A Multicultural Career: Where Do I Start?

Canon Sumidero, near Tuxtla Guitierrez, Chiapas Mexico

Presented by Francine McKenna
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Before I talk about the “how”, I’d like to touch a bit on the “why”.

- Multicultural colleagues
- Multicultural employees
- Multicultural vendors
- Multicultural business partners
- Multicultural career experiences
  - Global business challenges
  - Travel
  - Secondments

“A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it.” – John Steinbeck
“The real voyage of discovery consists, not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” Marcel Proust

Why embrace multiculturalism at home and in your business experiences?

- Diversity enhances worker retention, empowerment, alignment and productivity
- The problem-solving process is enhanced by integration of different perspectives
- Group dynamics are enhanced by teams working across cultural and racial boundaries
- Harassment and discrimination claims are reduced
- Qualified candidate pools grow
- New markets are opened

Your life will be richer for it!
Foreign languages are all around us in the Chicago area

But which neighborhoods have the most foreign-speakers?

Spanish-speaking zip codes

The MLA Language Map uses data from the US Census 2000 to display the locations and numbers of speakers of thirty languages and three groups of less commonly spoken languages in the United States.
Foreign languages are all around us in the Chicago area

But which neighborhoods have the most foreign-speakers?

According to more recent U.S. Census data (2011) South Lawndale has the highest number of Spanish-speaking residents at 29,672.

Polish and Chinese are the next most-common languages—followed by Tagalog (Philippines) and Arabic. Chicago was known to have the most Polish people outside of Warsaw. It remains the second-most common language spoken in the city.

Source: http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2014/02/14/common-neighborhoods-for-a-foreign-language/
Multicultural Vendors and Business Partners

A.T. Kearney's Global Services Location Index™ (GSLI) offers a snapshot for business leaders who must choose among a growing number of offshore locations, and the policymakers who seek to influence their decisions.

“Formerly lower ranked states with highly qualified labor once again became viable options amid currency devaluation (see figure 2 on next slide).

The Baltic states are a dramatic example—Estonia moves into 11th place and Latvia 13th amid ongoing austerity programs. The United Kingdom advances from 31st to 16th place due to the pound's fall in value coupled with slowing wage increases.

In Central and Eastern Europe, Poland is the top story, moving up 15 places to 24th after weathering the economic troubles and benefiting from improved investor sentiment. Hungary (31st) and the Czech Republic (35th) also fared slightly better this year because of decreasing wage levels.”

Source: http://www.atkearney.com/research-studies/global-services-location-index#sthash.t0pSnQhu.dpuf
Multicultural Vendors and Business Partners

**Figure 2**

*Fallout from the financial crisis shook up the rankings, as once-expensive countries moved up*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in rankings</th>
<th>(2009 – 2011)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 India</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2 China</td>
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<td>8 Vietnam</td>
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<td>10 Chile</td>
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<td>14 Lithuania</td>
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<td>15 United Arab Emirates</td>
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<td>16 United Kingdom</td>
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<td>17 Bulgaria</td>
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<td>19 Costa Rica</td>
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<td>20 Russia</td>
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<td>23 Tunisia</td>
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<td>24 Poland</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>25 Romania</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A.T. Kearney Global Services Location Index™, 2011
“Traveling: To be unfettered by position or possession.”

*Orlando* by Virginia Woolf

According to *The Economist*, a growing number of multinationals from the non-Anglophone world have made English their official language.

“The fashion began in places with small populations but global ambitions such as Singapore (which retained English as its *lingua franca* when it left the British empire in 1963), the Nordic countries and Switzerland…The practice spread to the big European countries: numerous German and French multinationals now use English in board meetings and official documents.

*Does that mean foreign language proficiency is unnecessary for working in or with Western European and Scandinavian colleagues?*

*Schumpeter*

*The English empire*

A growing number of firms worldwide are adopting English as their official language

Feb 15th 2014
“He did not think of himself as a tourist: he was a traveler… Whereas the tourist generally hurries back home at the end of a few weeks or months, the traveler, belonging no more to one place than to the next, moves slowly, over periods of years, from one part of the earth to another.” From The Sheltering Sky by Paul Bowles.

Source: Trinity College Library, Dublin Ireland Image courtesy of Irish Welcome Tours’ Flickr stream.
“Culture, the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human spirit. “ Matthew Arnold

Don’t hide in the hotel or the ex-pat compound.

Source: Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen http://www.globeimages.net/data/media/174/tivoli_gardens.jpg
“Be brave and eat where you like. There’s just one rule: The only good restaurants are the busy ones – with the possible exception of those considered fashionable, which are often dreadful.” Glynn Christian, Edible France

Source: La Divette du Moulin Restaurant, Rue Lepic, Montmartre, Paris | davidgiralphoto.com
“It’s a great advantage not to drink among hard-drinking people. You can hold your tongue and, moreover, you can time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don’t see or care.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*

Source: Tim Gidal, Hamburg Red Light District, 1929
“Music I heard with you was more than music,
And bread I broke with you was more than bread.”
Conrad Aiken

Source: Teatro Alla Scala, Milan,
http://www.dagospia.com/mediagallery/dago_fotogallery-96719/411558.htm
“The one thing more difficult than following a regimen is not imposing it on others. “

Marcel Proust

The successful global business traveler has:

1. Empathy
2. Respect for others
3. Intellectual curiosity
4. Interest in other cultures
5. Tolerance for ambiguity
6. Flexibility
7. Initiative
8. Open-mindedness
9. Sociability
10. Positive self Image

How Do I Start?

