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Reflection on an Intercultural Communication Workshop for Japanese Executives: Doing Business with U.S. Americans

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Reflection on an Intercultural Communication Workshop

for Japanese Executives:

Doing Business with U.S. Americans

Kristine Elaine Vassberg Menn

July 2015

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in TESOL degree at

SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont.

IPP Advisor: Dr. Susan Barduhn

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Student name: Kristine Elaine Vassberg Menn

Date: July 21, 2015

Acknowledgments

Reflection on an Intercultural Communication Workshop
For Japanese Executives: Doing Business with U.S. Americans

Abstract

"*Vérité en deçà des Pyrénées, erreur au-delà*"

(There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees that are falsehoods on the other)

Blaise Pascal (Moran, Harris & Moran, 2007, p. 2).

This paper is a reflection on an intercultural communication workshop developed for sixteen upper-level Japanese executives who work with their U.S. American counterparts in a U.S.A.-based global corporation. This training session was only one part of a much larger training program initiative which was carried out in five countries in Asia as well as in several locations across the U.S.A. Throughout my paper, I will apply the stages of the experiential learning cycle to their corresponding phases of the entire workshop process. To start with, I will take a look at how I first learned about the experiential learning cycle and describe how I utilized this tool to reflect on the training experience. Then, I will explain the background and events that served as a catalyst for this training initiative. Subsequently, I will detail the content of the workshop. Next, I will give some reflective observations about what happened during the training, specifically on the participants' analyses and suggestions concerning a critical incident scenario which they worked on together in small groups at the end of the training. After making these observations, I will combine the information presented by the groups about the critical incident with my prior knowledge to generate some hypotheses as to why the participants reacted to and analyzed the critical incident in the way that they did. Finally, I will use the data obtained during the workshop to suggest ideas for future trainings.

Reflection on an Intercultural Communication Workshop
For Japanese Executives: Doing Business with U.S. Americans

ERIC Descriptors:

Intercultural Communication

Experiential Learning Cycle

Cultural Awareness

Reflective Practice

Business Communication

Cultural Differences

Professional Training

Cross-Cultural Communication

Training Methods

Training Objectives

Reflection on an Intercultural Communication Workshop
For Japanese Executives: Doing Business with U.S. Americans

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The Experiential Learning Cycle

"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of

experience" (Kolb,198, p. 38).

In this chapter, I will explain how I learned about the experiential learning cycle, and then

describe how I utilized this tool to reflect on the training experience which I delivered in Tokyo

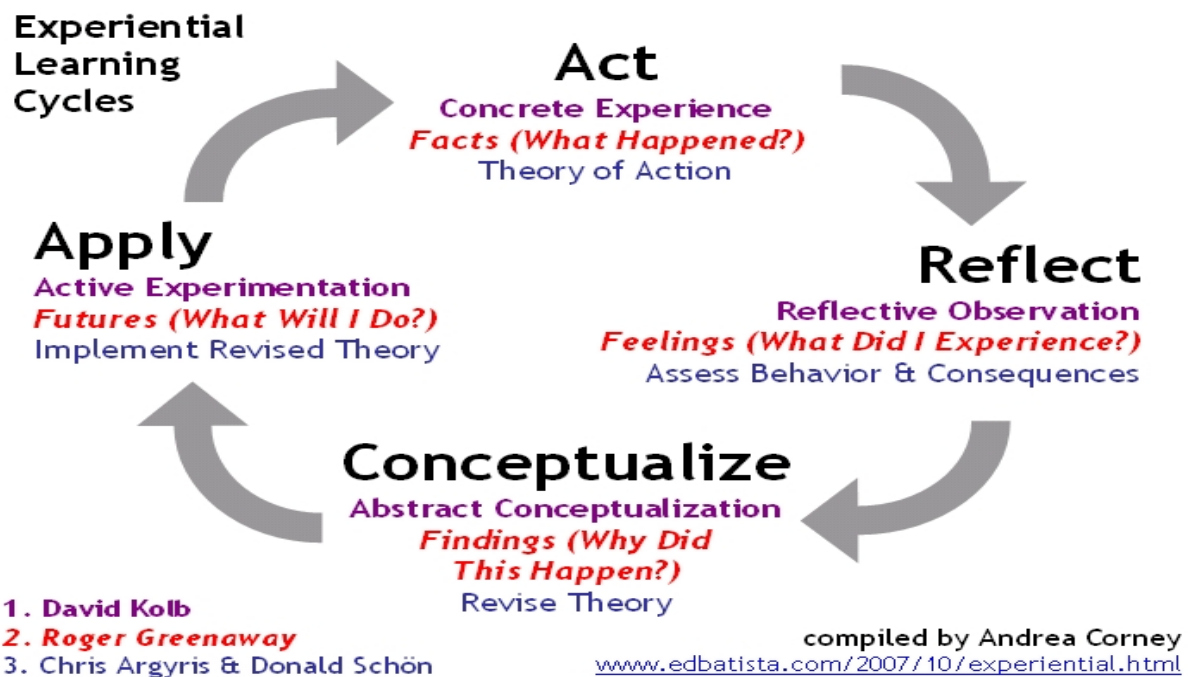to a group of Japanese executives working for a U.S.A.-based global corporation.

Backstory

Toward the end of July 2013, the self-designated "Pioneers", my classmates from the first

Low Residency Master of Arts in TESOL program at the School for International Training, came

together from all over the world to start our three-week, face-to- face classes. There was so much

excitement, so much anticipation; so much to discover, so much to learn. On one of the very first

evenings, Professor Alex Silverman held a session in which he introduced us to the four stages of

the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC). Looking back, I understand how appropriate it was that

this cyclical model was presented to us at the very start, for it has served as the basic foundation

of every class learning experience that we have gone through ever since. Nowadays, I also apply

it almost automatically to everything that happens to me in my personal and professional life.

Therefore, it only made sense that I employ some form of the four-stage model in my

Independent Professional Project (IPP) as well.

The topic of my IPP is an intercultural communication workshop that I conceptualized,

planned, designed, and delivered to a group of Japanese managers who work for a U.S.A.-based

global corporation. The company's Human Resource (HR) Department felt that these employees

needed to gain a greater understanding of U.S.A. culture in order to work more effectively and

enjoyably with their U.S. American counterparts. The initial idea I had for my IPP was solely to

discuss the content I developed and presented to the group; then I realized that I could add

another dimension to my research by applying each stage of the ELC to a corresponding phase of

the entire training process. In addition to resulting in a more elaborate IPP, the ELC also

provided a very nicely organized structure for my paper.

The basis of the ELC is reflection. This reflection can lead to awareness and transformation,

both of which are essential for growth to take place. I believed that approaching my training

through this perspective would give me, as a trainer, a valuable insight into what happened

during the training, what it all meant, and how I could adapt my methods to improve future

training programs. I began by researching how the ELC came about and what variations on it

exist. I found quite a few. Here are some that especially fit with the stages I envision for my IPP

to take:

Experiential Learning Cycles

Act
Concrete Experience
Facts (What Happened?)
Theory of Action

Reflect
Reflective Observation
Feelings (What Did I Experience?)
Assess Behavior & Consequences

Conceptualize
Abstract Conceptualization
Findings (Why Did This Happen?)
Revise Theory

Apply
Active Experimentation
Futures (What Will I Do?)
Implement Revised Theory

1. David Kolb
2. Roger Greenaway
3. Chris Argyris & Donald Schön

compiled by Andrea Corney
www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html

(Batista, 2007).

The Simplest Experiential Learning Cycle

DO IT.

What?
What happened?
What were the results?

So What?
What do these results imply?
How did I influence the outcome?

Now What?
What will I do differently next time?

compiled by Andrea Corney
www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html

(Batista, 2007).

DOING

SENSING (OBSERVING)

THINKING

ADDRESSING (PLANNING)

Juch (1983)

(Greenaway, 2002).

Adapting the ELC to my IPP

I have included these models of the ELC since the personalized model I developed for my work is a combination of all three. My reflection begins with addressing the situation and planning for the workshop as the first stage of my project. In this section of my paper, I will give the background and describe the series of events which led up to the training. During the next stage, I will detail the content which I created for the workshop, elaborating on the themes, common threads, and subject matter. I will move on to report the participants' behaviors and reactions to the training, specifically on their remarks and opinions about a critical incident. Then, applying my background knowledge to the critical incident results, I will reflect on possible reasons for the observations and suggestions generated concerning this critical incident, especially on the importance of relationships in the Japanese culture. Finally, to finish the cycle, after reviewing the workshop outcomes, I will make some recommendations for topics to be included in future training programs.

Addressing the Situation and Planning for the Workshop

"To be part of the Asian dynamism, Westerners do not need to become Asians in culture, in

values, or in habits . . . but it is necessary for Westerners to understand Asians, to feel at ease

with Asians, and to make Asians feel at ease with them"

Lee Kuan Yew, Former Prime Minister, Singapore

(Gross, 2008, p. 2).

Background

At the beginning of 2008, I was contacted by the head of the Marketing Department of a

global corporation based in the Chicago area to help out with one of the Asian employees

working at the U.S.A. headquarters who needed some coaching in communication. Many years

prior to this, I had created and launched a new coaching program focusing on leadership

competencies combined with intercultural and English language communication development.

The marketing leader at this particular global corporation asked that I assist his subordinate to

polish the following skills: public speaking, presentations, participation in meetings and

negotiations, business networking, and socializing. I planned and carried out this training over a

three-day period, after which my coachee demonstrated remarkable improvement in his

communication abilities, both verbal and nonverbal. Due to the successful outcome of this

training program, I was asked to provide various other intercultural communication trainings at

this corporation for other employees, both in the U.S.A and in Asia, who had some challenges in

communicating with their colleagues from different cultures. These training initiatives were vital

to the success of this corporation since a great deal of interaction between U.S. Americans and

their counterparts in five countries in Asia took place on a daily basis. Additionally, a large

majority of the company's customers (internal and external) were located in Asia.

