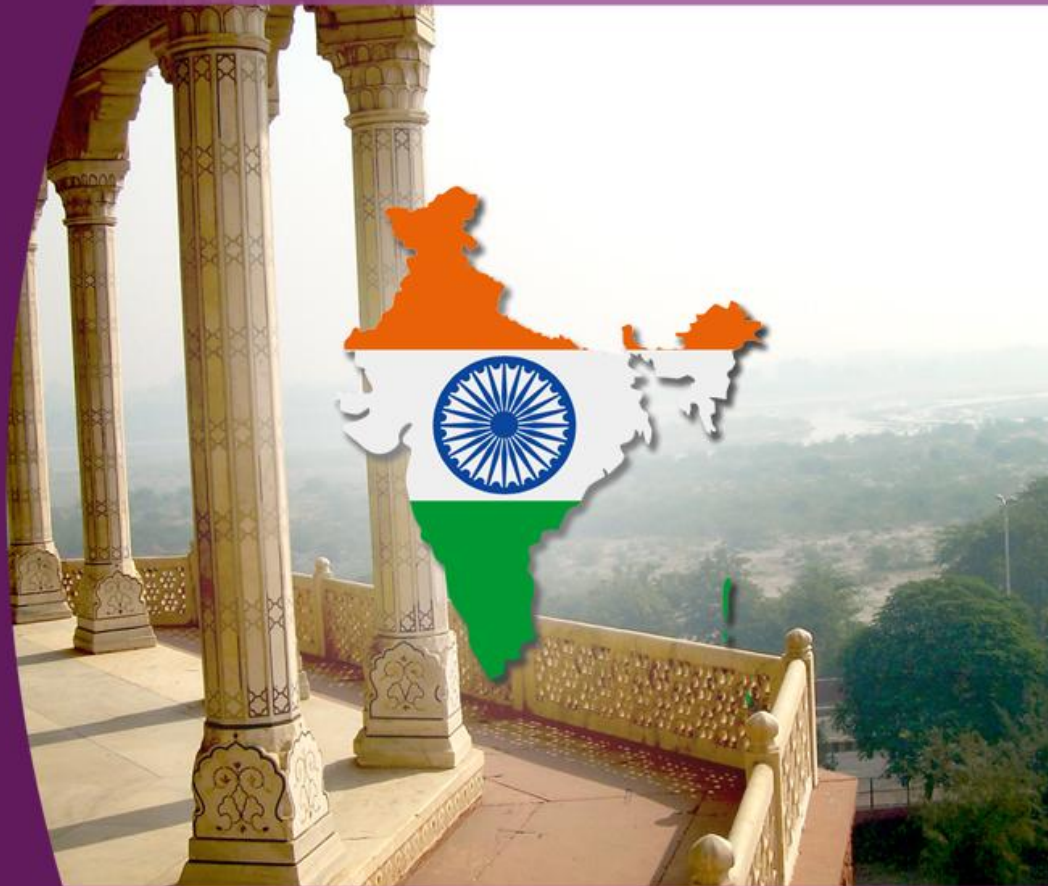




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India

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Introduction

In the business environment, working experience and university degrees are nothing without having ability to communicate effectively; in other words a business deal cannot be achieved without a successful negotiation process in which two parts communicate in order to meet their targets. However, the communication process in the cross cultural context seems to be omitted in many business schools; still, the pace of globalization has been increasing significantly and for many current students it will be essential to be able to work in international workplace. There is a high likelihood that some of them will have carry out business with Indian people since India has been experiencing economic growth and, as suggested by the McKinsey Global Institute's study, provided India maintains its recent growth, it will become the fifth largest consumer economy by 2025.

As "The man who is prepared has his battle half fought", we hope that this e-book will be a good preparation and it will facilitate the communication process with your Indian business partners and; consequently, you will be able to be more successful in your working environment.

Meeting Styles

Before attending a meeting in India, it is wise to make the appointment one or two months in advance and get confirmation as meetings in India often get cancelled on short notice. Between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. is considered as the most appropriate time to have a meeting.

When attending a meeting in India, the style depends on whether it is a traditional company, or a modern company. When traditional companies have a meeting, the goal is not to make a decision, but to change ideas or to achieve consensus. Nowadays the modern Indian companies have adapted the Western meeting style, which is more concrete and efficient.

First meetings in India are quite informal, as the Indians attach great importance on building a relationship before doing business. So during the first meeting there will be a lot of small talk and getting to know you talk. On the other hand, the Indians are formal when it comes to punctuality, dress code and addressing etiquettes. The Indians are impressed with punctuality and will always be on time, and they will address each other by using Namaste. This is where the palms together at chest level are brought with a slight bow of the head.

When foreigners use Namaste, it is seen as a sign that they understand the Indian etiquette. Handshakes between men and women are rare because of religious beliefs.

