices had no bearing on cultural themes. Books on cultural themes in business are being published continuously. One publisher to monitor is the Intercultural Press in Maine. Intercultural Press publishes material on cultural diversity in business and can assist in keeping a collection of multicultural material up-to-date. Advice on publishers and other resources can often be obtained from research institutions and professional associations. Directories such as The Encyclopedia of Associations can help in finding such special interest groups. A select list of such organizations is included in this bibliography.

References


Recommended books

Bibliographies

Most bibliographies on international business touch either lightly, or not at all, on concepts related to culture. Listed below are sources focusing on the social and cultural aspects of conducting business in culturally-diverse environments:


Multiculturalism

The study of culture as it relates to business has emerged as a distinct study. Listed below are books written by systems, communications, and managerial experts on multiculturalism in the business world:


Communication

Communication is transmitted through the spoken and written word, by electronic means, and through body language. Language and culture are inseparable. Cited below are books dealing with the interaction of peoples of diverse cultures, with particular emphasis on business:


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Weaver, G. (Ed.), *Culture, Communication and Conflict: Readings in Intercultural Relations*, Ginn Press, Needham Heights, MA.


Dictionaries

Listed below are bilingual and polyglot business dictionaries:

- **Isaacs, A. (1997), Multilingual Commercial Dictionary**, Books on Demand, Ann Arbor, MI.


McNeil, L. (1993), *Cassell Multilingual Dictionary of Local Government and Business*, Cassell Academic, Herndon, VA. (This work covers English, French, and German.)


**Marketing**

Marketing includes product research, consumer/customer research, advertising, and public relations. The works cited below address cultural issues of marketing in the global environment:


**Management**

Books dealing with broad concepts related to conducting business across culture are listed in this bibliography under the headings of “Multiculturalism” and “Communication.” Works offering practical advice on the supervision of the culturally diverse workforce are cited below:


**Human resource management**

This section contains references to books dealing with personnel issues in international business. Some case studies are listed, along with practical guides:


**Training**

Trainers of culturally diverse groups need lesson plans, classroom techniques, and workbooks on cross-cultural communication, and cultural sensitivity and awareness. Listed below are multicultural guides for trainers:


Paige, M., (Ed.) (1993), Education for the Intercultural Experience, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.

Seelye, H.N., (Ed.) (1996), Experimental Activities for Intercultural Learning, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.


**Etiquette**

Listed here are sources dealing exclusively with the etiquette of different countries and cultures.

Books on etiquette that are specific to countries or regions are listed under “A area studies” below:


**Relocation**

Listed here are relocation guides and travel guides for the business traveler. Vacation guides are excluded. For additional information on business travel in specific countries or regions refer to “A area studies” below:


Kalb, R. and Welch, P. (1992), Moving Your Family Overseas, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.

Kohls, L.R. (1996), Survival Kit for Overseas Living for Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad, 3rd ed., Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.


Strand, D. and Tracy, J. (Eds), Multinational Executive Travel Companion, 23rd ed., Multinational Executive Travel Companion Series, Suburban Publishing of Connecticut, Stamford, CT.
**Area studies**

This section lists sources explaining the social life, customs, etiquette, and national characteristics of peoples of specific regions or countries. Although some information focuses on business travel, travel guides for the holiday-maker are excluded:

**Australia**

**The Middle East and Africa**

**Europe**

**The Americas**

A sia and the Pacific
De Mente, B. (1992), Korean Etiquette and Ethics in Business, Etiquette and Ethics Series, NTC Publishing Group, Lincolnwood, IL.
Gocherenour, T. (1990), Considering Filipinos, InterAct Series, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.

Select list of associations, research institutions, and services
This is a select list of organizations involved with business and culture. This list is by no means exhaustive. The institutions below are examples of some of the many organizations studying the cultural aspects of business relations and practice:

AMA International, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10020. Tel: (212) 586 8100
AMA International is the overseas division of the American Management Association, and seeks to develop AMA services in the international business community. AMA International also organizes courses and in-company educational programs.
Bowling Green State University, Management Center, Business Administration Building, Bowling Green, OH 43403. Tel: (419) 372 2807
This institution conducts research, consulting and management development programs in a wide variety of business-related disciplines including strategic planning, organizational development, and international business.

Business Council for International Understanding, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10170. Tel: (212) 490 0460
The Business Council for International Understanding works with US and foreign governments in arranging briefings with US industry executives. The council also conducts seminars for personnel who are assigned abroad as well as home-based personnel with responsibilities in their companies’ international affairs. Provides intensive study courses and special cross-cultural programs, and maintains comprehensive company and country research documentation.