Laying the foundations for the training

Late in 2009, the company's Global Marketing Communications and Brand Manager informed me that a communication training program was being put together to introduce both internal and external stakeholders to the company's new Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Brand Position Statement (MVBP). The leadership team felt it necessary to include an intercultural component in this initiative since miscommunication across cultures was a critical issue, and more effective collaboration was essential to align the reality on the ground with the new MVBP. Therefore, it was decided that the Global Marketing Communications and Brand Manager would lead a seminar on the new MVBP, followed by an intercultural communication workshop, which I was asked to develop and facilitate.

Over the course of several months, I met with Managers and Directors of the Marketing and HR Departments to determine the right approach to deal with this challenge. We felt that there were certain components of the MVBP which especially needed to be addressed, given the current situation. Drawing on my background experience and knowledge of differences among cultures, I pointed out that we should deeply examine the following concepts contained in the MVBP:

- Trusted industry partner /customer collaboration / global infrastructure / network

- High quality / reliable and innovative solutions

- Speed / rapid delivery

- Superior cost of ownership

These concepts may all seem pretty straight forward, yet the underlying meaning may differ greatly from culture to culture. In addition to these abstract ideas, there were also some of the company's values which needed to be looked at from different perspectives, specifically:

- Courage

- Accountability

- Respect

How to go about this? While I had the schema to know that these elements, so important for the image of the company, could be interpreted differently by individuals from different cultures, I felt it essential to get some feedback from the Japanese managers working at the company to discover their views on these concepts. I sent an invitation out to all the top-level Japanese employees who had experience working in the U.S.A., asking them to participate in a series of brainstorming meetings in which we could discuss how the new MVBP statements and company values might be perceived by both Japanese and U.S. Americans. The feedback gained from these meetings proved to be extremely valuable, and provided a good foundation for the workshop content. A summary of these differences in perspectives called Cross-Cultural Exercise Notes was created and submitted by this team of Japanese leaders. It is found in Appendix A. (Please note that this is the exact unedited document submitted by the team of Japanese leaders; no changes were made to the submitted document.)

Another foundation required to customize the workshop to meet the participants' needs was a pre-training survey. Therefore, we drew up a survey to be distributed to all employees who were to take part in the trainings. To gain background information for the Doing Business with U.S. Americans training to be held in Japan, a survey asking questions about Japanese was sent out to their U.S.A. counterparts and a similar survey asking questions about U.S. Americans was sent out to the Japanese employees who would participate in the training. The surveys were designed to be short and straight to the point. The survey questions were input into a survey tool called Zoomerang™, which was sent to the participants as a link. The participants completed the

surveys anonymously, and the data collected from the surveys was used to plan the workshop. See Appendix B for the survey questions. The results from the surveys will be presented in the next chapter.

Using the wealth of information collected from the Japanese team who had met to brainstorm, along with the pre-training surveys, I was able to determine what content was vital to include in the training session. From the data obtained, the following learning objectives for my workshop were created:

Workshop Objectives:

- To provide intercultural communication information, insight, and tools to the global employee network

- To help overcome cultural barriers in order to further collaboration, resulting in a more productive and enjoyable global work environment

- To capitalize on everyone's full potential to deliver maximum value to customers

My overall goal for this workshop is stated so eloquently in this quote from Moran (2007), "we must understand our differences, celebrate our diversity, and create partnerships of long-term mutual benefit. Whether at home or abroad, peoples' differences broaden our life experience" (p. 698).

The Workshop Content

"Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture, but to understand our own"

(Hall, 1990, p. 29).

In this chapter, I will detail the content of the workshop, including all the topics which were presented, as well as the activities that the participants took part in. First, however, I would like to discuss an extremely important part of the workshop experience which may not have even been consciously noticed, but one, nevertheless, which we put a lot of thought into to make sure everything was set for meaningful learning to take place. To me, meaningful learning expresses the idea of learning with the whole self: mind, body, and soul. The first impression is often the most powerful and long-lasting, and I wanted to guarantee the right mood was set from the very beginning.

Workshop Environment

The room was set up in "cabaret style" -- an arrangement which would promote easy interaction among the participants and at the same time demonstrate that this workshop would be participant-focused. To accommodate the sixteen attendees, we had four small round tables with four chairs each for participant seating, plus a table in the middle which displayed books, food, and other items from the U.S.A. This arrangement encouraged an inviting and comfortable atmosphere, which the participants could see right away upon entering the room.
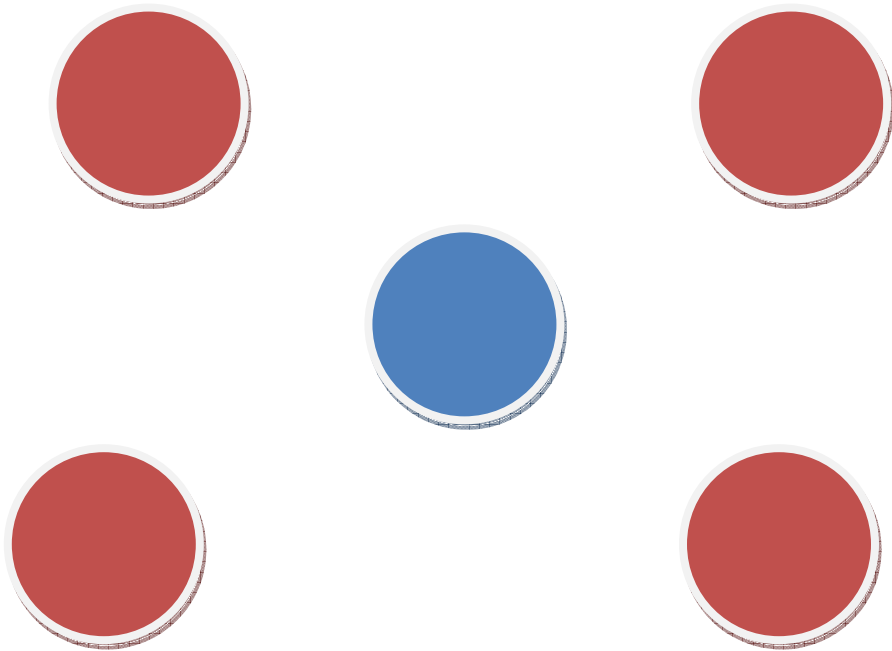
Additionally, on the walls around the room were maps of the U.S.A. and of the world, and

also the U.S.A. flag. (I asked permission to hang the flag before I put it up, because some people

can be very sensitive about this.) Music from the U.S.A. was playing as a slideshow of famous

spots of the U.S.A. was being projected. To top off the experience, freshly brewed American

coffee was offered along with chocolate chip cookies and other goodies brought in from the

U.S.A. All these components provided a relaxing, calming sensation, and established the tone for

the workshop.

Introductions

We started the workshop by having the participants introduce themselves. Most of the

participants already knew each other, so I requested that each one also share a fun fact about

himself -- something that nobody knew. After the participant introductions, I introduced myself

and gave a little background of why I was chosen to lead this training. These introductions

served to build relationship and trust in the room. Following this, I talked a bit about what they

could expect from the training and outlined the course objectives (p. 8). To emphasize the

importance of awareness and perceptions, I showed a slide with this image:

(Unknown author, *Deceptology*, 2010).

This is a very powerful picture for getting people to realize that everything is about

perspective. While showing this slide, I said that this is what I wished to be accomplished by the

end of the day: to be able to take a look at things in a way that is different and maybe even a little

uncomfortable; to lean into that discomfort; to understand that according to the famous words of

Anaïs Nin "we don't see things as they are; we see them as we are" (*Goodreads*, 2015). This

concept would be revisited many times throughout the day.

To finish off the introductory phase of the training, I divided the class into groups of four,

different from the groups at their tables. They were asked to talk with their teams about common

values they shared with their U.S.A. colleagues as well as one U.S.A.-related issue that they

wanted to address during the day. After their discussion, they wrote their conclusions on a flip

chart sheet, and each group presented its ideas to the rest of the class. After all groups had a turn

sharing their thoughts, we posted the sheets on the walls. I let everyone know that during the day

we would be covering each of the points listed, and throughout the day, we would check things

off the list as they were addressed.

Employee Survey Results

During the next section of the training, the following information obtained from the pre-

training survey was presented.

Summary of Results from the Pre-training Survey*

* Please note that these are the exact unedited graphs submitted to me by the HR Department; no changes were made to the submitted document.

Japanese who have lived outside their country of origin

- Yes.
- No.

Americans who have lived outside their country of origin

- Yes.
- No.

What languages Japanese speak

	Percentage
English	64%
Japanese	100%
Korean	7%
Chinese	14%
Other	0%

What languages Americans speak

	Percentage
English	94%
Japanese	0%
Korean	0%
Chinese	5%
Other	18%

Summary of Results from the Pre-training Survey*

* Please note that these are the exact unedited graphs submitted to me by the HR Department; no changes were made to the submitted document.

