



Consulting to Management®

Volume 16, Number 1 · March 2005

The Forum for Consultants to Management Worldwide



**Cultural
Intelligence**



**Use This
Secret Weapon**



**Trust and the
Third Opinion**



**Saving Troubled
Companies**



**Do You Still Believe
in the Seven
Deadly Myths?**



**Build
Middle Management
Capacity**



**Good News
and Bad News**



\$24 Worldwide

PUBLISHER

The Journal of Management Consulting, Inc., Wisconsin, USA, is a not-for-profit educational corporation serving the management consulting profession worldwide. To correspond with the corporate office, write John D. Roethle, Secretary, 6311 No. Berkeley Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53217 USA.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Consulting to Management is published quarterly by the Journal of Management Consulting, Inc. Subscription price per volume of four issues is US\$80 worldwide. To order subscriptions or inquire about bulk rates, visit our website at www.C2M.com or communicate with the Business Office. Checks or bank drafts should be made payable in U.S. dollars to "Consulting to Management." Visa, MasterCard, and AmEx are accepted.

ADVERTISING

The Board of Trustees reserves the right to reject advertising that is inconsistent with the professional image of this publication. For information on advertising policy, rates, and schedules, visit our website at www.C2M.com or communicate with the Business Office.

BUSINESS OFFICE

Address:
Consulting to Management
858 Longview Road
Burlingame, CA
94010-6974 USA
Telephone: 650-342-1954
Facsimile: 650-344-5005
E-mail: C2M@C2M.com

WEBSITE ADDRESS

For complete information on subscriptions, advertising, back issues, reprints, and editorial policy, and for an index of past articles, visit our website at www.C2M.com.

ARTICLE REPRINTS

Contact Wrights Reprints at 1-877-652-5295 or e-mail twright@wrightsreprints.com for customized reprints. For reproduction rights, go to www.C2M.com and click "Reprints."

© The Journal of Management Consulting, Inc., Milwaukee, Wisconsin. All rights reserved.



Consulting to Management®

Volume 16, Number 1 · March 2005

The Forum for Consultants to Management Worldwide

2 From the Editor

READERS' AID

Gerald A. Simon

3 Issues & Trends

David Bushko

- HELP YOUR CLIENTS AIM LOW
- SOME FORECASTS

5 CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

People Skills for a Global Workplace

David C. Thomas, Kerr Inkson

10 Memorable Assignments

A SENSITIVE POLITICAL SITUATION

Al Kedora

12 USE THIS SECRET WEAPON

High-Performing Workgroups

Susan Lucia Annunzio

16 TRUST AND THE THIRD OPINION

Saj-Nicole Joni

21 SAVING TROUBLED COMPANIES

The Turnaround Consultant

James R. Sargeant

25 Thoughts from the Edge

WHY GOOD CLIENTS TURN BAD

Alan Weiss

28 DO YOU STILL BELIEVE IN THE SEVEN DEADLY MYTHS?

Meghann L. Drury, Sotiris C. Kitsopoulos

32 BUILD MIDDLE MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

Lisa Haneberg

38 Word Corner

WOULDN'T IT BE LOVERLY

Dorothy Alexander, Albert Rivett

39 GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS

The Strategy Consulting Value Chain Is Breaking Up

Sascha L. Schmidt, Patrick Vogt, Ansgar Richter

45 Point of Law

SUBCONTRACT COATTAILS

Alex W. Zabrosky

47 From the Lab

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE . . .

THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME!

Part One

G. Bruce Friesen

52 Book Reviews

Robert H. Schaffer

G. Bruce Friesen

Blaise J. Arena

Fiona Czerniawska

Rees Morrison

64 Contributor's Guide

Opinions expressed in *C2M* are the authors' and do not necessarily represent those of *Consulting to Management*, the Journal of Management Consulting, Inc., its personnel, or advertisers. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission.

ISSN: 1530-0153



READERS' AID

The consultant's time is limited and valuable, which leaves you, dear reader, with the task of constantly having to make choices. So, here's some help for you.