The dress code depends on the weather, in the hotter parts the dress code is more informal than the cooler parts of India. However, during the first meeting one should always respect the dress code, which is dark coloured conservative business suits for men and conservative suits or dresses for women.

Presenting

India is a collectivistic society in which building relationships is highly valued and is seen as the basis of a successful cooperation. Although India have low uncertainty avoidance, they only do business with people they trust and who show having a lot of wisdom and know-how. The Indians are also keen on information about how a product can be of value to them.

When presenting in India, one should always respect hierarchy by waiting for the highest superior to enter the room and by addressing all key players by their title or family names. For the Indians it is important that their values and culture are highly respected, therefore the presenter should not be too informal.

Indians appreciate the "small talk" about family or India in general, but one should always avoid talk about religion and politics, as they do not feel comfortable discussing these topics. As a public they are extravert and do not mind interruptions and are easily derived just like the Italians. However, when the presenter is also being too extravert, the Indians believe the presenter is nervous and they will immediately have a lack of trust.

Successful presenters in India are mostly older, while the elderly are seen as people with more wisdom and are therefore more trusted than younger presenters. However, when they are convinced about a product or service that can be of value to them, they will not hesitate to take a risk and invest. Even if it turns out to be a bad investment, they see it as a valuable lesson and take their loss.

Do's with regard to presentations in India:

- Self-insured speaker with know-how
- Concrete information
- Facts
- Tact
- Use examples, analogies, metaphors and anecdotes
- Visual support
- Creative, out-of-the-box solutions, flexibility
- New trends and ideas supported by experts
- Correct tone and pace
- Great lessons learned from failure

Do nots with regard to presentations in India:

- Giving too much information
- Reading from a scripted text
- Nervous speakers
- To be underestimated

Country Specific Linguistics

Hindi and English are two official and major lingua francas in India. However, it does not mean that somebody from Jaipur, a city situated in North India, who speaks Hindi will be able to communicate with a person living in the South of the country. The likelihood that Indians, from different parts of the country, will have difficulties in communicating with each other is quite high since the number of major and minor languages in India accounts for many hundreds. Indian constitution recognizes 22 languages, known as "scheduled languages", which means that they can be utilised by states in official correspondence.

The vast majority of "scheduled languages" belongs to Indo-European languages group and is spoken by 72% of the Indian population. Four of Dravidian languages, used by one-fourth of the Indian citizens, are scheduled ones. It is worth attention that in the Republic of India English and Hindi are two official languages, however, every state has got the right, based on its demographics, to declare its own official languages.

Next to the Latin script India has its own forms of which Devangari is the most common one being employed by the majority of the Indian languages such as Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi.



An example of Devangari script

Devangari is written from left to right and it is classified as a alphasyllabary writing system , meaning that each character stands for a unique sound. Consequently, most words are pronounced in the way they are written and, on the contrary to the Roman alphabet, there are no capital letters. Its appearance is also appealing to people using different scripts since letters are somewhat “hanging from a line” and this is actually a part of the most of the characters.

Beside Devangari, other scripts are used, for example by the speakers of Tamil and Sindhi , which is written as a Persianized form of Arabic script, but it can be also written in Devangari or Gurmukhi scripts. One thing is certain, by looking at the multitude of languages, dialect and scripts one can certainly say that Indian linguistics are a discipline that does not lack variety.

Official Languages

Hindi

Hindi is perceived as the preferred official language of India. Nonetheless, since Hindi is not comprehended by the whole Indian society, English and other languages recognized in the Indian Constitution are used in the business sector and education.

According to the results of Indian census, which was conducted in 2001, 258 million people in India, stated Hindi as their native language.

As stated by CIA The World Factbook, it is the primary tongue of 41% of the Indian population. Hindi is the dominant language of north India and it is very similar to Urdu; a language also officially recognized by the Indian government. The differences between these two languages are small (mainly in the writing system), but as Urdu is associated with Muslims, dissimilarities are exaggerated and emphasized.

If considered one language, approximately 50% of the total Indian population speaks the same language, which is roughly 15% of the world population and is only surpassed by English and Mandarin (add source Encyclopaedia Britannica) and only two other languages, Mandarin and English has a higher number of speakers.

It is remarkable that Hindi had a considerable influence on the English language, which was a consequence of co-existence of these two languages in the period

between 1612 and 1947, when India was under the British dominance. During that time Indian words such as bazaar (market), bungalow (spacious house), guru (teacher) and shampoo were assimilated into English. Nonetheless, these are only a small group of examples and the real impact which Indian languages played on English is exhibited in published by Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell "Hobson-Jobson. The Anglo-Indian Dictionary."