Frequency of Japanese travel to the United States
- <1 time/ 5 year
- <1 time/ year
- 1-2 times/ year

Frequency of American travel to Japan
- Never
- <1 time/ 5 year
- <1 time/ year
- 1-2 times/ year
- 1-2 times/ half an year
- >2 times/ half an year

How frequently do Japanese deal DIRECTLY with U.S. Americans
- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often
- Usually
- Always

How frequently do Americans deal DIRECTLY with Japanese colleagues and / or customers?
- Never
- Seldom
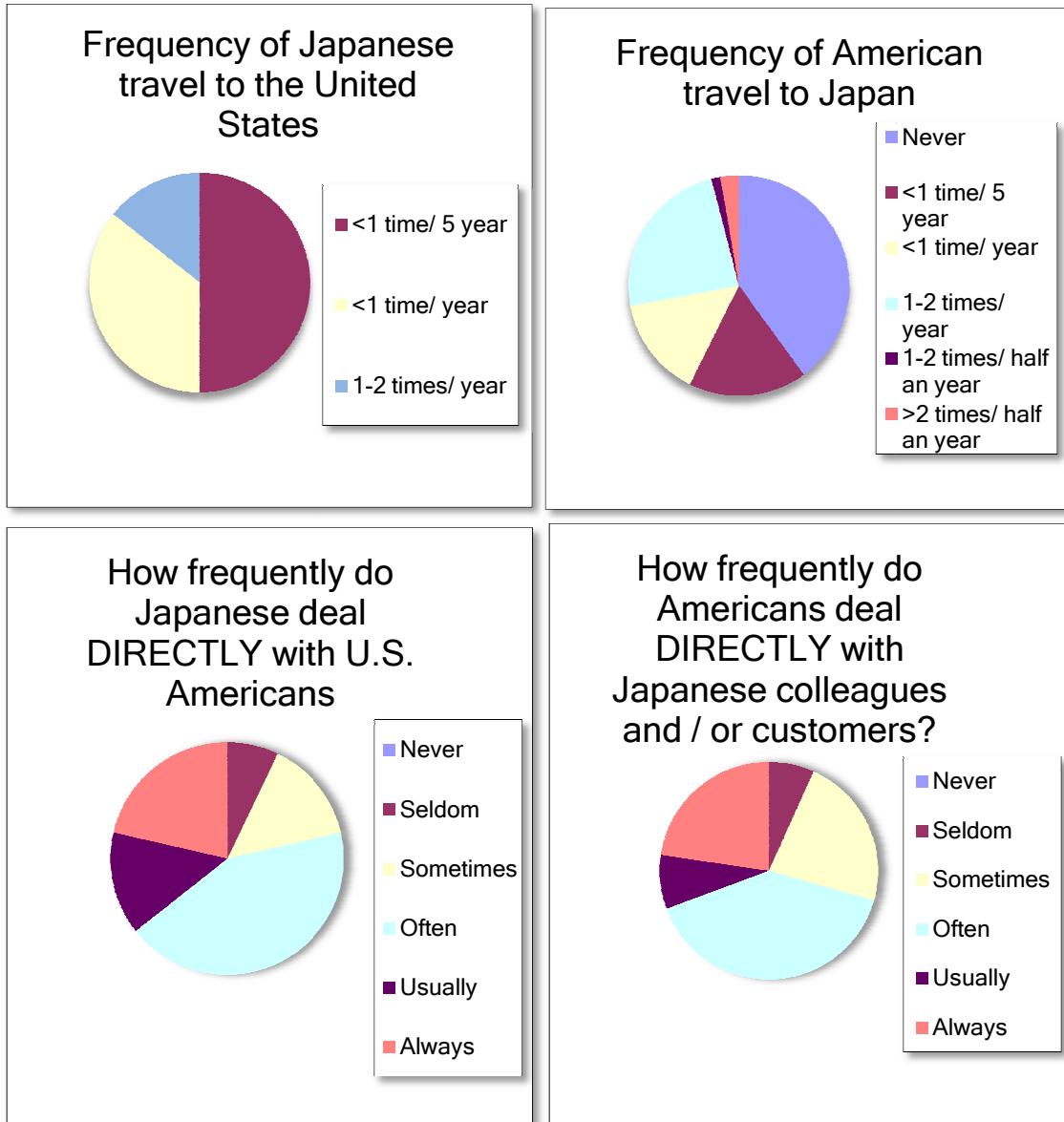- Sometimes
- Often
- Usually
- Always
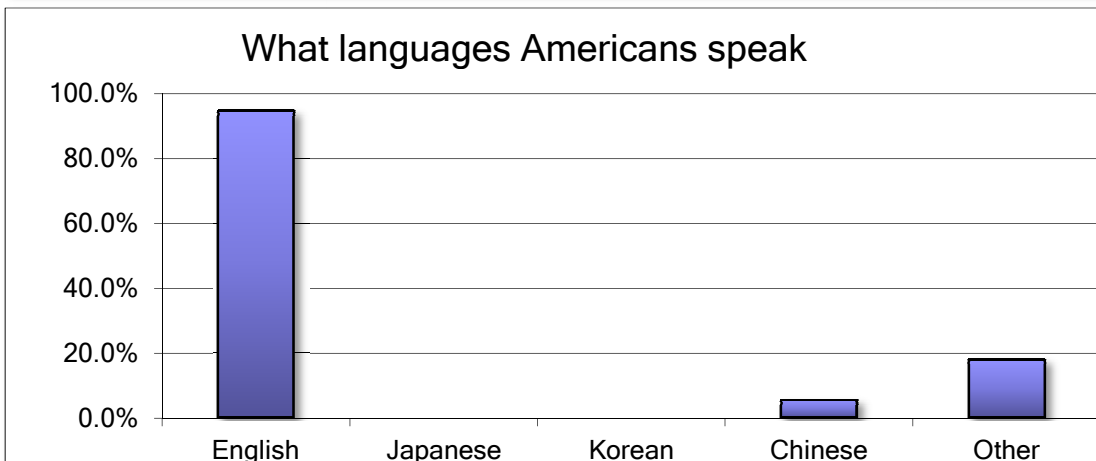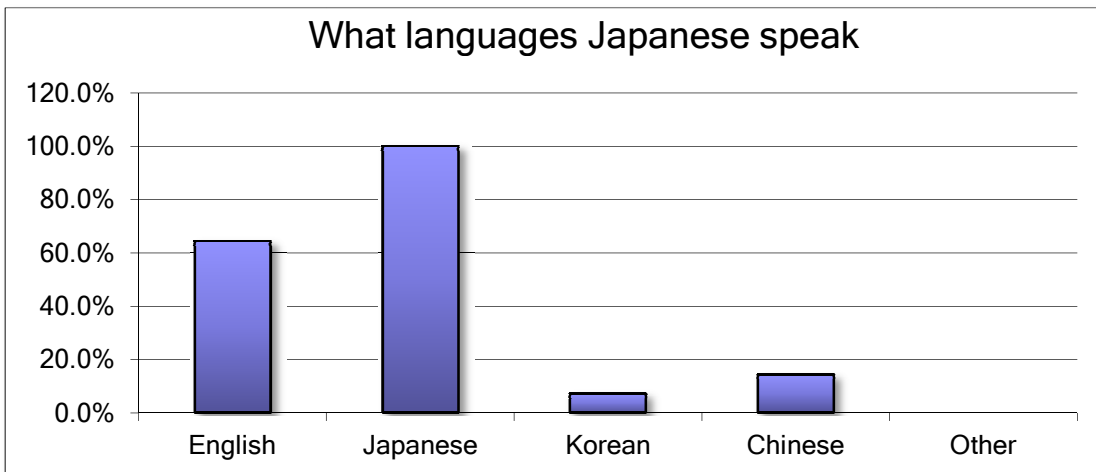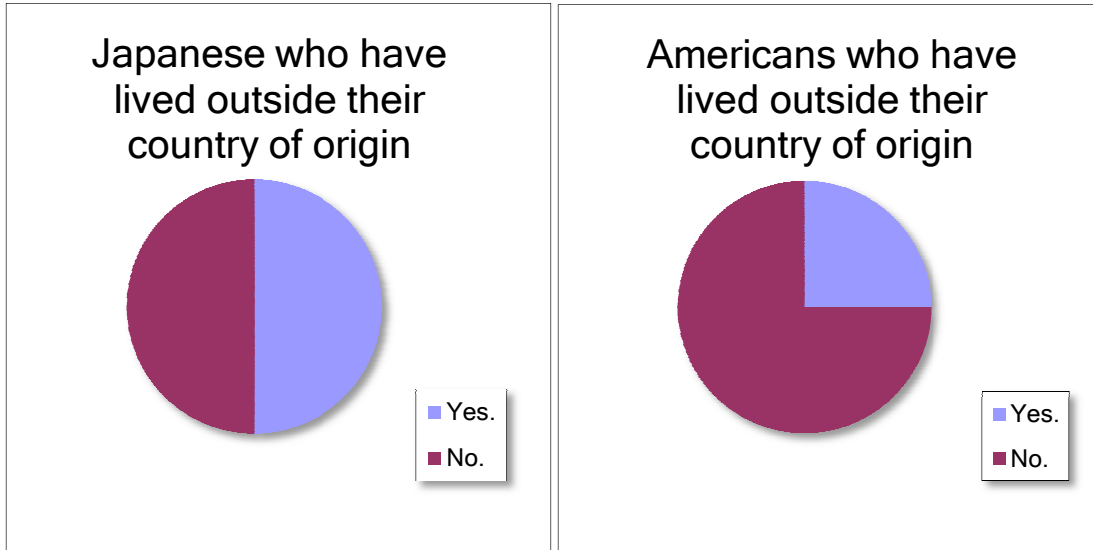
Summary of Results from the Pre-training Survey*

* Please note that this is the exact unedited document submitted to me by the HR Department; no changes were made to the submitted document.

What Japanese like most about working with U.S. Americans

- Easy to talk with
- Supportive and flexible
- Very clear communication style
- Reasonable and logical
- Technical expertise

What U.S. Americans like most about working with Japanese

- Open minded, disciplined, hard working, trustworthiness
- Respectful and courteous
- Importance of relationships
- Work ethic
- Collaborative and dependable
- High standards and attention to detail

What Japanese say is most challenging about working with U.S. Americans

- Communication – Language barrier – However U.S.A. direct style is NOT an issue for Japanese
- Decision Making - Emotional versus Logical Business Approach - (U.S. Americans place more importance on work rules and tasks than the "feelings" of others)
- U.S. Americans focus on the individual versus the team
- U.S. Americans do not understand the Japanese customer and what drives their satisfaction
- U.S. Americans are more concerned about product functionality (performance & cost) than quality

What U.S. Americans say is most challenging about working with Japanese

- Communication – Language barrier and indirect style is a challenge to U.S.A.
- Decision making, hierarchy and ability to deal with ambiguity
- Japanese are more concerned about quality than product functionality (performance and cost)
- Japanese put customers' satisfaction ahead of all business priorities

Intercultural Communication

The interwoven threads linking the overall goal and specific objectives for the workshop were awareness, sensitivity, acceptance and understanding. While developing the workshop content, I chose subject matter which would be useful in guiding the participants to:

- Become more sensitive to cultural differences

- Understand cultural differences more fully

- Become more accepting of cultural differences

- See the world through different eyes

- Learn about the culture of the U.S.A.

