

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE ARRIVING IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Doing Business
With Ease
OVERSEAS

Building Cross-Cultural Relationships That Last

Harriet L. Russell



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: A New Map for Doing Business	13
Charting the Course: Why the Unease Overseas?	15
The Quest: Cross-Cultural Connections at Home and Abroad.	19
SECTION II: A Guide for the Journey	25
Lesson 1: Language Colors What Other People Think.	27
Lesson 2: Techniques for Better Intercultural Communication	33
Lesson 3: The World is One Family.	43
Lesson 4: Innovative vs. Traditional Cultures	51
Lesson 5: Long-Term vs. Short-Term Cultures	59
Lesson 6: Formal vs. Informal Cultures	73
Lesson 7: Relational vs. Transactional Cultures	81
Lesson 8: Collective vs. Individualistic Cultures	87
Lesson 9: Humility vs. Self-Promoting Cultures	93
Lesson 10: Low-Context vs. High-Context Cultures	103
Lesson 11: Hierarchy, Social Position, and Family.	107
Lesson 12: Entertaining, Etiquette, and Seating	113
Lesson 13: Personal Space, Eye Contact, and Touch	121
Lesson 14: Verbal vs. Nonverbal Cues	131
Lesson 15: It's About Time	143
Lesson 16: Women in Business	151
Lesson 17: Silence Is Golden	157

Lesson 18: Harmony, Persuasion, and Confrontation . . .	161
Lesson 19: Business Meetings, Negotiating, and Decision-Making as an American Manager Overseas	165
Lesson 20: Cross-Cultural Approaches to Team-Building, Project Management, and Feedback	177
SECTION III: Landing On Your Feet in a Different Country	189
Greetings, Forms of Address, Business Cards	191
Giving, Receiving, Declining Gifts.	201
SECTION IV: Points to Remember for Specific Countries	221
Doing Business in Japan.	223
Doing Business in Belarus and Russia	229
Doing Business in China	233
Doing Business in Fenno-Scandinavia	237
SECTION V: Noble Directions for Global Connections	241
The Compass Within	243
Three Cross-Cultural Directions for Successful Overseas Business.	245
The Three As Applied	249
Business Ease Overseas: Building Cross-Cultural Relationships That Last	251
AFTERWORD: For Your Continued Journey, Inside and Out	255
Acknowledgments	259

SECTION I

A New Map for Doing Business



CHARTING THE COURSE

Why the Unease Overseas?

In this book, I take you on an inside view of my personal experiences as a world citizen in business living overseas. I show you how the journey as a world traveler has enriched and enhanced my journey within.

Upon graduating from college in 1974, my only experience abroad was a year in Spain. Then, in 1975, I spent six months traveling overland from Europe through Iran and Afghanistan to India and Nepal. As I followed Marco Polo's Silk Route, I traveled by car, train, and bus. I took the time to immerse myself into the journey.

In each place, I did not know the language, the culture, or the customs. Wherever I went, I was a fish out of water.

I traveled by air to Thailand, the Philippines, and finally to Japan, not knowing Tokyo would be my home for the next five years.

At the start of my career I had education, skills, and some work experience, but I was without a guidebook on what to expect, how to act, or what to say in another culture so distinct from my own. I learned from exposure, experience, and each personal interaction.

As a woman, I learned how to do business successfully without stress through observation, perseverance, and patience.

I understand the unease of overseas. I found shortcuts on how to quickly understand cultures, customs, and etiquette along the way.

Some people like to travel. They are open, courageous, even adventuresome, but also vulnerable.

Some people are afraid to travel. They are cautious about developing meaningful and long-lasting business relationships across the world. They do not know where to begin.

How can we, in this day and age, overcome the fear of the unknown and the discomfort with encountering people who behave, communicate, and live differently? How can we elevate our perspective to make changes?

The best resource is to begin with ourselves. Awareness and attitude make a difference. Do your part. Live authentically, honestly, and positively. Be kind, sincere. Be truthful, especially with yourself. There are two basic emotions: love and fear. All positive emotions are based in love. All negative emotions are based in fear. Will you align with fear or will you align with love?



**Companies do not do business;
people do business.**

The most rewarding cross-cultural understandings are interactions with people.

Surely, I like to see history still alive in the remnants of old architecture, methods of cooking, healing, and handicrafts passed down from generation to generation. The awe-inspiring landscapes and scenery allow me to take a breath

and feel alive with reverence for the grandeur of life and Mother Nature.

But it is interactions with people that move me deeply. The connections of the heart. Learning from and accepting differences. The acknowledgment of each individual's specialness and the recognition of our similarities.

You can proceed even though there are difficulties. You can be inspired to act. I hope this book will help you along the way.

In this book I introduce you to cross-cultural business connections by:

- Defining “culture.”
- Helping you find ways to categorize behaviors and beliefs of differing cultures and overlay them onto global business.
- Showing you how to move from discomfort and uneasiness to understanding and less stress. We start with our own personal awareness of who we are, how we think, feel and act, and how others perceive us.
- Teaching about others from other cultures.
- Uncovering how to throw away the formulas and learn to trust your own inner guidance and intuition from a calm and peaceful attitude of gratitude and positivity.

