



Management in Chinese cultures

Confucian values

Jane Henry

Confucian values permeate throughout the Chinese cultures around the Pacific Rim and these values have an effect on the way people set about doing business. A key element of the Confucian system is the stress on harmony this leaves the Chinese business man to spend much more time building up relationships than his counterparts would in the West.

ANDY TSENG: Area Director, DHL Greater Chinas

The western way when you try to do business in China and you are coming in and you lay down the agenda and you talk, talk, and after you finished, then you start building the relationship after the business, but Chinese -cooking, cooking, all the information, you know, you try to build up that in the relationship and then the business part is easy. So it is two different ways.

GEOFFREY BYE: Regional Public Relations Manager, DHL Asia Pacific Middle East

Western managers can be very very impatient, they want that trust to be there in a week, they feel that they should be trusted because they are competent by dint of having a marketing director title a corporate communications managers title. That doesn't work in Asia. It's your own personal authority and your own personal trust that has to be established first

Pochung

Establishing of trust means you are convinced that I wouldn't pull any surprises on you. Now, in the western world a very simple joint venture we are all protected by the contract. But in the Eastern world the contract is 4 pages. We have to be protected by integrity of other side. Now, when we talk about Guanxi, when we talk about communication, we talk about trust, all it is is-no surprises when it comes to the crunch. In the western world we have contracts to protect us. Now, where does the Easterner find their protection? It's on the communication and the building up of that trust.

Jane Henry

The focus on building trust and long term relationships, tends to lead to greater organisational loyalty than you'd find in the West.

Allan Wong

The Chinese value that would create a lot of family values and loyalty among employees, that means people feel obliged working for you. They feel secure they have to please the company, they have to please the boss. When you start working with a Western company they have seen all these lay-offs and hirings, when you are not useful you are gone, but Hong Kong companies try to accommodate. They are more lenient, of course you can argue that there could be complacency, that could be bad to the company, but then this kind of loyalty being created among employees is, I think very important issue especially during the down times.

PAUL CHAN LOK WING: Manager, Fast Food Chain

The culture in my company really emphasis harmony, because it is not easy for them to dismiss a person, even if they do not do the work well, they just prefer natural wastage.

Dannie Hongchoy

I found it quite strange when I first starting working there, I found that there were a few old gentlemen. Every day they go to work and they have their own little desk and I was wondering what they do and then I asked around and then I realised that in fact they had been with the company for a long long, time and now in fact they are way past the retirement age and yet they still go to the office every day. In fact, I find out that this is the way our big bosses treat our older staff and most likely they will be there until the day they pass away.

Jane Henry

Another difference from the West is the stress on harmony

Ronald Liu

In Western organisations, I think they quite respect the individual thinking, but in Chinese culture we like to work like a team like a family. So the company style, the company philosophy, is top most important. So everybody, I mean the individual, because of the cultural background, are more willing to compromise. People are more willing to sacrifice and compromise in order to achieve harmony. We try to balance the opinion of different people, balance the benefit of our customers and suppliers, so that long term relationship could be established.

Geoffrey Bye

In Asia you have self mastery towards a common goal, where in the West you have self mastery towards individual goal and that's the difference.

Ronald Liu

I think when you are negotiating with the Chinese party the top most important thing is that you should stop and listen to what they want because in such a way they believe you respect them, and being considerate is very important in the Chinese culture. But when you are negotiating with the western world you have to learn something from Western practice, be brave to speak out for what you want, instead of, you know, playing a passive role.

Jane Henry

Empowering staff to participate and speak out is seen as critical to creative functioning in the West, yet it receives scant attention in traditional Chinese businesses.

Paul Chan Lok Wing

Decision making is on the top not at the lower level, so I think that we have little discretion in making the decision, so we follow the rules even at a managers level or even at senior management level, you just follow the rule.

Dannie Hongchoy

It would very likely be the Chairman who asked the staff to think of -OK -there is an issue, what do you think is the best way to resolve it? I think most likely it is this way that the staff will encouraged rather than they have the initiation to give a new idea.

Duc Do

In the West we are taught about empowering your employees, they will exert their full potential and therefore it is better for the company. In the East, if you empower them they might feel this manager do not know where he is going, he is weak because he does not give clear direction to where we are going so two different mind sets.