- Understand themselves and their own culture better

To introduce the general theme of the workshop, I posed the question, "What is intercultural communication?" The participants took a few minutes to think it over and discuss their thoughts with their table mates. Intercultural communication is the sharing of information among individuals from different cultures at varying degrees of awareness and control, through the use of symbols, signs, language, or behavior. I emphasized first of all, that often we are not aware or in control of what information we are sharing with others. Another important point that I stressed is that this transmission of information includes all messages sent and all the ways these messages are perceived, regardless of the intention. The intended message is not always the one that is received. "An individual's self-image, needs, values, expectations, goals, standards, cultural norms, and perception affect the way input is received and interpreted" (Moran, 2007, p. 45). Therefore, it is extremely important that we never presume that we know what final message we are communicating to another person. After laying this basic foundation on intercultural communication, I distributed a text by Dr. Robert Moran on global communication and asked

everyone to first read it, and then to discuss with a partner the three things that they thought were

the most interesting.

Global Communication

Global communication is defined as "the process by which persons share information, meanings, and feelings through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages" (Klopf). The individual working and communicating in a multicultural environment must remember that the message that ultimately counts is the one that the other person gets or creates in his mind, not necessarily the same one that the individual sends.

The following are practical guidelines for developing skills for more effective intercultural communication. These statements briefly outline several important characteristics of intercultural communication. Some are obvious and others are not, but all, if internalized and understood, will result in more effective communication.

1. *No matter how hard one tries, one cannot avoid communicating*. All behavior in human interaction has a message and communicates something. Body language communicates as well as our activity or inactivity. All behavior is communication because all behavior contains a message, whether intended or not.

2. *Communication does not necessarily mean understanding*. Even when two individuals agree that they are communicating or talking to each other, it does not mean that they have understood each other. Understanding occurs when the two individuals have the same interpretation of the symbols being used in the communication process, whether the symbols are words or gestures.
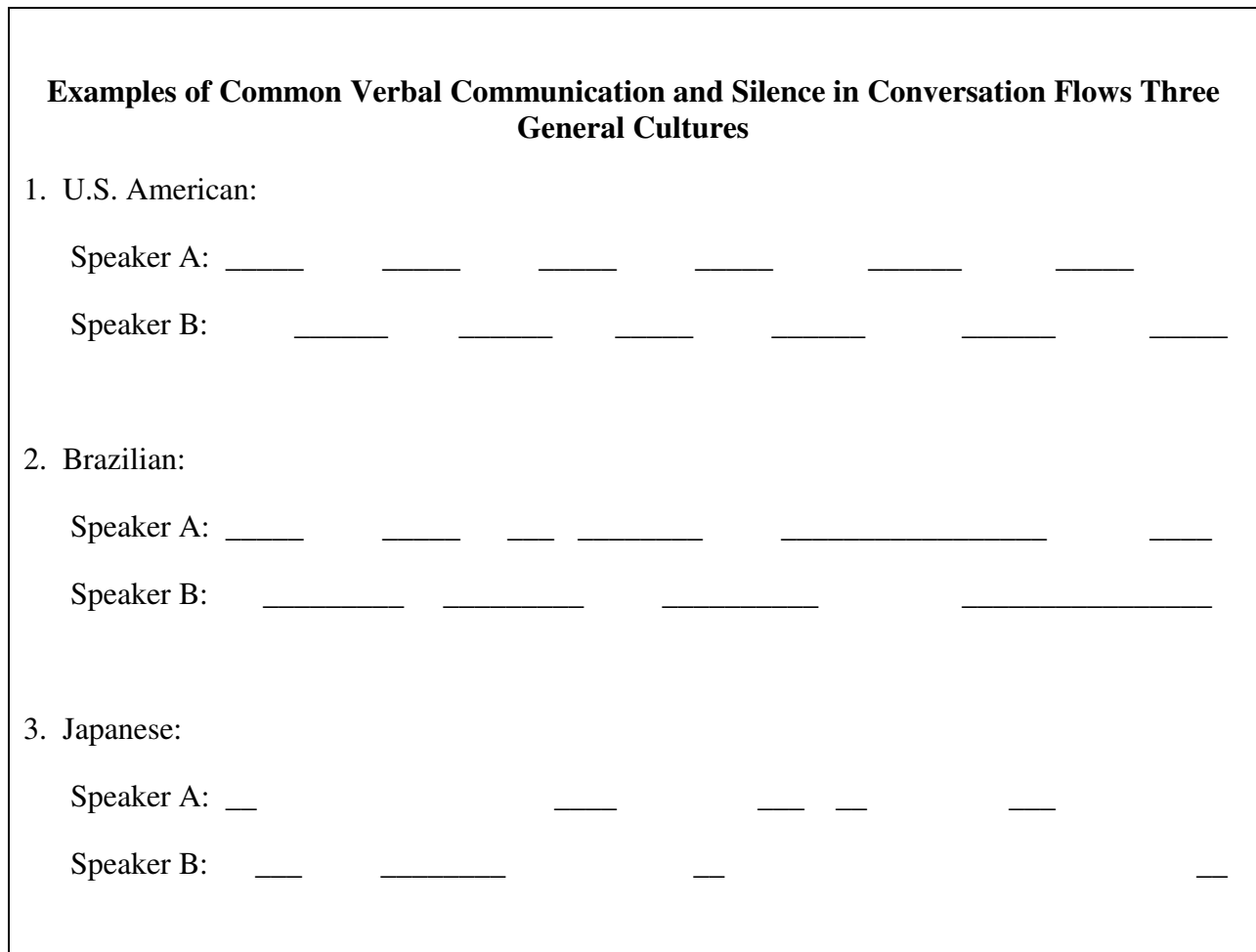
3. *Communication is irreversible*. One cannot take back one's communication (although sometimes he wishes he could). However, one's message can be explained, clarified, or restated. Once communicated, the message is part of the communicator's experience and it influences present and future meanings. For example, disagreeing with a Saudi Arabian in the presence of others is an "impoliteness" in the Arab world and may be difficult to remedy.

4. *Communication occurs in a context*. One cannot ignore the context of communication that occurs at a certain time, in some place, using certain media. Such factors have message value and give meaning to the communicators. For example, a business conversation with a French manager in France during an evening meal may be inappropriate.

5. *Communication is a dynamic process*. Communication is not static and passive, but rather it is a continuous and active process without beginning or end. A communicator is not simply a sender or a receiver of messages, but can be both at the same time.

Adapted from Moran, 2007.

Upon completing the activity on global communication, everybody came back together to delve more deeply into the concept of messages. I informed the group that even though we often believe messages come only in the form of words, we are actually constantly sending messages, even when we are not talking. Nonverbal messages may "speak" louder than words. Some examples of nonverbal messages include silence, interruptions, laughter, facial expressions, physical distance, touching, eye contact, and gestures. I showed the following graphic on verbal communication and silence which illustrates some typical conversation flows between two speakers, Speaker A and Speaker B, in three different general cultures:

Examples of Common Verbal Communication and Silence in Conversation Flows Three General Cultures

1. U.S. American:

   Speaker A: _____   _____   _____   _____   _____   _____

   Speaker B: _____   _____   _____   _____   _____   _____

2. Brazilian:

   Speaker A: _____   _____   ___ _____   _____   ____

   Speaker B: _____ _____   _____   _____

3. Japanese:

   Speaker A: __   _____   ___ __   ___

   Speaker B: ___   _____   __   __

(Source unknown).

After giving the group time to study the chart, I explained how it is common in the U.S.A. (depending on the individuals involved in conversation, of course), that silence may not feel very comfortable. Therefore, just as the first speaker (Speaker A) is beginning to finish speaking, the second speaker (Speaker B) will start right in. The next example is of two Brazilian speakers; we can see that there is no silence whatsoever, and in fact, often the two people will be talking at the same time to each other. The final example is of a conversation between two Japanese. I then asked the group to discuss what that silence could mean.

To continue on the theme of nonverbal communication, I explained that gestures can be classified in one of three ways:

1. Same gesture with same meaning in different cultures

2. Same gesture with different meanings in different cultures

3. Gesture has meaning in one culture but has no meaning in another culture

This information once again reinforced that the message sent is not always the message that is received.

We send messages just by what we look like or where we come from. This is the reality whether we like it or not. To demonstrate how true this is, I displayed the following picture of people from different cultures sitting around a table:
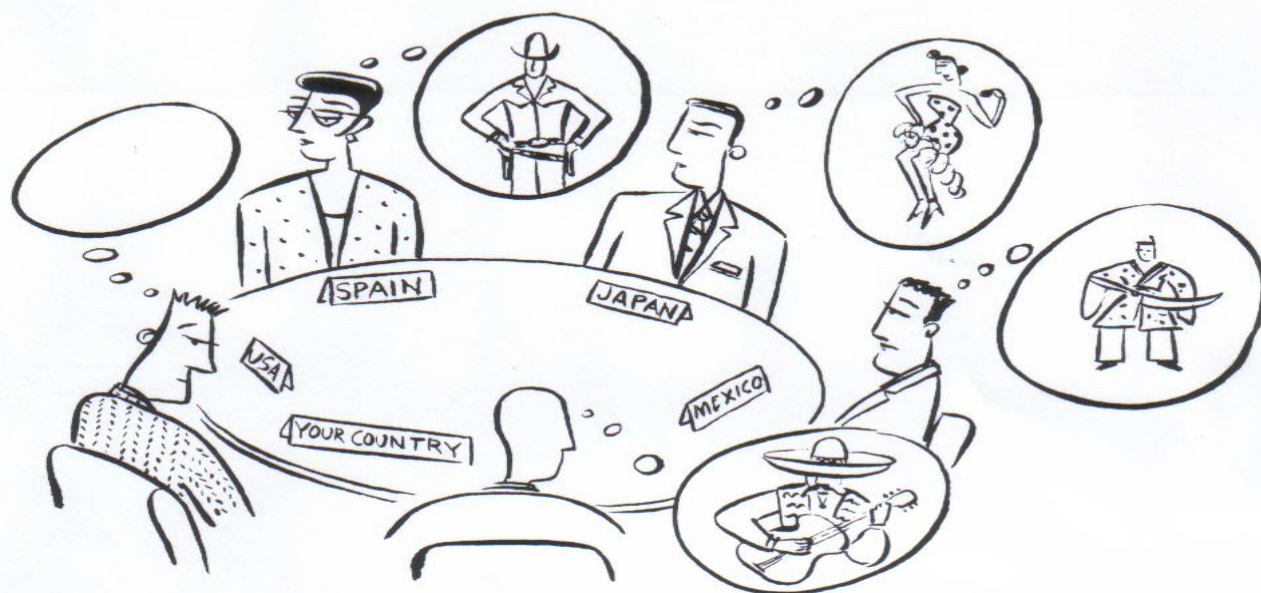
(English, 1995, p. 2)

I then asked the participants to think about what stereotypes are depicted in the drawing.