THE QUEST:

Cross-Cultural Connections at Home and Abroad

In this global economy and multicultural, multilingual world, bridges are built and crossed. My intent is to help you cross them with ease.

This book is not meant to change your cultural foundation, but to stimulate you into another way of viewing yourself and the world with an expanded consciousness with limitless potential. It can be so rewarding and enriching to learn from other cultures.

The principles of self-awareness, nonjudgment, acceptance of others, and seeing the whole picture are tenets for success in cross-cultural business relations.



**I believe that everyone, every action,
every thought carries an impact
upon this world.**

Why not make business life a journey of less stress, open hearts, growth, learning, and development in order to create

peaceful as well as profitable business relationships? Cross-cultural competency can do this.

Who Am I?

I lived abroad for eight years in total immersion in my twenties. When I reached thirty, it was as if I had an identity crisis. Was I doing business, interacting, and thinking like an American, a Spaniard, a Japanese, or as Harriet Russell?

I was a blend of all. I had consciously or unconsciously taken in my experiences and adapted them to my persona. I was like a chameleon who changed according to my environment, but I also had a core “me.” I observed, adapted, and then integrated into the different cultures.

I came back to the U.S. thinking I needed more real American business experience and education. I started working in New York City at Sony Corporation of America, then the German Metallgesellschaft. Still searching, I went to Bankers Trust on Wall Street to experience what I thought was the all-American style—a U.S. company for a U.S. woman.

For all the external success, I still did not feel at ease. I began a daily practice of meditation. I then took a ten-day program for self-exploration at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. As soon as I walked in the door, I felt an energy shift. The staff was happy, the attitude was positive, the level of service and professionalism were great, and the scenery and lifestyle just what I wanted.

I began to feel in alignment with who I really was. East meets West, right in Massachusetts. I discovered how moving with ease in life came from within myself.

I went back to New York, left my job, sublet my apartment and returned to Kripalu to live and work for eight years.

For the subsequent thirty years, I have used body-mind stress management techniques and applied them to all areas of my life, including cross-cultural business.

Here are five key points that work for me:

- Positive Attitude
- Trust
- Knowledge
- Patience
- Respect

This book is not intended to cover all the places I have been; neither is it a directory of all the cultures in the world. The personal anecdotes I have selected and shared illustrate points within the framework of the academic field of Intercultural Communications and Business Protocol.

This is my story. And you will have yours. In the sharing of our experiences, we can build lasting business relationships and a stronger, friendlier world.

Letting Go

It is wonderful to know that nothing is wrong or right in cross-cultural differences.

It is just what it is. Different. And the differences in cultures give us possibilities to expand our skill-set toolbox as well as our consciousness.

Rumi, the 13th century poet and Sufi mystic, wrote: “Out beyond ideas of rightdoing and wrongdoing, there is a field. I will meet you there.”

An influx of different ways of thinking, acting, perceiving and interacting with the world can be intimidating, even

threatening to a person. Yet to another person, it can open our eyes to not only understanding others, but more importantly, to understanding ourselves better.

Cross-cultural awareness begins with asking, “Who am I?”

What values and concepts do we hold? When we are challenged and continue to hold on, we create internal stress. With stress comes negative attitudes, moods, words, and behaviors. Our openness to balanced and healthy inclinations towards kindness, compassion, understanding, and love are blocked.



**Holding on does not make you strong.
Letting go does.**

Relaxing into accepting others as they are releases stress and tension. Just as it takes energy to tense a muscle, it takes energy to hold on to our resistance. When we let go of the tension, we consequently gain energy and can channel it into other areas. We can open our minds and access a heartfelt energy which allows us to move into mental and emotional transformation.

Know yourself. Be yourself. And then explore outside yourself and try new ways. See how they feel. Understand from the inside. Then you can make conscious choices.

Knowledge Is Power

We are always changing. Yet the inner core of who we are, the love and light, is constant. How you find that inner self is personal to each individual. That it exists in everyone is undeniable.

How to break through the layers of differences to find the connections of similarity is what cross-cultural competency can provide.

Look for the commonalities which have no division across human lines, and learn from the differences.

If you are working cross-culturally within your company or doing business across borders, you cannot escape this world of global participation. Observe and you will learn. With this awareness, you can see so much more clearly who you are and what part you play. You can become aware of how others perceive you. You can put yourself in another's shoes. Learning is knowledge. Knowledge is power—the power to be free to let go into what *is* instead of wondering why it *isn't*.

Seven Cross-Cultural Inner Quest Steps

- Be adventuresome, be fearless, and see yourself straight on.
- Explore the outer world; be curious and open.
- From the outer world the mind is stimulated, and the heart is opened.
- Be challenged by the unknown; be inquisitive and a perpetual student of life.
- Then find your inner world; go within and explore there.
- Use both worlds, the inner and the outer, to take you on a journey uniquely your own; explore who you are, how you see yourself, and how you might be perceived by someone else of a different culture.
- Become more understanding of others; it will bring you to greater acceptance of yourself too.