Typically, you'll find in *C2M* a range and variety of topics of interest to consultants. One good reason is that our articles are written by practicing consultants brimming with ideas for practicing consultants. And this issue is no exception. Just take a look.

- ★ *Dealing with a client in another country or with a market or other business activity in another country—and culture?* “Cultural Intelligence: People Skills for a Global Workplace” may be for you, enhancing your ability to cross cultural boundaries with the ease of a diplomat.
- ★ *Probably all of us can find utility in ideas and insights regarding the workings of client organizations, complex and otherwise.* One such source is “Use This Secret Weapon: High-Performing Workgroups.” Another is “Build Middle Management Capacity.”
- ★ *Concerned with building trust with a client and having your opinion valued?* “Trust and the Third Opinion” may be for you.
- ★ *In a troubled company situation and wondering whether to back out or go forward?* Maybe “Saving Troubled Companies: The Turnaround Consultant” will illuminate for you key issues and available options.
- ★ *Are you amenable to reexamining some of your experience-based operative assumptions about the delivery of a consulting service?* If so, try “Do You Still Believe in the Seven Deadly Myths?”
- ★ *Trying to understand the changes occurring in strategy consulting?* You'll do no better than the authoritative “Good News and Bad News: The Strategy Consulting Value Chain Is Breaking Up.”
- ★ *Ever contemplate subcontracting to another consultant or in engaging a consulting subcontractor?* You won't want to miss the Point of Law column, “Subcontract Coattails.”

And there's a good deal more here for you.

Thank You, Professor Chandler

For close to 20 years, Alfred D. Chandler's name has graced these pages as a member of the *C2M* Advisory Board. But time will have its way, and the time has come, as he moves on to other interests, to thank him for being a supporter of this publication. Now Strauss Professor of Business History, Emeritus, at Harvard Business School, Professor Chandler made his mark in the very highest rank of business historians by way of investigating and illuminating key influences on modern industrial society. His publications include such landmarks as:

Strategy & Structure: Chapters in the History of the Industrial Enterprise (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962)

The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977)

Inventing the Electronic Century: The Epic Story of the Consumer Electronics & Computer Industries (New York: Free Press, 2001)



■ Help Your Clients Aim Low

Following the U.S. national election, a PBS broadcast of “NOW with Bill Moyers,” focused our attention on some issues concerning the nation’s prospects. In doing so, it diverted our attention from the war in Iraq to what the program called “the war on the working class.”

The broadcast alluded to a recent editorial: “Speaking of a nation divided, even *Forbes* magazine, no enemy of the accumulation of capital, acknowledges that there are two nations polarized by incomes: ‘Executive pay continues to leap. Even chief executives dismissed in disgrace receive huge severance packages.’ The middle and working classes, on the other hand, are borrowing more and saving less. One reason: ‘the average real wage is falling,’ and that’s ‘unusual for this stage of the business cycle.’”

Not to worry, though. This is still the land of opportunity. According to NOW, *Forbes* writer says, “this polarizing of income presents an opportunity for investors. He advises them to move their money to companies that run yacht basins, clean and maintain the vacation homes of the wealthy and even house-sitting, au pair and pet-care services.”

This is pathetic. One of the nation’s leading business journals advises wealthy investors to put their money on

pet-care services? Not food, not housing, not clothing, not even technology. Pet-care services? Regardless of how rich you are, surely when you get that kind of advice from that kind of publication, you’ve got to stop and consider that your country—its economy, its culture, the hopes and dreams of its people—may be in deep trouble.

Wealth doesn’t trickle down, it wells up.

Among consultants, however, there is one individual who has a better idea. We refer to C. K. Prahalad, Fruehauf Professor of Business Administration and Professor of Corporate Strategy and International Business at the University of Michigan Business School. Prahalad has been named among the top ten management thinkers of the world in every major survey for over ten years. In short, he’s clearly worth listening to.