Next, I requested that they think about the following questions and discuss them with their table

teams:

1. What stereotypes do you have about U.S. Americans? Why do you have these

    stereotypes?

2. What stereotypes might exist about people from Japan in general? Are these stereotypes

    true?

3. What are the origins of these stereotypes?

According to English (1995), "a stereotype is a belief that all people from a culture behave a

certain way. It is an opinion based on one's own cultural values and prejudices and on little

information about the other culture" (p. 9). Stereotypes are often negative, and almost always not

true. Everything depends on perspective; we all see the world through our own eyes. As Hall

(1989b) says, "all peoples of the world look at the world in their own way. The world they see is

one which they have created -- which is why it all looks so familiar" (p. 209). We make

judgments depending on what is important to us as individuals and on what is important within

our own culture.

The next slide I displayed had two questions on it:

1. How many lives does a cat have?

2. How many continents are there in the world?

From my experience in different cultures, most cats around the world have seven lives. The

number of continents is usually five or six. The U.S.A. is the only place I know of so far where

cats have nine lives and live in a world of seven continents. So it really is true that what one

group of people may believe to be the absolute truth may be considered untrue in another culture.

What is Culture?

It's very likely that not many people have given much thought to this question. Since our

culture is all around us and part of us, we probably don't spend time pondering what culture

actually is. As this may be something that few have ever stopped to consider before, I asked the

group to think about this question and then write down all their ideas. Then we compiled all the

views on a flipchart. After we looked at what everyone had to say, I showed some slides with

different definitions of culture: "culture is the total way of life that a group of people share"

(Zanger, 1993, p. 14). Moran (2007) adds more depth to this:

Culture is a distinctly human means of adapting to circumstances and transmitting the

coping skills and knowledge to subsequent generations. Culture gives people a sense of

who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be

doing. . . Culture is dynamic. Cultures change . . . but slowly. Culture is often considered

the driving force behind human behavior everywhere (p. 6).

Culture can be compared to the water that a fish calls his home.

This fish doesn't even think about the water until he jumps out of it

(image from Clip Art Microsoft Word 2007). The same goes for

people then as well; we usually only think about our culture when

we are confronted with someone who does something in a different

way. While each individual has his own personality, style, and

history, each person also has cultural expectations based on what is "normal" in his own culture.

Without realizing it, people often expect that everyone does things in the same way; that there is

a "right" way to do things; that there is a universal common sense. In reality, differences are, in

most cases, not bad or good. After highlighting this information, and to reinforce this point

further, I wrote on the flip chart:

Different ≠ Wrong

Different = Different

Culture as an Iceberg

Edward T. Hall was a U.S. American anthropologist who conceptualized the iceberg as a

metaphor for culture (O'Brien, 2013). Not everything is what it seems at first glance. The visible

part of the iceberg, that portion which is above water, makes up only a small percentage of the

total iceberg. The much greater chunk of the iceberg is found below the surface. When we

compare this to culture, we realize that components of culture such as language, food,

appearance, customs, traditions, art, history, courtesies, and behaviors, to name a few, are easily

visible or recognizable. The larger part of culture consists of those cultural elements which are

not as easily seen. Some of these include communication style, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions,

priorities, perceptions, and values.
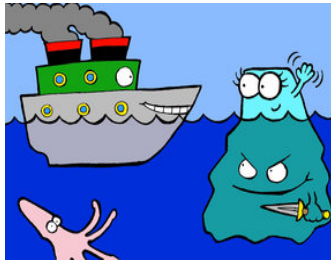
We can extend the iceberg analogy by including a ship in the picture

(image from Clip Art Microsoft Word 2007). The captain of the ship

can see the ice jutting out from the water, but he knows that the real

danger is hidden. In order to really know a culture, to interact

effectively with the people, and to avoid disasters, we must not only be familiar with the aspects

of culture which are apparent, but also dig deeply under the surface to discover what lies

beneath.

What are Values?

The final theme to be investigated during the workshop was cultural and individual values.

To start this section, I asked the participants to work with a partner to come up with a basic

definition for the term "values". We then regrouped and the pairs presented their ideas to the

entire class. Generally speaking, values are something that are believed to be fundamentally

important, worthy, and desirable. Values can be real or ideal; values can be individual,

subcultural, or cultural. When we speak of cultural values, we mean those values which are

traditional core values of a culture. At the same time, we also recognize that all members of a

culture do not hold all of the same values. There are many subcultures within each culture. Some

examples of subcultures include geographical regions, ethnic groups, religions, generations,

corporations, industries, and social classes.

We cannot see values, but we may be able to determine which values are particularly

significant within a culture by observing how the members of the culture behave. When

explaining the concept of cultural values, I emphasized repeatedly that we must not stereotype a

culture by claiming that everyone in a certain culture holds the same values. However, it is possible to make cultural generalizations. English (1995) states,

> Within each culture there are many choices. There is, however, in every culture a standard way of doing things. The cultural generalizations describe those standards and the values that guide those standards. A generalization is based on observation, not prejudice. It explains the standard practices of a culture but does not determine how every person in that culture behaves (p. 9).

Why is it important to learn about a culture's values? As we had discussed earlier in the workshop, values drive behaviors. We need to try to learn which values our colleagues from other cultures hold dear to their hearts so that when we do see a behavior that is not common in our culture, we may be able to discern a value which could possibly be driving that behavior.

One last but extremely crucial remark I added about values is how deeply embedded they are in people. We must remember this when we consider people who are fluent in other languages and / or who have lived in another culture for many years. These people may still hold on to their own original values much more than we assume.

Traditional Core Cultural Values and Behaviors of U.S. Americans

To finish our exploration of values, I informed the group that we would examine some traditional core cultural values and behaviors which many U.S. Americans share. As a warm up, I handed out a worksheet called Values -- Building Awareness (p. 27). I asked the participants to first work individually, circling the values which were important to them and underlining the values which they believed may be important to their U.S. American colleagues. After five minutes on their own, they spent five more minutes discussing their ideas with a partner. Then we all came back together in the big group and looked at what some of the opposite values might

be, e.g., directness versus indirectness, as well as what kind of problems could possibly arise

when two opposing values clash in the workplace.

Values -- Building Awareness

⬭ **Circle**   the words that you feel are important to you.

<u>Underline</u>   the words that you feel are important to your U.S. American

colleagues.

If you have any questions about what these words mean, please feel free to ask.

Self-reliance	**Following Procedure**	**Work to Live**
Independence	**Separate Business & Personal Life**	**Order**
Live to Work	**Flexibility / Adaptability**	**Equality**
Following Rules	**Face (Good Image)**	**Warmth**
Relationships	**Hierarchy**	**Trust**
Formalities	**Discipline**	**Capitalism**
Indirectness	**Control of Nature**	**Creativity**
Situationalism	**Consensus**	**Functionality**
Directness	**Tradition**	**Humility**
Individualism	**Future Outlook**	**In-group Oriented**
Harmony	**Task / Goal Oriented**	**Informality**
Caution	**External Control**	**Composure**
Speed	**Emotions**	**Seriousness**
Understanding	**Respect**	**Light-heartedness**
Effort	**Quality**	**Taking Risks**
Punctuality	**Control of Time**	**Change**
Optimism	**Resilience**	**Self-promotion**
Competition	**Aggression**	**Practicality**
OTHERS:		

Before beginning the discussion on U.S.A. traditional core cultural values, I projected an image of a continuum and explained that all values of individuals, subcultures, and cultures fall somewhere on the continuum, but not necessarily at the polar extremes. The positioning depends on the other individual, subculture, or culture with which the first is being compared. For example, if we take the two opposite values of direct communication style and indirect communication style, we could probably say that overall, U.S. Americans would value direct communication more than Japanese would, as shown here:

Direct Communication   **Indirect Communication**

U.S. Americans   Japanese
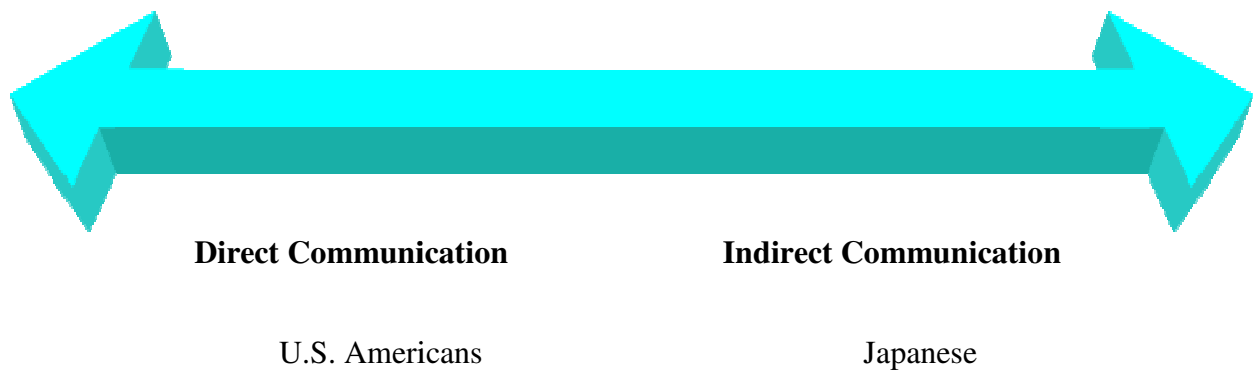
However, if we use the same values, but instead compare U.S. Americans with Germans, for example, the charting might look like this:

Direct Communication   **Indirect Communication**

Germans   U.S. Americans
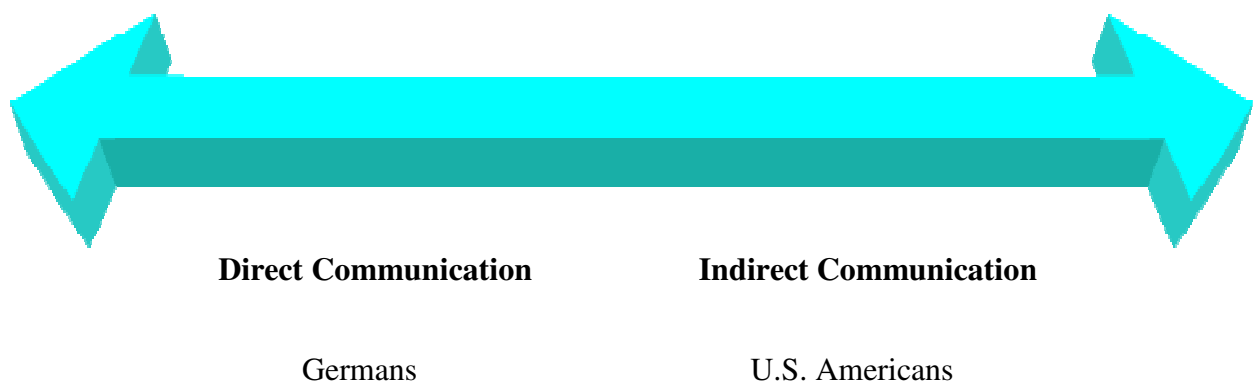
So, we can see, once again, it all depends on perspective, on which set of eyes are doing the looking.

