

5 Secrets to Developing Cultural Competency for Successful Engagements in the Arab World



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Opportunities and Challenges

- **Share opportunities and challenges you experienced or think will experience in working in the Arab World**

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

- New market with huge potential

Challenges

- Localization of talent – Saudization, etc.
- Potential changes in country leadership and direction
- Not knowing the culture



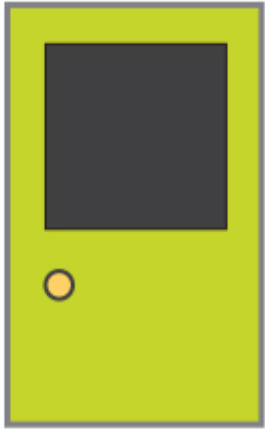
Goals for Our Session



Culture



Stereotypes vs. Generalizations



Stereotypes

A judgmental belief about a group and its members considered to be an accurate description of individuals. This belief is protected from contrary information.



Generalizations

A non-judgmental characterization of a group and its members having a general, not specific, application. It serves as a hypothesis to be refined through individual interactions.



Cultural Iceberg



Visible: What we pickup with our senses

Invisible:

- Customs
- Beliefs
- Values
- Assumptions



Exploring Culture

My Culture

Visible

Behavior

- Customs
- Beliefs
- Values
- Assumptions

Invisible

Their Culture

Visible

Behavior

?

Invisible

CRASH !!



Hybrid Culture





Demographics

- Population – 330 million
 - Egypt: 90 million
 - Saudi Arabia: 28 million (30% non-nationals)
 - UAE: 5.8 million (80% non-nationals)
 - Oman: 3.2 million (30% non-nationals)
 - Kuwait: 2.7 million (69% non-nationals)
 - Qatar: 2.2 million (88% non-nationals)
 - Bahrain: 1.3 million (54% non-nationals)



#1 Secret

Focus on Relationships



Relationship Activity

- Share with a partner techniques you use to build relationships.



Suggested Actions

Relationships

- Do your homework – “intelligence” work
- Use third parties to connect with the right people
- Take time to get to know people
- Get buy in of key individuals on HR programs
- People want to help people they know – build teams
- Keep in touch
- Let them know that you care about them
- Send Ramadan and Eid greetings
- Give presents as appropriate



#2 Secret – “Saving Face”



“Saving Face” Activity

- You are conducting a training session for a certification for a group of Kuwaitis. Part of the certification requirements is class participation. You find that the Kuwaitis are not participating like they should. They are not even asking questions.
- What would you do to handle this situation?



Suggested Actions

“Saving Face”

- Allow for one on one follow up after training
- Give written tests to assess learning
- Give authentic compliments
- Use titles until told otherwise
- Watch your style of communication
- Keep harmony – confrontation is not appreciated
- Give feedback in private
- Follow appropriate etiquettes
- Observe how people interact with each other



#3 Secret

Understand Flexible Time



Flexible Time Activity

- Partner with person next to you
 - How have you handled flexible time?
 - What has been successful?
 - What would you do differently?



Suggested Actions

Flexible Time

- Be aware of flexible time
- Don't take it personally
- Take work to do
- On projects
 - Build in time for the flexible time
 - Follow-up with specific inquiries
- Relationships work



#4 Secret Religious Boundaries



Religious Boundaries Activity

- Ramadan will be on June 8, 2016
- Ramadan will be on _____, 2017
- Ramadan will be on _____, 2018