CDS International, 330 7th Avenue, 19th floor, New York, NY 10001-5010. Tel: (212) 760 1400
Formerly the Carl Duisberg Society, the CDS sponsors work training and educational exchange programs for business personnel and others, including students from the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany. CDS also serves as the national supervising agency for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Centre on Transnational Corporations, United Nations DC2, New York, NY 10017-1220. Tel: (212) 963 3176
A unit of the United Nations, the CTC researches international arrangements and agreements relating to transnational corporations, including codes of conduct, negotiations, and political, social, and cultural impacts of transnational corporations on host developing countries.

Chartered Institute of Marketing, Moor Hall, Cookham, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 9QH, England. Tel: 01628 524922
Membership in the Institute comprises marketing executives from 20 countries. This organization seeks to increase knowledge of the principles and practices of marketing, operates a speakers’ register, and conducts research.

Delphi International Group, 1090 Vermont Avenue NW, 7th floor, Washington, DC 20005. Tel: (202) 898 0950
Delphi is an umbrella group for organizations involved in facilitating international business and development, offering education, training, exchanges, and observation study programs for US and foreign government agencies, companies, and institutions.

East-West Center, Pacific Islands Development Program, 1777 East-West Road, Honolulu, HI 96848. Tel: (808) 944 7724
Designed to promote mutual understanding and better relations between the USA and Asian and Pacific peoples, the program operates the Cultural and Social Issues in Development Project to study cultural values and work ethics.

European International Business Association, c/o European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management, 13 rue d’Egmont, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: 2 5119116
Members in the association are individuals and associations involved in international business. This organization serves as an information clearinghouse for research of international business.

Foundation for International Economic Policy, 25 North Brentwood Avenue, St Louis, MO 63105. Tel: (314) 721 5194
The Foundation promotes the understanding of international business and cultures through business and educational activities and is currently developing a trade expansion center in Tokyo, Japan.

Indiana University, Bloomington, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 313 North Jordon Avenue, Bloomington, IN 47405. Tel: (812) 855 9097
Research activities at the center focus on interdisciplinary studies of Latin American and Caribbean countries including the study of international business. The center holds seminars on aspects of Latin American life and culture, and maintains a Latin American research collection.
International Advertising Association, 342 Madison Avenue, 20th floor, Suite 2000, New York, NY 10017. Tel: (212) 357 1133
The Association is made up of individuals from 71 countries engaged in advertising or marketing. This group conducts research on issues related to advertising around the world.

International Association of Business Communicators, 1 Hallidie Plaza, Suite 600, San Francisco, CA 94102. Tel: (415) 433 3400
Members of this group are communication managers, public relations directors, and others in the public relations and organizational communications field. This association conducts research in the field of communications.

International Communications Association, 12750 Merit Drive, Suite 710 LB-89, Dallas, TX 75251. Tel: (214) 233 4889
The International Communications Association seeks to exchange ideas and experiences in the communications field. This association conducts research and study programs.

International Marketing Federation, c/o ADETEM, 221 rue La Fayette, F-75010, Paris, France. Tel: 1 40389710
The Federation’s membership is made up of marketing executives from 22 countries. Its objectives are to study the practices of marketing and to provide for the international exchange of marketing information and documentation.

International Studies Association, Brigham Young University, David M. Kennedy Center, 216 HRCB, Provo, UT 84602. Tel: (801) 378 5459
Members in this group are scholars specializing in international affairs and cross-cultural studies. The association holds conferences and conducts workshops.

Management Professionals Association, PO Box 1445, Madras 600 017, Tamil Nadu, India. Tel: 44 440677
Individuals in 161 countries working in management belong to this group which encourages members to exchange and pool information. The association facilitates personal contacts among members and operates a speaker’s bureau.

National MultiCultural Institute, 3000 Connecticut Avenue NW, No. 438, Washington, DC 20008. Tel: (202) 483 0700
The Institute encourages understanding and communication among peoples of differing backgrounds and provides multicultural training for organizations working with diverse groups.

United States Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036. Tel: (212) 354 4480
The Council serves as the US National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce and enables multicultural enterprises to operate effectively by representing their interests to intergovernmental and governmental bodies.

University of Missouri-St Louis, Center for International Studies, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St Louis, MO 63121. Tel: (314) 553 5755
Specializing in international politics, foreign policy, and intercultural education, the Center designs and coordinates programs, research projects, and courses in East Asian, European, North American, Latin American, and African studies.

University of Pittsburgh, University Center for International Studies, 4G01 Forbes Quadrangle, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. Tel: (412) 648 7374
The Center initiates and sponsors international research and seeks funding for international research programs dealing with Latin America, Russia, East Europe, Asia, and Western Europe. Research in the International Business Center focuses on the relationship between corporate strategies, decision making, and governmental policies across nations.

World Trade Center of New Orleans, 2 Canal Street, Suite 2900, New Orleans, LA 70130. Tel: (504) 529 1601
Multinational membership in this group sponsors trade and cultural programs. The center maintains a library of 10,000 volumes on world trade and international affairs.