And the best place to do that listening is in his new book, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty Through Profits*. He states the problem well right at the beginning, “What is needed is a better approach to

help the poor, an approach that involves partnering with them to innovate and achieve sustainable win-win scenarios where the poor are actively engaged and, at the same time, the companies providing products and services to them are profitable.”

From Prahalad’s perspective, the first barrier to be overcome is our “dominant logic,” our natural inclination to see things in light of “our own ideologies, experiences and established management practices.” For example, he notes that multinational corporations assume the poor (what Prahalad calls “bottom of the pyramid,” or BOP, markets) can’t afford most products, don’t have use for the products sold in developed countries, and won’t pay for technological innovation. The conclusion is that the poor simply aren’t critical for corporations’ growth and vitality.

Prahalad makes some startling assertions to the contrary. For example, with respect to cost, “We will show that a 10 to 200 times advantage (compared to the cost structures that are oriented to the top-of-the-pyramid markets) is possible if firms innovate from the BOP up and do not follow the traditional practice

DAVID BUSHKO is CEO of Aegis Communications, Inc., and President of FirThink, Aegis’s consulting division.

of serving the BOP markets by making minor changes to the products created for the top of the pyramid.” The principle isn’t new. That the last should be first is an ancient principle that has worked often and well for thousands of years. Wealth doesn’t trickle down, it wells up.

Prahalad then goes on to refute a series of other long-cherished views about the BOP market. He notes that the poor have extraordinary purchasing power. The reason this often appears false is that the poor pay a “poverty penalty.” That is, they pay higher prices because of local monopolies, inadequate access, poor distribution, and strong traditional intermediaries. According to Prahalad, “Large-scale, private-sector businesses can ‘unlock this poverty penalty.’” Thus, for instance, some usury laws aside, a bank serving the BOP could charge interest rates of 25%, thus actually reducing BOP borrowing rates from the exorbitant 600% charged by those who currently lend to the poor. That, in turn, would give the borrower a good deal more money to spend, thus further expanding BOP market opportunities.

Prahalad discusses a number of other misconceptions. One of the most interesting themes throughout the book, at least as far as this reader was concerned, is his description of the varied ways in which BOP consumers readily use cell phones, computers, and newer advanced technologies to interconnect and reap the benefits of information technology.

The key to exploiting this new world of opportunity is innovation. Here, too, Prahalad offers some good advice. His 12 guidelines for innovation in BOP markets include focusing on price performance, developing hybrid solutions that are scalable and transportable across countries, and developing products on the basis of a deep understanding of functionality, not just form. These are principles that, if imple-

mented, would not only create new opportunities and begin the eradication of poverty, but also impose new disciplines that could improve all areas of the enterprise.

At the end, Prahalad makes what is perhaps his most surprising assertion: “Given bold and responsible leadership from the private sector and civil society organization, I have no doubt that the elimination of poverty and deprivation is possible by 2020.” This conclusion is based on some “givens” that are difficult to imagine in the present environment, but the conclusion is, nevertheless, the right one for our—or any other—time.

At a time when big-time opportunities seem to be diminishing, it’s worthwhile noting that new ones are opening up in areas off the traditional radar screen. In an earlier column, we called for the development of “activist consultants,” people who understand that there are more important questions in life than “Is it profitable?” and want to act accordingly. For those in this category, Prahalad’s book is a good place to develop some initial advice for clients that could have a positive impact on the world’s future into the bargain.

■ Some Forecasts

Now that the U.S. election is over, everyone is talking about what lies ahead. We suspect that the answer is “More of the same, but more so.” In this environment, consulting may not be a high-price, high-margin business, but it could be a very steady, moderately profitable one. In short, you may not get filthy rich, but you can still live the good life. Here are some trends to watch and respond to:

■ *More mergers and acquisitions activity.* Many of these won’t be on the same scale as the glory days, but the big fish will continue to swallow up the little ones at a steady pace. If you consult in this area, you can expect to make some money.