I then presented some traditional core values that are common in the U.S.A. I asked the

participants to think about themselves as individuals and also about the Japanese culture in

general as I talked about each of these values. They filled out a chart about themselves as

individuals and about their culture in general as I gave details on each of the U.S.A. values. I

suggested that they indicate which value they might hold if it were the contrary to the U.S.A.

value, e.g., indirect communication versus direct communication. The following page shows an

example of a chart partially filled out by a fictitious participant, Satomi.

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Name: Satomi

Values Worksheet

Traditional Core U.S.A. Values:	**Yourself as an Individual**	**Traditional Core Japanese Values:**
1. Directness	Directness	Indirectness

(In this first example, Satomi thinks that she is direct in her communication style, but that in general, most people in her culture are less direct than people in the U.S.A.)

2. Individualism	In-group Oriented	In-group Oriented

(In this example, Satomi thinks that she values being in-group oriented as do most other people in her culture.)

3. Task and Goal Orientation

4. Hard Work Orientation

5. Informality

6. Equality

7. Inductive Thinking

8. Competition and Aggression

9. Control of Time and Nature

10. Speed

11. Functionality and Practicality

12. Optimism and Resilience

13. Self-promotion

Others:

Comments:

Critical Incident

The training culminated in a team activity in which the participants worked together in small groups to analyze a critical incident. Critical incidents are "brief descriptions of situations in which a misunderstanding, problem, or conflict arises as a result of the cultural differences of the interacting parties, or a problem of cross-cultural adaptation and communication" (Apedaile, 2008). I wrote this critical incident (pp. 33-34) prior to the training to meet this particular audience's needs, focusing on the data collected from the Cross-cultural Exercise Notes (Appendix A) compiled by the Japanese team and the data from the pre-training survey (pp. 13-15).

By combining all the information acquired during the workshop with any previous knowledge from personal experience, the teams worked together to make observations and produce some possible solutions to the situation presented in this critical incident. I asked first that they try to look at the critical incident with a new perspective, to see the situation through the eyes of their U.S. American colleagues, especially because this critical incident was presented from the viewpoint of a U.S. American. I told them that, as much as possible, we need to assume positive intent; that their colleagues and they both want successful outcomes, but oftentimes the approach of how to achieve that success is different. Then, I asked them to list all the facts of the case, including actions, words, and explicitly expressed thoughts in the incident, without prejudice or judgment. For each of these facts, actions, words, and explicitly expressed thoughts, I wanted the teams to determine a possible value which corresponded to the facts, actions, words, and explicitly expressed thoughts. They could use the values which we learned about in the previous activities or choose any others which hadn't been discussed during the workshop. Finally, I requested that the groups suggest some changes to be adapted by the parties

in the critical incident, so that this type of intercultural misunderstanding could be avoided in the future, leading to a more enjoyable and productive work environment. To summarize these instructions clearly, I wrote on the whiteboard:

After reading the critical incident, talk with your team about the following:

1. Facts presented in the critical incident

2. Chris's actions, words, and explicit thoughts

3. The Japanese managers' actions and words

4. Possible values, beliefs, and attitudes leading to Chris's actions, words, and explicit thoughts

5. Possible values, beliefs, and attitudes leading to the Japanese managers' actions and words

6. Suggestions for improving communication to create a more enjoyable and productive work environment

I gave each group a flip chart page and asked them to write down all their ideas and then put the sheet up on the wall. Each group then presented its analysis.

This type of activity is very valuable since it utilizes all the skills and tools which the participants learned throughout the workshop. Additionally, since the events presented in the critical incident actually occurred frequently in their own work setting, the participants would immediately be able to utilize the information obtained from this exercise by putting into practice what they had learned the next time these situations transpired in their workplace.

The outcome of this activity is discussed in the next chapter.

Critical Incident: Today's Going To Be A Good Day

Dr. Chris Elliott, a young and upcoming director at a global corporation, was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. He is on his way from his brownstone home in downtown Chicago to his office in a far west suburb on a cold and snowy winter day. As he turns onto Highway 290, the snowfall begins to intensify. "Good thing I left early, with plenty of time to get to the office," he says to himself. "With this kind of weather, you never know how the traffic is going to be."

As he switches on the radio to check the traffic and weather reports, he hears one of his favorite songs by the Black-Eyed Peas. "I've got a feeling, tonight's going to be a good night, tonight's going to be a good night . . ." Chris starts singing along, changing the words a little to fit his present situation: "I've got a feeling, today's going to be a good day, today's going to be a good day, today's going to be a good, good day!"

Yes, today would indeed be a good day, he was sure! Chris has several meetings lined up, one in the morning and three more in the afternoon, in which he will be working with various members of his team to finalize everything for his big presentation at the yearly meeting he has with the Leadership Team (LT) tomorrow. During his five years at the company, Chris has planned everything very well, and has worked very hard to get where he is in the company. He is quite confident that the LT will finally have the chance to see all his accomplishments and recognize him for the excellent scientist and director that he is. Due to all his hard work, Chris is expecting a promotion to the senior director level in the near future.

The first meeting is with three of the managers who work for him, Yamamoto-san, Akira, and Toshi. They certainly have a lot of things to discuss, brainstorm, and debate. "I just hope they cooperate with me this time," Chris thinks to himself. "Sometimes I feel like I'm the only

one doing any talking; it's almost like I'm debating with myself. I wonder why nobody ever wants to take any responsibility and contribute anything to our projects? I almost always have to make all the decisions alone! And when they do contribute, they go back to discussing decisions that have already been made, or start talking about what people in other departments are working on."

The traffic report comes on, giving the news that due to bad weather conditions, a truck flipped over, blocking two of the three lanes on the road. But Chris isn't too worried because he left home an entire hour earlier than usual. "No, nothing's going to get in the way of my good, good day today," he says with a smile.

Unfortunately, things start becoming a little more complicated – the traffic slows down to about 20 miles an hour, and the snow really begins coming down hard. "This can't be happening to me! Oh well, at least I have the whole day to get everything done."

Chris walks into his first meeting almost half an hour late. His three team members are there waiting. He says hi to them, makes a quick comment about the traffic and weather, and then moves right to the first item on his agenda. His team remains even more quiet than usual during the entire meeting, contributing nothing at all to the outlined project plan for tomorrow's presentation. When Chris asks them if they could please give him some feedback, Yamamoto-san begins to tell him that "everything appears to be fine, and . . .", and then pauses for what seems forever to Chris. Silence. "So everything is fine and I can present this to the LT then?" Chris inquires. Silence.

Frustrated, Chris decides to end the meeting, and goes to his office to finish the project plan on his own.

Reflection on a Critical Incident Activity: Outcomes and Hypotheses

"My thesis is that one of the many paths to enlightenment is the discovery of ourselves, and this

can be achieved whenever one truly knows others who are different"

(Hall, 1989b, p. 8).

In this chapter, I start by outlining the outcomes on the critical incident group activity

obtained during our debriefing session. The reason that I chose to focus on the results of this

critical incident is because during the workshop, the participants were relatively reserved and

quiet, consistent with the cultural generalization of Japanese communication style (Moran, 2007,

p. 443). I determined that a critical incident group activity would be the best way for me to gain

an insight into what actually took place during the workshop; the observations and

interpretations produced by the participants would give me an understanding of what they had

experienced in the training and how this applied to their lives.

To exhibit these outcomes, I will first show the facts, actions, words, and explicit thoughts

displayed by the U.S. American director and his team of Japanese managers which the

participants presented. I will also furnish the corresponding values which the participants felt

were linked to each of each of these facts, actions, words, and explicit thoughts. I will then

provide their solutions for ways to improve communication between the two cultural groups, i.e,

to create a cultural bridge, leading to a more pleasant and effective workplace. Finally, based on

the results from the critical incident together with my existing knowledge of Japanese culture, I

will offer my hypotheses as to why the participants came up with these results.

Critical Incident Activity: Outcomes

   Facts about Director Chris Elliott, actions, words, and explicit thoughts with

corresponding values. The following chart contains a list of facts about Director Chris Elliott,

his actions, words, and explicit thoughts, accompanied by some possible corresponding values.