Suggested Actions

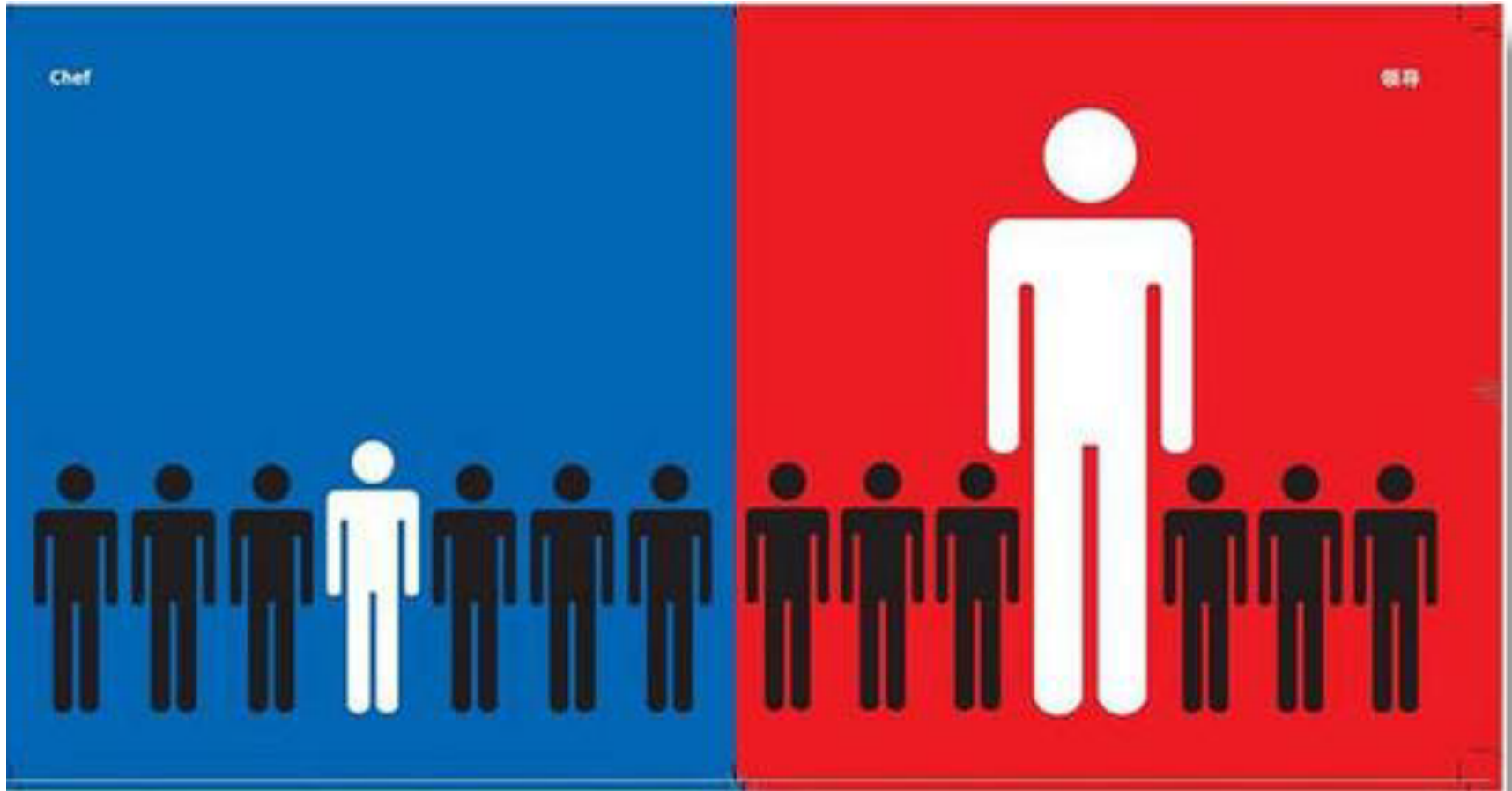
Religious Boundaries

- Know about the religion and how it impacts your business
- Be aware of lunar calendar
- Download prayer schedule
- Modesty between genders
 - Don't extend your hand to someone of the opposite gender
 - Avoid having a male and a female alone in closed space
 - Dress conservatively
- Use of interest is prohibited – write your contracts in a different way