English

English is frequently regarded as the only language, which is understood by all Indians, and the number of speakers of English is only higher in the United States. However, there are extremes in the English language, hence many well-educated professionals speak and write English with the ease and fluency of a native speaker, but, on the other hand, there are also semi-literate or illiterate workers knowing only limited vocabulary and limited grammar.

English is therefore seen as the language of business, politics and education, but it ought to be taken into consideration that it differs significantly since it is regularly mixed with Hindi and local dialects. As a consequence, miscommunication can occur, even if both sides declare comprehension of the English language.

Since Indian English prefers archaic, literary and flowery forms to the simple statements, consequently, words such as sad demise, fair sex and felicitate are used rather than death, women and congratulate. Furthermore, some words are unique only to India or are utilised in a different than original context. For instance, hotel is a vegetarian restaurant (although the big hotels are hotels as well), military hotel has nothing in common with an army because it is a non-vegetarian restaurant and if somebody is gay it does not necessarily say something about his sexual preference, it simply means that he is a carefree person. Another common for India phrase is "black money", which is the amount of money charged above or under the declared price, "white price". Some other common expressions are prepone (postpone), good name (family name), time- pass (waste of time).

Flexibility of the language and its derivation from culture is demonstrated in terms, which were created for intricate network of family relationships. As stated by Hofstede (2005), English speaking countries are generally more collectivistic (United States, rank one on Individualism Index, Australia and Great Britain two and three respectively) which is the reason why the English language lacks expression for extended family and more collectivistic country such as India (rank 31) has had to

create new words in order to be able to describe their family relationships. Speakers of Indian English use the word cousin- brother so as to demonstrate the importance of the father's brother's children. Another word, co-brother in law, (husband of the wife's sister) is used so as to differentiate him from one's own sister's husband who is viewed as somebody who is more closely related.

People who have business or personal relationship with the Indians, or want to build one, should be aware of the fact that most Indian languages does not have a specific word for "please", which is expressed by the form of the verb used, or in the way request is worded. As a consequence, some Indians may sound impolite and rude to the foreigners but it is against their intentions such as pleasing and helping their business partners.

Indian is a country of contrasts, on the one hand we may find highly educated professionals working for huge international companies , on the other hand 26% of Indian society is illiterate. For that reason, we may have an opportunity to have an intelligent conversation or come across hilarious examples of Hinglish.

A few of them are listed below:

- Wait I will remove your ticket- I will buy your ticket
- Do not talk middle middle- Do not interrupt
- Eve teasing- harassment (sexual) of a female
- Rowdy sheeter- habitual offender
- Hanky-panky- political/ corporate corruption

Listening Habits

The major goal of communication of Indian style communication is to build, maintain and nurture personal relationships, whereas the Western countries communicate mainly in order to exchange information. In general, Westerners are more direct than Indians and their directness is very close to being blunt according to Indian standards and, consequently, the Western business partners may be seen as rude.

Therefore, it is important to be formulate the message in a polite manner and be careful while criticising and giving feedback and be aware of the fact than Indians are relationship-orientated and contact culture, on the contrary to the West which is task and contract orientated. The major implication of this for the Western speakers is the necessity to be patient and make an effort to establish a good relationship with his Indian business partners.

Furthermore, since directness is not appreciated, irony and jokes should be avoided, the Indians may not misunderstand it and feel offended by the speaker. It is recommended to an eloquent English speaker and to be humble and respectful since these characteristics are highly valued by Indians. The speakers from the United Kingdom may find it more difficult to communicate and establish a friendly relationship with the Indians, this results from the fact that India was under British governance until 1947 and some people are still suspicious of ex-colonist.

India has been growing in importance and it is highly likely that in near future without being present in India companies would not be able to achieve success and, a key to the successful business with Indians is a relationship which is established on preserving harmony and avoiding giving offense.

For these reasons, The Western entrepreneurs should bear in mind that:

“The Eastern emphasis on self-regulation of emotion, empathy, and avoiding hurting others’ feelings requires the development of a style that places more value on indirect, hypothetical, and metaphorical communication, turning it into an art form.”

(Storti, C., 2007, Speaking of india: bridging the communication gap when working with Indians, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, Boston MA, USA)

Non-verbal communication

Messages are conveyed through the use of verbal and nonverbal communication and what is not said is sometimes of greater significance than what is communicated verbally. This is particularly the case in India, a rather high- context culture, which is less direct and confrontational compared to Western European countries such as the Netherlands and Germany. So as to avoid cultural misunderstanding great attention should be put on nonverbal signals; in other words, the body language will express the real message. However, problems may arise when the other interlocutor is not able to decipher the nonverbal signals.

Non-verbal behaviour related to movement (Kinesics)

Head

The head is very important for Indians since it is perceived as the seat of the soul. Touching somebody's head without a permission and in a wrong manner is considered as an offence and tarnishing of somebody's soul. Consequently, it should be, likewise passing things over somebody's head, strictly avoided.

