

Case Study: A Person Needs Face Like a Tree Needs Bark
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This paper aims to discuss the case study “*A Person Needs Face Like a Tree Needs Bark*” (Scandura, 2016, p. 333). The case study deals with international assignments and how one should prepare effectively for the assignments by understanding different cultural values, by having an integrative approach to acculturation and by developing cultural intelligence. Scandura

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(2016) invites the reader to think of a plan for addressing a situation where an American businessman (Brian) makes a Chinese manager (Chan) lose face. The reader learns from the case that the Chinese manager felt embarrassment when Brian asked him assertive questions; Brian's leadership style became compromised because he didn't realize that behavior would not be acceptable in different cultural contexts. Brian is from a low- context culture (the United States) and his words were not meant to be a personal attack; however, Chan is from a high- context culture (China) which tends to rely on situations to determine whether one is worthy or not (Scandura, 2016). Northouse (2015) discusses that culture can be learned. Adler and Bartholomew (as cited in Northouse, 2015) affirm that there are five essential cross-cultural competencies: 1) leaders need to understand business, political, and cultural environments globally; 2) leaders need to learn different aspects of different cultures- from gastronomy to technologies; 3) leaders need to learn how to work with people from different countries concurrently; 4) leaders need to learn how to communicate with other cultures; 5) leaders need to learn how to live with people from different cultures from a position of equality. Ferraro and Briody (2013) explain that one of the challenges of international assignments is to cope with cultural shock; the authors explain that most people begin their foreign assignments with a positive attitude, but when there is an evident discrepancy between cultures, international businesspeople experience the second phase of cultural shock: irritation and hostility. Brian did not anticipate Chan's reaction as he had not prepared effectively for the assignment. Ferraro and Briody (2013) also argue that one can learn how to do business globally through preparation and training. Scandura (2016) states that increasing cultural agility can help one become a more effective leader. One of the characteristics of cultural agility refers to the ability to reflect and learn. Brian, therefore, should reflect and learn from that situation. After Chan's reaction, Brian's

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next steps should include 1) revising and acquiring information on Chinese culture and engaging in self-reflection; 2) developing culture-specific confidence and 3) practicing effective behaviors with people from China (Scandura, 2016). Next, Brian should focus on developing a long-term relationship with Chan by inviting him for lunch or dinner and apologize for his words. Ferraro and Briody (2013) state that “building relationships requires that negotiators take the time to get to know one another. Frequently, this involves activities- eating, drinking, visiting national monuments...” (p. 144). The authors emphasize the importance of an American businessman show his or her characteristics outside the realm of business. Brian could have the chance to explain himself and show Chan that he did not mean to hurt his integrity. Taking the time to get to know people as individuals improve outcomes and establish long-term relationships (Ferraro & Briody, 2013). In conclusion, it is important that one prepares effectively for international assignments by understanding different cultural values, by having an integrative approach to acculturation and by developing cultural intelligence and cultural agility. Additionally, cross-cultural competencies and the acknowledgement of cultural shock can help one deal with discrepancies between cultures. Finally, taking the time to get to know people as individuals can promote long-term relationships even after an episode of miscommunication and misunderstanding between different cultures.

References

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