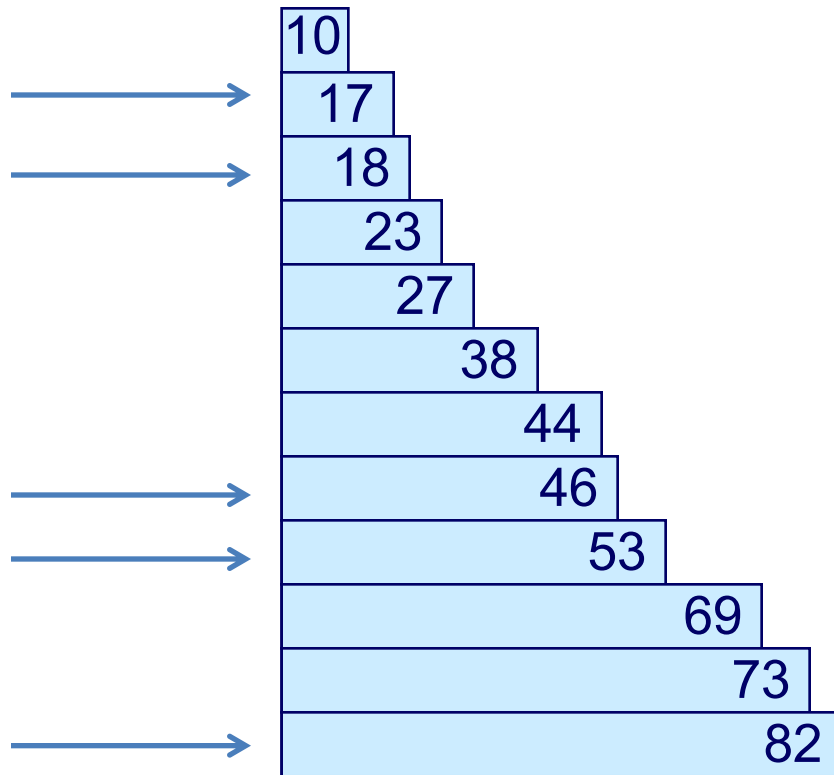
#5 Secret

Understand Hierarchy



“It is important for leaders to have precise answers to the questions subordinates raise about their work.”

Where would you place these countries on the chart?

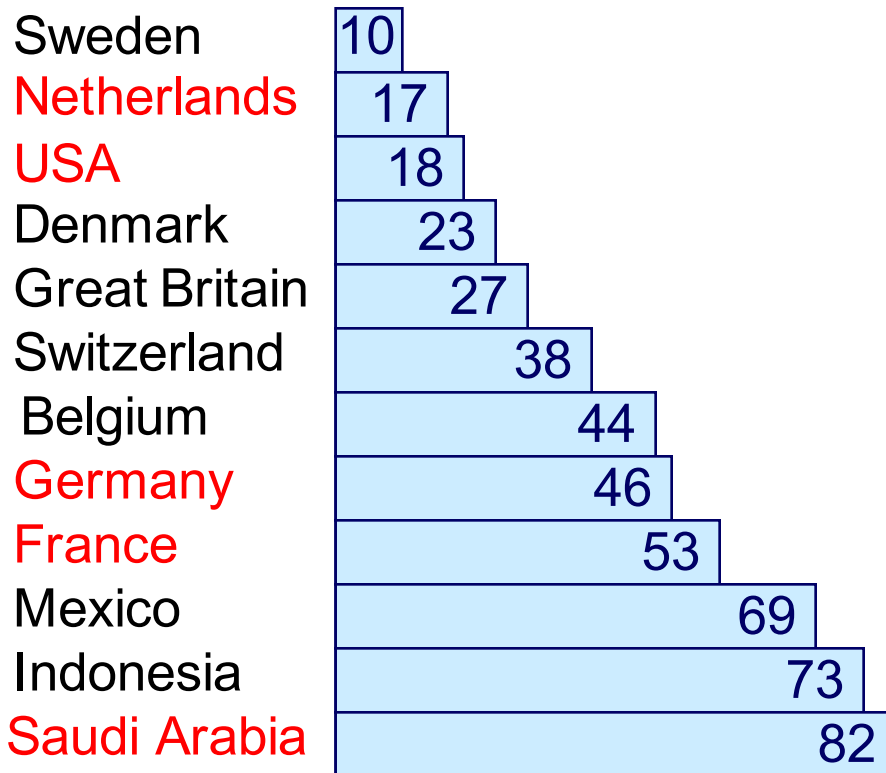


- France
- Germany
- Saudi Arabia
- Netherlands
- USA

% in agreement with this statement



“It is important for leaders to have precise answers to the questions subordinates raise about their work.”



% in agreement with this statement



Suggested Actions

Hierarchy

- Do your homework on who is who
- Family matters
- Know the name structure of Arabs
- Manager or person of authority has the answers
- Subordinates do what they are told
- Use the hierarchy wisely
- Take and expect clear guidance from superiors
- Like clearly defined roles with boundaries and limitations
- Respect and rarely challenge those in power
- Enforce regulations and guidelines
- See sexes as naturally different



5 Secrets

1. **Focus on relationships**
2. **“Saving Face”**
3. **Understand flexible time**
4. **Understand religious boundaries**
5. **Adapt to hierarchy and customs**



Planning Your Approach

Secret	Start Doing	Stop Doing	Continue Doing
Build relationship			
Saving Face			
Understand Flexible Time			
Be Aware of Religious Boundaries			
Adapt to Hierarchy and Customs			



Wrap-up

- Name one take away from today
- Complete action plan
- Fill out card



Thank you!

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