■ *Tax laws will continue to evolve.* The President, at his first press conference after the election, announced his intention to change these. So far, what he has done has benefited those at the high end; we can expect a continuation of this with a consequent shifting of the tax burden to middle- and lower-income citizens. The President wants to continue spending in Iraq, while cutting the deficit by one-half over the coming four years. It’s hard to imagine where the money will come from if not from taxes. For consultants, especially individual practitioners, hold on to your money until you see how this shakes out.

You may not get filthy rich, but you can still live the good life.

■ *Continuing growth in the outsourcing market*—another bit of good news for consultants. The economy will continue to look very good from the top, but less so from the bottom. But it’s the top that sets policy, and as the money comes in, those at the top won’t want to see it go out too quickly. The end result will probably be restrained hiring. Instead, most clients will look to do all they can with resources that can be cut quickly if things don’t go well. That usually means steady work for consultants.

■ *Everyone will be watching for “ripple effects.”* Since the economy is so integrated, both good and bad surges tend to ripple out and shake up many other areas. If things go badly in the financial area, for example, it hinders technology, because financial firms are mass users. When things aren’t going well for them, they don’t upgrade as quickly, reducing technology’s ability to grow. At the same time and for the same reason, if things

continued on page 24

Cultural Intelligence

PEOPLE SKILLS FOR A GLOBAL WORKPLACE

DAVID C. THOMAS, KERR INKSON

The need for effective interactions with people from different cultures is no longer limited to expatriates or jet-setting corporate troubleshooters. It has become a fundamental management skill involving what we term *cultural intelligence* (CQ). To develop it, you (and your clients) must progress through a series of stages ranging from simply reacting to external stimuli to adjusting your behavior in anticipation of subtle changes in cultural context. While there are numerous ways to accomplish this goal, including formal education and training, experiential learning is key to increasing CQ.

Consider the following story about a global manager:

Bill Miller, top American salesman with a major information technology manufacturer, sits in his Mexico City hotel room, head bowed, running his hands through his fair wavy hair in frustration. Will his hosts ever get down to talking business? Don't they know he has only a few days in their city? There is a deal to be made. The preliminary negotiations, made from a distance, have gone well. Yet now, two days into his trip and with only 24 hours more to go, he feels he is no closer to "closing" than he was when he arrived.

It's not that his Mexican hosts are hostile. On the contrary, they are extraordinarily good-natured. They smile broadly at him, take a personal interest in him, and certainly

look after all his physical needs. The hotel, for example, is excellent. It is just that the Mexicans show very little interest in talking business. The manager who has been assigned to look after Bill is a good host, but he is not party to the deal Bill wants to negotiate. On the way in from the airport, when Bill brought up the subject of his sales presentation, which he had carefully prepared before the trip, his host seemed surprised that Bill wanted to talk about it. "Plenty of time for that later," he advised. "For the moment, you must be tired from your flight. Why not relax for a day or two and do some sightseeing first? I can look after you."

And so, Bill spent the first day being shown around Mexico City, struggling to conceal his impatience. On the second day, however, his host introduced him to the senior managers concerned with the proposed purchase and acquiesced to Bill's suggestion that he make his presentation on the third morning. Again, they were very sociable, but seemed surprised at his haste. Eventually they reluctantly agreed to an "after-work" discussion at 5 P.M.

Bill prepared carefully and arrived promptly at the meeting room with his PowerPoint® display. There was no one there, just a cabinet of drinks and prepared nibbles. Gradually, however, the executives drifted in. They engaged Bill conversationally in English and began to ask questions.

■
*Learn to
cross cultural
boundaries
with the ease
of a diplomat.*

But the questions were not about the equipment, but about Bill's company, its history, its plans, and its future expansion in Latin America.

Next, they moved on to Bill himself, his history in the company, his views of the IT industry and their own industry, his assessment of future economic policies, even his wife, family, and hobbies. Bill was still impatient. He wanted to get on with his presentation, but he did not want to offend his hosts, so he answered their questions and waited for a break in conversation to introduce his presentation. Eventually, during a pause, he said, "Thanks, I am so grateful for your hospitality. Now, I wonder if we might sit down and let me go through my presentation. I think we have a real good deal here for your company."