Head Movement

Indian body movement can differ a lot from what the Westerners are familiar with. The frequently misinterpreted gesture is the habit of nodding one's head from side to side. By Westerners it is read as "no", however, it usually means that the person is full of attention and understands. What is even more, in some cases it means "yes". In order to decode the message, it is often necessary to know in which part of the country the speaker's family come from. It is due to the fact that gestures such as nodding the head may mean "yes" or "no", depending on the region the person using this gesture comes from; similarly, head wobbling (a figure eight head-motion) indicates the extent to which a person agrees or disagrees.

Ears

Catching your own ears' is a signal of regret and honesty.

Eyes

Winkling, as well whistling, might be interpreted as a behaviour having sexual connotations.

Chin

Pointing out is done with ones chin, not with a single finger or two fingers, what is seen as something impolite. Pointing with a whole hand or a thumb is also tolerated.

Left Hand

In the Hindu religion, which is the main one in India the concepts of purity and pollution are still adhered to in the practice, for these reason it is very useful to be aware of the toilet practice in India. The average Indian as rule does not make a use of toilet paper and for him it is a unclean practice. Instead of using the toilet in the "Western way"(with the toilet paper), after using the toilet, left hand and water are used to clean the specific body parts. Even though, the left hand is then meticulously washed, it is believed to retain something of uncleanness. Thus, it should never be used to eat with , while eating with the hand and, moreover, nothing should be given or received with the left hand.

Hips

In India standing with your hands on your hips is interpreted as an angry, aggressive and dominating posture.

Foot

Likewise the left hand, the feet maintain impure however clean they may be. Because of this, the shoes should be taken off at the door. On the other hand, feet of some people are considered as sacred. Consequently, respect to elders, holy men and women, is exhibited through the custom of touching of feet and simultaneously looking into their eyes. The meaning of it is "I am like the dust on your feet."

Nonetheless, one's own feet ought to be kept firmly where they belong. Gestures with feet are offensive so be careful not to touch somebody with your foot or you shoes and if it accidently occurred, excuses should be immediately made. Additionally, it is bad mannered in India to push something, especially an object of importance such as book, with the foot.

Furthermore, the soles of your feet cannot be revealed to other people. All things considered, struggle to make your feet as invisible as you can and by doing so you will reduce the possibility of insulting Indians.

Namaste



Meaning: The God/Goddess Spirit within me recognizes and honours the God/Goddess Spirit within you.

Namaste or Namaskar is a traditional form of greeting in India in which the hands are placed together with a slight bow and the word Namaste is said softly. Namaste is rarely used in the business circle where handshakes are becoming more common, especially with Indian women who may refrain from physical contact.

Haptics - Touching in Communication

In India touching somebody is regarded as a special act. The ability to touch is closely connected to Hinduism and the phenomenon of pollution. It has got an important role of creating a distance between the members of diverse social groups, for the that reason only people from the same family or the caste can touch you affectionately. Touching somebody is equivalent to having a bond with him/her and, in general, touching behaviour between both members of the same gender and across genders is avoided. Contrary to this conduct, pushing somebody in the crowd so as to make enough space for one is acceptable.

Body contact between men and women is limited and the Indian society is against displaying feeling between sexes in public, therefore, even an innocent kiss or a hug is considered as provoking behaviour. For an Indian woman it is socially unacceptable to be touched by somebody else than her husband or son and the husband can only touch his wife only in the intimate personal place. Considering the business environment, the handshake with a woman, it is not done unless she offers her hand.

Regarding the proximity, Indians usually allow an arm's length space between themselves and others and do not stand too close while having a conversation. Whereas, touching is strictly associated with intimacy and it is not a part of communication, the view of two male friends holding hands when they walk, is a common sign of friendship.

The concept, which in many cultures is strongly related with physical contact, personal space seems to be non-existent. A quite extreme example, which illustrates this issue, is going to the toilet that is located somewhere outside the building. In India, this act becomes a public one, Western people concerned about their privacy, may be astonished seeing people who go in the groups to relieve themselves. Moreover, the standards of the Indian cultures diverge from significantly from Western standards. An average Indian may appear to be curious, sitting too close, staring too long and asking numerous, detailed questions while talking to a lonely stranger. Yet, this is a normal conduct for Indian society.

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Colophon

NUR: 812

First edition 2011

Authors: Jeroen van der Poel and Marta Bankowska

Series editor: Sander Schroevers

Editorial team: Emilio Bamio Ares, Jasmijn Camping, Anke de Vries, Santhuruu Nadesapillai, Sander Schroevers

Inner design: Jaguar Print, Hoofddorp

Cover design: Farhana Faroque

Cover graphic: Jakob Breivik grimstveit and Zdenek Svoboda (www.fotopedia.com)

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