Facts about Chris, Actions, Words, and Explicit Thoughts	Possible Corresponding Values
Chris is a young director.	Equality between Young and Old
Chris left home early because of the bad weather.	Control over Time and Nature
Chris starts singing even though the road conditions are bad.	Optimism, Resilience
Chris has many meetings lined up for the day.	Speed, Control over Time, Goal-oriented
Chris has planned well and worked hard, and believes he deserves recognition.	Self-promotion, Individualism, Competition
Chris thinks that he is the only member of the team who contributes anything during meetings or takes any responsibility.	Equality, Transparency
Chris thinks that there is a lot to discuss and debate at the meeting today.	Direct Communication Style, Comfort with Conflict

Chris thinks that nothing can ruin his day, not even the terrible weather and bad traffic.	Optimism
Chris arrives at the meeting late, says hello, comments on the weather, and then goes straight to business.	Speed, Task over Relationship, Informality, Lack of Protocol
Chris asks for feedback from his team.	Equality
Chris asks if everything is ok with the plan and if he can present it to the LT after Yamamoto-san pauses.	Speed, Direct Communication
Chris becomes frustrated and ends the meeting.	Control over Time
Chris works on the final plans on his own.	Individualism

Facts about Japanese managers, actions, and words with corresponding values. The following chart contains a list of facts about the Japanese managers, their actions, and words, accompanied by some possible corresponding values.

Facts about the Japanese Managers, Actions, and Words	Possible Corresponding Values
According to Chris, instead of talking about the issue at hand, the Japanese managers discuss decisions that have already been made and people who are not involved in the issue.	Relationships, Detail and Process-oriented, Cyclical Time-oriented

The Japanese managers are waiting for Chris when he arrives late.	Relationships, Hierarchy, Respect, Protocol, Patience, Punctuality
The Japanese managers are more quiet than usual, contributing nothing.	Relationships, Indirect Communication Style, Restraint, Saving Face
Yamamoto-san begins to speak, giving a positive comment, and then pauses.	Relationships, Hierarchy, Saving Face, Conflict-avoidance
Silence	Relationships, Appearance of Harmony, Understanding

Creating a cultural bridge. The groups reported that awareness (of self and other) and knowledge of the other culture were necessary to build a cultural bridge. In this section, I will give the details of the groups' analyses of the critical incident and their suggestions for ways to improve communication between the two cultures in this particular critical incident.

What Chris needs to know. Chris should become aware that the approach the Japanese team prefers when making decisions includes taking into consideration all the decisions made in the past and all the people involved in the current decision. Details involving relationships and past events are thought to be an important part of the current decision. Furthermore, formalities and protocol are of utmost concern for the Japanese. The superior should always be held in high esteem and must be shown respect, even when there is disagreement. The hierarchy must always be respected. If the superior is late to a meeting, the subordinates must wait patiently and be ready when the superior arrives. They must never say anything that might make their superior look bad or feel embarrassed. Most Japanese refrain from expressing their honest opinions and

feelings because they value a sense of togetherness and harmony more than self-expression. By remaining quiet, the Japanese are trying to communicate a very strong message of their dissatisfaction. When he does speak, Yamamoto-san uses an indirect style of communication by beginning with a positive statement followed by a pause. In this instance, his message is not in his words, but in the context; his real message is not one of agreement, but actually the opposite. He becomes frustrated and believes that Chris is not worthy of being the boss if he does not realize what is really being communicated here. Furthermore, Yamamoto-san and his Japanese colleagues feel that Chris is too young to be their director, and it is embarrassing that he is so impatient and openly displays his frustration. Chris needs to be more sensitive in detecting these nonverbal messages, and try to be more patient and refrain from showing his frustration.

Chris should also think about the fact that the Japanese are speaking a second language and are not completely fluent in English. The concept of face is extremely important in the Japanese culture; Chris should understand that his managers may be uncomfortable to speak because they could make mistakes and become embarrassed.

What the Japanese managers need to know. The Japanese managers should become aware that Chris' behaviors are driven by his deep-rooted values. They need to realize that Chris believes that he is acting in the way any good director should behave. His approach valuing individualism, speed, equality, informality, direct communication, and the use of conflict to resolve problems are all in stark contrast to the manner preferred by his Japanese managers. Chris believes that everyone is responsible for doing his part and contributing to the decision making process by expressing all opinions openly. The best way to solve a problem is to brainstorm and present all possible ideas, even if these ideas go against those of the superior. Only when all ideas are divulged and discussed freely will the optimal solution be found. Chris'

belief is that direct communication is key to success; it is a waste of time to keep discussing previous decisions and details about people who are not involved in the current situation. It is also a waste of time to remain silent during meetings. With a team like this, Chris prefers to work on the project by himself.

Since a direct approach is important to their director, the Japanese managers should try to adapt to a more open style of communication and express their opinions and thoughts more transparently. They should try to understand that all ideas, even ones that may not be accepted by others in the group, are welcome and could lead to finding the best outcome.

Combining the Outcomes with my Previous Knowledge to Generate Hypotheses

In this last section of the chapter, I will combine the information presented by the groups about the critical incident with my prior knowledge about Japan to generate some hypotheses as to why the participants reacted to and analyzed the critical incident in the way that they did.

The two charts on pages 36-38 highlight many differences between the U.S.A director's and the Japanese managers' values. One thing that really stands out is the participants' perception of relationships being an issue in all the situations listed in the chart depicting the Japanese facts, actions, and words. Something that the charts do not show, however, is that each of the four groups working on the critical incident reported that relationships are the main concern in all aspects of Japanese culture. Relationships are the prime consideration in decision-making procedure, communication style, workplace behavior, and every other possible situation. This information made me curious, and I wanted to understand where such value of relationships in Japanese culture originated. I decided to examine some historical facts as well as present day realities in Japan to make some hypotheses which explain the priority of relationships in Japanese culture today.

The history of Japan dates back more than 2,000 years (Moran, 2007, p. 441). It is a country composed of many islands, isolated from the rest of the world by ocean. This is one historical reason that the population of Japan is largely homogeneous. Living on a landmass with a total area of 374,744km^2, 99% of its approximate 127,000,000 people are of Japanese ethnical background (*ibid*).

Throughout time, the Japanese have had to live very closely together, sharing such a small piece of land. This geographical condition has made it necessary for the people to realize the importance of living together peacefully and harmoniously. I believe that this context provides a strong influence on human relationships. Living in such close proximity in a small, water-locked country, the Japanese understand that it is necessary to cooperate with their neighbors. To maintain harmony, the Japanese have learned that relationships must take priority over everything else. Because of this belief, the Japanese feel that at times it is best to stay quiet instead of expressing a negative opinion which could disrupt the peaceful environment.

Furthermore, I believe that due to these close living conditions, the country's long history, and the homogeneity of the Japanese people, members of the Japanese culture share a common understanding of many situations. Since they are part of a very close-knit society, an inferred meaning may often be found in the context, rendering words unnecessary. Nonverbal cues which carry shared messages are frequently exchanged among the Japanese; these nonverbal forms of communication are usually very subtle and may not be noticed by those from other cultures. Obviously, there must be a relationship in place to communicate in this manner.

Conclusion: Reviewing the Workshop Stages and Planning for the Future

"Intercultural Communication is at best intercultural dialogue, a jointly travelled path towards learning and understanding, respect and responsibility. Different opinions become a source for new solutions, and culture turns into a valuable resource. In the multicultural and interdependent world, intercultural dialogue is our chance to make a difference"

(Salo-Lee, n.d.).

In this paper, I have reflected on an intercultural communication workshop by applying the stages of my own adaptation of the ELC to each corresponding stage of the training process. The threads of awareness, sensitivity, acceptance and understanding were interwoven throughout the entire undertaking. In the section on the pre-training phase, I provided the background scenario of what led up to the training. I continued by describing the content I created for the workshop. Then, I reflected on the outcome of the training by contemplating the participants' reactions to a critical incident. After assessing these results and drawing on my relevant background schema, I presented my ideas concerning the origin of the participants' conclusions. Using the information which I acquired from the participants and from the hypotheses I made based on this data, I would now like to finish my reflection by making some recommendations for subject matter to be included in future training initiatives.

Communication Exercises

During the debriefing of the critical incident, the participants spent a significant amount of time talking about their abilities to communicate in English. Many of them mentioned that they do not feel completely comfortable speaking the language. Additionally, most of the participants in the group believe that they have a more indirect communication style than their U.S. American colleagues. To address this challenge, in future trainings I would include some

communication exercises in which the participants could practice using a more direct

communication style while speaking the English language. In her chapter on communication,

Shinomiya (2008) provides numerous tips for improving communication between U.S.

Americans and Japanese. She also lists many potential problem areas and offers practice

exercises which would be useful for Japanese speakers of English. Some of the topics discussed

in this chapter include how to break into the conversation to clarify information, ask a question,

give feedback, ask the speaker to slow down, let the speaker know the level of understanding or

agreement, ask for repetition, ask for meaning, as well as ways to confirm and summarize what

the speaker is saying (pp. 48-179).

Another language concern for Japanese speakers of English is the use of phrasal verbs and

idioms. U.S. Americans use these expressions all the time without even realizing it. It would be

extremely beneficial for the Japanese audience to get some information about this component of

the English language, and to have the opportunity to do some exercises to practice using some of

the most common of these expressions.

U.S.A. Culture

Now that this group of Japanese executives has a good foundation on the important role that

intercultural communication plays in the workplace and general knowledge about some

traditional core U.S.A. values, it would be helpful for them to learn a bit more about the U.S.A.

culture. In the next workshops, I would like to furnish information about the history and present

day realities of the U.S.A., specifically those elements which have an influence on typical

attitudes and behaviors. Kearny (1984) gives a nice overview in his book about the U.S.A.

heritage and explores some significant occurrences in the country's past which may explain the

basis for the traditional core values. It would be advantageous to become familiar with the

historical events which have influenced life today in the U.S.A., focusing especially on those factors which are so different from those of Japanese history.

Sexual harassment is another matter of significance in the work environment in the U.S.A., and one which I believe would be worthwhile to include in the next trainings. This concept may not be completely understood by the Japanese and could potentially cause some unintended problems. It would be helpful for the participants to receive some information about exactly what sexual harassment is and what consequences it could bring to the individual and the company.

Customers' Organizational Cultures

During the training detailed in this paper, it was emphasized repeatedly that not all individuals in a culture share the same traditional core cultural values. There are many subcultures within any given culture. One example of subcultures is corporate cultures. I would suggest an investigation of the corporate cultures of the company's main customers and suppliers to understand how best to communicate when doing business with these entities, and provide this information in the next trainings.