There was an embarrassed silence. Then the Deputy CEO said slowly, "Unfortunately, I think Mr. Alvarez may already have gone home." Sure enough, he had disappeared. He was the CEO, and without his signature there could be no deal. "Maybe . . ." said the deputy CEO, "maybe tomorrow? In the meantime, why not come out to dinner, where we can get to know each other better?" This time, Bill pleaded fatigue.

How on earth, he wondered, did these people ever sell anything to each other, or buy anything from each other, let alone from him?

Back at his home, Juan Alvarez lit a cigarette thoughtfully. The American had looked so ill at ease, so much a man in a hurry, that Juan just hadn't felt like sticking around. He had wanted to try to build a business relationship, the opportunity to make many years of deals, not just one. Miller had thrown it back in his face. He had seen it before with Americans.

How on earth, he wondered, did they ever learn to really trust each other in business?

The story of Bill Miller and Juan Alvarez is typical—one that is enacted again and again in business negotiations around the world. Businesspeople wonder how to deal with peo-

ple from other countries, other cultures, or other ethnic groups; and they are often left puzzled and frustrated because they simply haven't felt tuned in to the people they have been dealing with. The ability to learn what is needed has been limited by our own narrow thinking about interacting effectively across cultures. We have tried to solve the problem of cultural differences by simply learning and teaching what other cultures are like.

Information about other cultures abounds. Research by cultural anthropologists and other academics has been useful in establishing cultural stereotypes of the world's cultures and subcultures and provides a starting point for anticipating culturally based behavior. Understanding some of the main cultural differences between countries and how they are manifested in business behavior is an important first step to intercultural effectiveness, but it is only a first step. Research on cultural difference can at most provide only a broad statement of cultural identity—the sort that claims Japanese behave in this way and Americans in that way. Generalizations about a country are likely to conceal huge variances within that country stemming from religious, tribal, or ethnic differences; detailed forms of special protocol; and regional variations, for example.

The laundry-list approach to cross-cultural understanding provides an overview of a particular country—such as key cultural characteristics, regional or organizational variations, expected behavior, detailed customs, speech inflections, and expressions and actions that might be considered offensive—as well as functional information like cost of living, health services, and education system. You can buy books of this type about most countries.

Lists of cultural attributes have their place, but they are cumbersome and require documenting every trait of every conceivable cultural variant and the drills and routines that

The ability to learn what is needed has been limited by our own narrow thinking about interacting effectively across cultures.

cater to each. While this kind of intensive preparation for a single, defined destination may be appropriate for an extended visit, for most of us our engagements with other cultures are limited to a less intensive interaction with a variety of cultures. If we are traveling in, or entertaining business visitors from, half a dozen countries, should we memorize the laundry list for each one? If we are suddenly introduced to people of culturally different backgrounds, how can we adapt to the situation?

The essence of culture is subtler and harder to express in print than is possible in a formal and abstract list of facts. Such knowledge needs to be supplemented by and integrated with experience of the culture.

An Intelligent Solution

Our solution to the problem is to become *culturally intelligent*.

Cultural intelligence is being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning increasingly more about it, and gradually shaping one's thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture and one's behavior to be more fine-tuned and appropriate when interacting with others from the culture.

Culturally intelligent people are like the ancient Greek Proteus. Proteus was a supernatural character in Homer's *Odyssey*, a sea dweller who could change shape at will and become a fish, or a lion, or a tree, or a fire, according to the situation he was in. This adaptation was guided by knowledge and mindfulness of the situation. Similarly, global managers of today and tomorrow must learn to be flexible enough to adapt knowledgeably to each new cultural situation they face.

Cultural intelligence has three parts:

■ **Knowledge**—of culture and of the fundamental principles of cross-cultural interactions. This means knowing what culture is, how cultures vary, and how culture affects behavior.

■ **Mindfulness**—the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to cues in the cross-cultural situations encountered.

■ **Behavioral skills**—based on knowledge and mindfulness. These skills become competent across a wide range of situations and involve choosing the appropriate behavior from a well-developed repertoire of behaviors that are correct for different intercultural situations.

