Cross-Cultural Communication

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China is one of the countries which are modernizing, but there are still a lot of differences in the way Chinese Interact and communicate with the Western people. Learning the verbal and non-verbal communication of China is very important when it comes to international business negotiations. The success and failure of negotiation highly depend on verbal and non-verbal communication. Hofstede analyzes China as one of the countries very low in individualism which reveals the fact that they like being in a group and believe in stronger relationships by managing conflicts. China also has a high power distance society, and these cultural considerations must be kept in mind while indulging in business with them.

The non-verbal communication in China is very crucial to make the message understandable, and they highly rely on the voice, the tone, and the facial expressions while communicating something. Frowning is considered as a way of disagreement and staring towards someone while communicating is also considered as disrespectful and Chinese also shun their eye contact to provide themselves with some privacy. Gestures are a common element of non-verbal communication and in China polite nods are common while greeting someone; however, the use of gestures is not as frequent. Unlike in the US, pointing is done with the hand, not one finger. In addition, they do not prefer to be touched unless unavoidable (“Verbal and Non-Verbal Language | Exploring China,” n.d.).

When it comes to personal space, formal acknowledgement of space is a norm. While doing communication with Westerns, they consider them to be upfront with their speaking manners, and therefore it results in misunderstanding very often. Chinese also prefer a less aggressive and slower approach. They do not want blunt communication, and it makes them upset, yet they believe in subtle and indirect ways of delivering their ideas and opinions. Relationships are very important for Chinese to consider and they value it a lot especially when it comes to business deals which are referred to as guanxi. Before doing business, they would like to build a relationship, and no topic is actually off limits. Formal communication is expected, and they also prefer face to face meetings.

When it comes to dealing and communicating with Chinese person especially for the sake of business their cultural considerations and communication etiquettes must be kept in mind. An American must also modify the communication style based on cultural demands so as to deal successfully with Chinese. As Americans prefer direct and blunt communication but the Chinese always want a subtle and less aggressive communication style. Being very direct will lead to a shutdown of a business deal. The communication must be very polite and courteous and must show deference to their business and its practices. The communication style adapted to negotiate with them should represent respect and graciousness.

American must learn to communicate in an indirect way, and the tone must be modified. In addition, they think before speaking is the key to communicate with the Chinese successfully. Communication characteristics must be based on developing deeper relationships and respect and hierarchy must be esteemed. It must foster trust and friendly relationships with the Chinese person. Shouting, speaking rude and asking straightforward questions is also discouraged. This may seem frustrating to an American, but one has to adapt to these communication characteristics to have a successful business relationship. Success and achievements must not be showcased in front of Chinese and communication must be slow and efficient. Chinese do not want to rush communication like Americans who have a firm belief in time-saving and efficiency.

It is common to point out towards someone using a finger in America, and that should be avoided in the form of Chinese. Frowning, rude and angry expressions and touching must also be avoided. If necessary one has to back down from an argument, as opposed to American culture and readily disagreeing must be avoided. It seems offensive for Chinese.

Culture and communication are the most important considerations when it comes to international business negotiations (Steers, Nardon, & Sanchez-Runde, 2013). As Chinese and Americans have huge differences in their cultures; therefore, Chinese cultural and their verbal and non-verbal communication preferences must be given importance. Understanding of culture and the counterparty is most important and the foremost thing before initiating any negotiation. Chinese representatives belong to the high-context culture, either an internalized social context or physical environment of communication which represent most of the meaning in a message, commonly refer to them as indirect style which should be given consideration while negotiating with a Chinese. The context is crucial in communicating with Chinese, especially in business negotiations. In addition, as China has a collectivist culture, therefore, importance must be given to the group success.

As China has a strong hierarchical structure and hence respect and attention must be given to the hierarchical positions. The long-term orientation and relationship building is very important for Chinese people, and hence trust building should be the first thing to be done before initiating any business deal. One must not humiliate the other partner from China. The mixing of family and professional life must not be disliked. Guanxi is very important to establish as Chines give must consideration to network and they only negotiate with those who consider being part of their network. One factor that should be given attention is that if one is at the lower position, he must not directly intend to negotiate with the persona at a high hierarchical position. It is necessary to go through certain intermediate positions and later they can introduce one to the person at a higher position. Negotiators must develop cross-culture awareness and make full research for the cultural understanding of counterpart.

Being a collectivist country, the conflict resolution strategies in China include negotiation, mediation, litigation, and arbitration. These four strategies must be considered by anyone dealing with Chinese and facing conflicts in a business environment. Negotiation is considered as the best strategy as it is a cost-effective method and benefits to preserve the relationship of negotiating parties which is vital in China. Chinese also prefer negotiation as a way of conflict resolution to resolve the dispute between the parties. However, despite being one of the best methods of dispute resolution, it doesn't always lead to an agreement.

Mediation is a non-binding mechanism in which both the parties in conflict present their proposals and is also one of the successful means of conflict resolution. This method is also referred to as arbitration and litigation, and it also leads to a satisfactory position. In case the conflict is not resolved using the mediation and negotiation method then arbitration is considered as the third way of resolving the disputes. It is an effective way as it secures the right of both parties. Litigation refers to a method of dispute resolution which involves the court in the resolution of conflicts. This method is least preferred in China (“Dispute prevention and conflicts resolution in China,” n.d.).

While doing business, it is highly preferred to avoid conflicts, and disputes and hence conflict prevention mechanism must be adopted. Though it is impossible to avoid any conflicts and disputes in negotiations and to deal it can be avoided by considering the culture and necessary communication means to promote friendly relationship with Chinese as they do not initiate conflicts and disputes.

References

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