Mindfulness Activities

To end my discussion on topics to be included in the next training program, I would like to suggest including some exercises focused on mindfulness. While I feel that the Japanese may be more familiar with this concept than their U.S. American counterparts, I believe it would be desirable to incorporate this feature in future trainings. Taking time to breathe and relax is important when taking part in a workshop with such intensely powerful subject matter as intercultural communication. Swisa (2013) provides excellent ideas for easy and meaningful ways to practice mindfulness which could be incorporated into future trainings at various points throughout the workshops.

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Appendix A

**Cross-cultural Exercise Notes
Japan Training – Doing Business with U.S. Americans***

*Please note that this is the exact unedited document submitted by the team of Japanese leaders; no changes were made to the submitted document.

Trusted Partner

U.S.A. Perspective

Responsive to requests and needs; equal; reciprocal; working closely together; win-win situation; building trust; teamwork; trust that people will say what they mean and vice versa; "on the same page"; "I know you will do it, so go off on your own and do it"; assessing technical ability to do what you say and follow up on what you say you will do; customer is given preference; forthright; open; tell about issues; foster spirit of self improvement; confidentiality; will to share knowledge; meet delivery commitments

Japan Perspective

Partner – lower level; customer is #1; never as open as we expect, so it takes a long time to get to the trusted partner level that U.S.A. expects, especially since we are foreign; hierarchy -- customer and supplier are never "sideways" so customer must be treated with respect; do what you need to do; anticipate the needs before they are asked – "I'm going to make you happy"; one-man sumo doesn't exist; in sync, in harmony with the other, but it's not horizontal; high quality and effective cost structure built with a long-term partner; never let customer down; service / product are right the first time; zero-defects; meet expectations without breaking

harmony; long-term relationship; no surprises; smooth out the wrinkles; "you're holding up the fort for us, so you have to come through"

Speed -- Speed of response v. speed of delivery

Taiwan is somewhere between the U.S.A. and Japan.

U.S.A. Perspective

Take action; flexible; whatever is good enough to solve the problem at the moment is enough; questions of quality, detail; "You can always count on the Americans to do the right thing after they have exhausted every other possibility." (Winston Churchill); decision making --"let's do it and we can fix it if there is a problem"; get it done now – fast; cars, fast food – speed is a big asset in our country; rapid; trial and error

Japan Perspective

Slower; think a lot; fear of failure; layers to go through, but once everything is set up, it goes fast – 5 hours v. 60 seconds; slow to create new procedures; they don't have a second chance, so everything needs to be checked and confirmed; done right; well-established process; very rigid process; when the process breaks down, there is catastrophe; what drives taking action depends on the hierarchy; decision making – "let's make sure – let's do it right so we don't have to fix it"; resolution, answers and information that they need; delivery – when you say you will do something by a certain date, you are trusted to do it; quality trumps speed and separates Japan from other countries; must have the solution; may be a slower approach, but more effective, and may in fact be quicker in the end because they don't have to go back and do it again; consensus, teamwork, group decision; quality

*How deep is your relationship relative to speed?

> Japan – Let's make sure before I respond – before relationship, but after the relationship is formed, things go smoothly and fast.

> U.S.A. – We can build a quick relationship, but don't have the patience to take time to build the relationship, and we might go on to someone else if the relationship isn't formed quickly.

*Timing –

Japan -- 30 minutes early is on time.

U.S.A. – Just on time

Cost of Ownership

<u>U.S.A. Perspective</u>

Potential for selling value; quality; cut and dry – price minus cost = profit; warranty, cost and service are separate; products with performance, local support teams, added value on higher-priced product make it worth it; low cost; different from individual consumer where it is more closely aligned with Japan -- what you want, when you want it and the value behind it v. U.S. corporate (like Japan) – dollars and cents driven, but they want a lot of value with it; end-user – bulk, value, get it quick; a lot cheaper

<u>Japan Perspective</u>

Price-driven within specification; pride in packaging; holistic approach – total quality, how long it will last, customer service, other issues, who else is affected, who else is included, continuing

to take care of the customer – service is baked into the price – ex – no tipping – it's baked into the price; extended warranties sound like something is wrong with the product to start with/ if I am getting the best product, I don't want to pay more for service – it's expected; concept of returns; problem-free – after sale service is free; they think service should be included in the original price; marketing is not understood traditionally – they thought of it as sales; brand recognition; price which is only part of the cost; Japan and corporate U.S. dollars and cents driven, but want a lot of value with it – service is baked into the price in Japan; limited space; they want it to work, keep working, something of value, can't take it back; brand names have reputation of being more reliable in Japan; zero-defect

Quality

U.S.A. Perspective

Profit – getting things out; functionality; keeping old things until they break; efficiency; low cost; cost/benefit analysis – 99% is great and 100% is cost-prohibited and therefore not worth it; perfection at company due to industry, but in general the question is: does it meet functional purpose? It doesn't have to look pretty, but it has to work; meeting specs; end user can bring it back; more on cost, not quality; if something goes wrong, U.S. looks for root cause until it is found, but after it is found, we stop looking; lack of defect; relies on customer feedback; continued improvement; we know that there will always be mistakes, and it's ok; add in for more hours; the whole package – how fast and well we do things is part of quality

Japan Perspective

Space – there is no room so #1, shame in failure; zero-defects goal; throw things out for some new model, not because the old one broke; zero complaints; never inconveniencing customer – anticipate what might go wrong at any cost; quality very serious; end-user zero defects; consumer – quality packaging goods; if something goes wrong, Japan won't stop looking even if the first problem was solved; must meet specs; doesn't rely on customer feedback; sustained perfection; you can't think you're going to fail – you must get it right the first time

Accountability

U.S.A. Perspective

Comfort level, individual – ok to fail and then move forward; individual takes priority and responsibility; individual blame, depending on team; transparency – what happened exactly, including who was involved; it's always someone else's fault – looking for individual source; "I" – "I did my part"

Japan Perspective

Losing face; team members don't have final responsibility, manager has final accountability – father takes responsibility; prioritizing – focus on everything – all is important; accept accountability in group and apologize; team and manager (higher up) is accountable; fix the problem v. whose fault is it; who is the big boss – person in charge; fear of failure – public face; "we"

Courage

U.S.A. Perspective

High risk – being outspoken, speak your mind, speak up, speak out against things – the

individual; doing things right and take chances, risks

Japan Perspective

Low risk – meek approach which could be interpreted as lack of courage by U.S.; saying nothing

is the flower; showing courage with patience – speaking up shows immaturity; courage of group;

withhold, hold back, hesitate, endurance; team endurance perseverance – women's soccer team ;

persistence; management responsible; do as team, don't stand out, make team look good; go the

distance

Respect

U.S.A. Perspective

Ask questions, speak up, interactive style, direct; respect is earned-- equality—respect for

(every) person as an equal; organizational hierarchy at company

Japan Perspective

Don't ask questions, don't speak up, indirect, giving an out; respect is ascribed – ingrained in

hierarchy; disagree without offending; be yourself and still be respectful; be more understanding,

not invasive; perhaps prepare them for what's coming; gentle – "In all due respect, and I

apologize ahead of time, but I think you're full of crap"; perhaps waiting for the right moment;

one-on-one; consideration

Appendix B

Japan Pre-training Survey -- Doing Business with U.S. Americans
Administered by the KEM Intercultural Group

This questionnaire is intended to help develop a customized intercultural communication training course for Japanese working with U.S. Americans. It will give you, the participant, an opportunity to explore your cultural identity and reflect on your cultural experiences relating to U.S. Americans.

1. What is your job position?
2. Have you ever lived outside your country of origin? If yes, where and for how long?
3. What languages do you speak?
4. How often do you travel to the United States?
5. How frequently do you deal DIRECTLY with U.S. Americans, and in what situations?
6. What things do you like and enjoy about working with U.S. Americans?
7. What aspects of working with U.S. Americans do you find most different or challenging?
8. What cultural issues or challenges relating to communication with U.S. Americans are you facing? Please rank the following from very challenging (1) to least challenging (3).
    a. Motivating or influencing   1 2 3
    b. Negotiating   1 2 3
    c. Decision making   1 2 3
    d. Responsibility or task assignment 1 2 3
    e. Participation among the U.S. A. team   1 2 3
    f. Stereotyping   1 2 3
    g. Conflicts within the global team   1 2 3
    h. Requirements for information   1 2 3
    i. Communication in English   1 2 3

9. Please provide your opinion by ranking the following statements from Highly Disagree (1) to Highly Agree (5)
    a. U.S. Americans approach schedules and deadlines with greater importance than Japanese do. 1 2 3 4 5
    b. U.S. Americans feel the individual to be more important than the "group".   1 2 3 4 5
    c. U.S. Americans believe that work, tasks, and rules are more important than the feelings of people. 1 2 3 4 5
    d. U.S. Americans question authority more than Japanese do. 1 2 3 4 5
    e. U.S. Americans are open-minded when solving problems or brainstorming. 1 2 3 4 5
    f. U.S. Americans speak only in English when working with other cultural groups, and don't consider the needs of non-native speakers. 1 2 3 4 5
    g. U.S. Americans are not very rooted in tradition (future-oriented). 1 2 3 4 5
    h. U.S. Americans are very expressive, direct, and straightforward. 1 2 3 4 5
    i. U.S. Americans often overstep their responsibility and / or interfere in my business (or job role.) 1 2 3 4 5
    j. U.S. Americans' job descriptions and assignments are sometimes ambiguous and confusing to me. 1 2 3 4 5
    k. U.S. Americans are very concerned about fairness and equality. 1 2 3 4 5
    l. Getting to the point and asking questions is important to communicate with U.S. Americans. 1 2 3 4 5
    m. U.S. Americans' direct communication style is very challenging / frustrating. 1 2 3 4 5
    n. U.S. Americans are more concerned with product functionality than with quality. 1 2 3 4 5
    o. U.S. Americans are not as customer-oriented as Japanese. 1 2 3 4 5

10. What are two or three of the most important issues, concerns, or challenges in working and communicating with your U.S. American colleagues that this workshop should address for your benefit and for the benefit of your colleagues?
    _____
    _____
    _____

11. Please add any additional comments, examples, or questions you might have.
    _____
    _____
    _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We will see you soon in the training.