- Get a passport.
- Learn another language. Perfect the ones you do speak.
  - Being successful is one thing. Being successful in another language is quite another.
- Find others with a like mind.
- Start with trips.
- Raise your hand.
A Multicultural Mindset

One of the reasons America is sometimes described as being an insular country is our relatively low ownership or passports and thus the low rate of international travel. Why is that?

The website *The Expeditioner* cites the most recent statistics issued by the State Department in January of 2014: About 46% of the American population has a passport.

But the U.S. is nearly at the top of the list of countries for those who do have a passport for frequency of travel to a foreign destination.

*Source: http://www.theexpeditioner.com/2010/02/17/how-many-americans-have-a-passport-2/#*
A Multicultural Mindset

“Those states that voted for Romney in 2012 tended to be those states with the lowest number of passport holders, while those states that voted for Obama have the highest percentage of passport holders. A notable exception being Alaska — a state that given its location, it is no surprise that a majority of its residents have passports.” The Expeditioner
“Two roads diverged in a woods, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

Robert Frost

How not to be an “Ugly American”

Stop saying “Time is money.” Our addiction to speed has put us out of sync with most other cultures. We’re perceived as impatient, rushed and, perhaps, pushy by others.

Be less individualistic: You don’t have to always blow your own horn and if you want a job done right, you don’t always have to do it yourself.” Many other countries frequently view us as self-centered and poor team players.

Don’t be so task-oriented
“Keep your eye on the ball,” and “Work before pleasure.” Other cultures place more value on building and nurturing relationships as a way to get the job done.

Be less direct
“Don’t beat around the bush,” and “Tell it like it is!” We tend to view indirectness with suspicion. However, in other cultures our directness may be perceived as being blunt to the point of rudeness.

Be less egalitarian
“All men are created equal...” Our tendencies to use our boss’s first name, to challenge authority easily, and to expect equal treatment reveal a low power distance value. Other cultures frequently take our egalitarianism as an unwillingness to show proper deference and respect to those who deserve it.

Reduce the content focus
“Where’s the beef?” and “Get to the point!” The U.S. style of communications is very strongly oriented toward content (facts, numbers, dates and precise, explicit meanings). We may be perceived as impersonal, naive or narrow-minded, whereas we might experience non-U.S. counterparts as being inscrutable, evasive or insincere, when, in fact, we are merely sending and receiving messages on different channels.

Know thyself
Many of our traits such as optimism, industriousness, inventiveness, decisiveness, enthusiasm, and friendliness are considered positive abroad. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to be aware of the negative perceptions of foreign counterparts and to make sure you know how you are coming across. Perhaps the most important lesson for the cross-cultural sojourner is to understand one’s own cultural baggage.

Source: http://www.goodreads.com/videos/13349-camus-vs-sartre-documentary
Top Ten Business Travel No-Nos

1. In France: Forming a circle with your thumb and forefinger and placing it over your nose indicates that the person you're referring to is drunk.
2. In Scotland, don’t ask the bagpipers what’s under their kilt.
3. In Brazil, don’t forget they speak Portuguese, not Spanish.
4. In Mexico, don’t be embarazada of your Spanish. That word means you’re pregnant, not embarrassed. (Beware false friends in foreign languages.)
5. Don’t speak louder, speak more slowly, without jargon or maybe even try to speak the local language.
6. Don’t ignore the unique taxicab rules of a place. Taxi drivers are the curse and the unexpected pleasure of any traveler.
7. Learn the basic expressions of courtesy in the local language on day one. Consider yourself a guest wherever you are.
8. Don’t keep believing that you are doing your host country a favor by being there and spending dollars or showing the “right” way.
9. Stop maintaining the typical American inherent sense of cultural superiority.
10. Don’t show that you are too anxious to go home too soon.

The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls. Pablo Picasso

Language Education

• For example, at the University of Illinois – Urbana/Champaign
  • 2013 BLRT Grants: *Providing incentives for foreign language faculty to teach and do research in a business context.* Faculty, doctoral students and language professionals are invited to apply for the 2013 BLRT grants.
  • Certificate in Global Business for any U of I MBA student combines two international business courses with a foreign language and an area studies course. Four courses and a study abroad experience are required.
  • Illinois CIBER supports International Business Immersion Programs (IBIP) to regions around the world.
  • The NEIU Department of World Languages and Cultures has acquired the entire series of Pimsleur Language Programs for the languages currently taught, or soon to be taught, at NEIU.
  • The NEIU Language Learning Lab provides technical support and instructional media for students taking language courses. Students can gain communication skills and an authentic cultural experience. “A seat in the LLL is like a passage to virtual world travel.”
  • NEIU offers classes in Arabic, Chinese, French, Greek, Italian, Korean, Polish and Spanish
Multicultural Business Education

Centers for International Business Education and Research

- The CIBER program links the manpower and information needs of the business community with the international education, language training and research capacity of universities across the United States.
- The **thirty-three centers** serve as regional and national resources for business practitioners, students and teachers at all levels.
- **In the Midwest:**
  - Indiana University
  - Michigan State University
  - Purdue University
  - The Ohio State University
  - University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
  - University of Michigan
  - University of Minnesota
  - University of Wisconsin
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