The three elements are interrelated and evoke a cycle or repetition in which each new challenge is built upon until cultural intelligence is ultimately achieved. Thus besides acquiring growing competence in a specific culture, you simultaneously acquire *general* cultural intelligence, making each new cultural challenge easier to face because of what has been learned from the previous ones.

The *intelligence quotient*, or IQ, which measures our ability to reason, paved the way for the more recent *emotional intelligence quotient*, or EQ. *Cultural intelligence* (and its measure, CQ) builds on these earlier concepts and incorporates the capability to interact effectively across cultures.

The concept of cultural intelligence is difficult to put into practice on an ongoing basis, requiring time and effort to develop a high CQ and concomitant skills. Years of studying, observing, reflecting, and experimenting go into building a truly skilled performance.

Developing Cultural Intelligence

The development of cultural intelligence occurs in several stages:

STAGE 1: REACTIVITY to external stimuli

A starting point is mindlessly following one's own cultural rules and norms. This stage is typical of individuals with very little exposure to or interest in other cultures. Parochial individuals do not even recognize that cultural differences exist, or they consider them inconsequential. People at this stage of development can be heard to say things like "I don't see differences," and "I treat everyone the same."

STAGE 2: RECOGNITION of other cultural norms and motivation to learn more about them

Experience and mindfulness produce a newfound awareness of the multicultural mosaic

DAVID C. THOMAS
(dcthomas@sfu.ca) and
KERR INKSON
(k.inkson@massey.ac.nz)
are the authors of *Cultural Intelligence: People Skills for Global Business* (Berrett-Koehler, 2004), on which this article is based. Dave is Professor of International Management at Simon Fraser University, Canada, and Kerr is Professor of Management at Massey University, New Zealand.

that surrounds us, which can lead to an overwhelming amount of new information. Curiosity is aroused, and the individual wants to learn more. People at this stage often struggle to sort through the complexity of the cultural environment. They search for simple rules of thumb to guide their behavior.

STAGE 3: ACCOMMODATION of other cultural norms and rules

Reliance on absolutes disappears. A deeper understanding of cultural variation begins to develop. The cultural norms and rules of various societies begin to seem comprehensible and even reasonable in their context. The recognition of appropriate behavioral responses to different cultural situations develops, but adaptive behavior takes a lot of effort and is often awkward. People at this stage know what to say and do in a variety of cultural situations. However, they have to think about it, and adaptive behavior does not feel natural.

STAGE 4: ASSIMILATION of diverse cultural norms into alternative behaviors

At this stage, adjusting to different situations no longer requires much effort. Individuals develop a repertoire of behaviors from which they can choose, depending on the specific cultural situation. They function in a number of different cultures almost effortlessly and with no more stress than if they were in their home culture. Members of other cultures accept them as culturally knowledgeable and feel comfortable interacting with them. They feel at home almost anywhere.

STAGE 5: PROACTIVITY in cultural behavior based on recognition of changing cues that others do not perceive

People with high CQs have the ability to sense changes in cultural context, sometimes even before members of the other culture. They are so attuned to the nuances of intercultural interactions that they automatically adjust their behavior to anticipate these changes and facilitate better exchanges. They intuitively know what behaviors are required and how to execute them effectively. Individuals at this stage of development may be quite rare, but it

is a level of cultural intelligence to which we all might aspire.

People at higher levels of cultural intelligence have a *cognitively complex* perception of their environment. They are able to make connections between seemingly disparate pieces of information. They describe people and events in terms of many different characteristics and are able to see the links among these characteristics. They can see a coherent pattern in a cultural situation without knowing what the final picture might look like.

Culturally intelligent individuals are able to see past the stereotypes that a superficial understanding of cultural differences generates. They realize that knowledge of the culture of a country or region is valuable only in the context of its religious, philosophical, and historical issues. For example, the Kurds, Shia Muslims, and Sunni Muslims in Iraq share a significant amount of cultural background. But knowing the history of their interactions over the centuries is necessary to truly understand the values, attitudes, and beliefs that underlie their behavior toward each other and the outside world.

Raising CQ is not a linear process but instead requires learning through one's own experience and through social interactions. Tuning into the critical differences between oneself and others in culture and background requires knowledge about how culture affects behavior and implies both mindfulness of the context and openness to different behavior. Retaining this knowledge requires the ability to transfer the lessons gained from a specific experience to broader skills in other settings, and then practicing those skills in future interactions. The more frequently and mindfully behaviors are tried out and are successful, the more quickly cultural intelligence improves.

The iterative and long-term nature of gaining cultural intelligence is provided in the following example:

Jenny Stephens is a 35-year-old executive working for the French subsidiary of an American multinational. After meeting and marrying a Frenchman in New York, she moved to Paris; she speaks fluent French and

interacts with French relatives and friends and colleagues on a regular basis. When asked if she felt she understood French culture, she said: "I have been here for seven years. In an almost predictable manner, I have found that whenever I begin to get a sense that now I really understand the French, something strange will happen that will throw me off completely. As I would reflect on the event and talk it over with my husband and friends, I would begin to develop a more complex view of the French. Then, things would go fine for several months until the whole process would repeat itself in some other area."

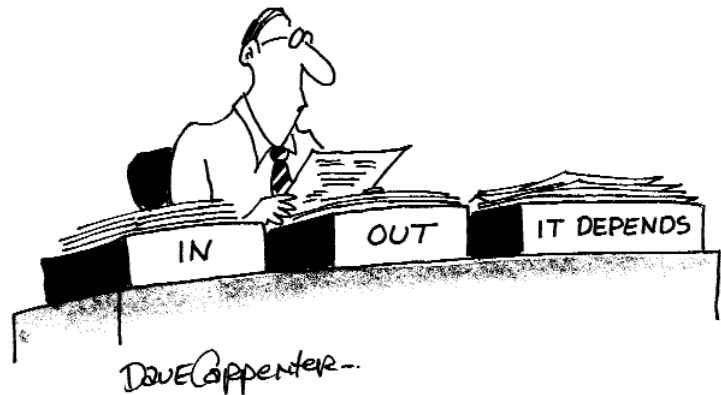
In this case, Jenny is practicing a kind of mindfulness by recognizing unusual cultural behavior and discussing it with those close to her. In this way, each instance of strange cultural behavior builds on her previous knowledge and contributes to her development of cultural intelligence.

While long-term foreign experiences like the one described above are perhaps the best opportunities for gaining cultural intelligence, numerous other situations and activities can also be drawn upon. These range from formal education to various informal interactions. Regardless of the specific context for interaction with other cultures, we specify the following "rules of engagement" that managers should keep in mind as they approach interactions with individuals from different backgrounds:

- Become knowledgeable about your own culture and background, its biases and idiosyncrasies, and the way this is unconsciously reflected in your own perceptions and behavior.
- Deliberately increase mindfulness by expecting differences in others. View different behavior as novel rather than strange, and suspend judgment of it.
- Be attentive to behavioral cues and their possible interpretations, and to the likely effect of your behavior on others.

CONSULTANTS

© Dave Carpenter, www.cartoons.com



- Adapt your behavior in ways that you are comfortable with that also are appropriate for new situations.
- Be mindful of responses to your behavioral adaptation.
- Experiment with methods of adapting intuitively to new situations, and build your comfort level in acquiring a repertoire of new behavior.
- Practice new behaviors that work, until they become automatic.

Conclusion

As an essentially experiential process, improving cultural intelligence is both physically and emotionally taxing. Facilitating its development involves coaching in the best sense of the term. While it's hard work, the steps to achieving cultural intelligence are easy to assimilate. By following a few simple guidelines you can improve your CQ and develop the ability to act competently across a range of cultural situations. Moreover, the confidence and control that comes with cultural intelligence is well worth the effort. ■

INDEXED UNDER:
Consulting internationally;
Cross-cultural issues