Case Study 13.2

"A Person Needs Face, Like a Tree Needs Bark"

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Scandura (2019) describes the business meeting between American Brian Cook and his Chinese change manager Chan Ling. During the meeting Brian verbally reprimands Chang for the underperformance of Chan Ling's team, a situation that Brian holds Chan Ling accountable for. After much assertive questioning by Brian, Chan Ling quietly gathered his possession, walked out of the meeting, and terminated his employment with the company. Viewing the interaction between Brian and Chan through the lens of cross-cultural communication reveals that Chan lost face. Ho (1976) shows the complexity of the Chinese concept of face by defining face as the respectability and deference that a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in the social network and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in the position as well as acceptably in his social conduct. Chan interpreted Brian's questioning of him as a personal assault (2019). Determining what Brian should do now and developing a plan for addressing Brian's situation is required.

The Chinese saying, " A person needs face like a tree needs bark" indicates the importance of face to participation in Chinese society (Ho, 1976). Western business persons must understand the role of face in order to transact business effectively with the Chinese (Jia, 2001a). Brian did not realize that his way of questioning Chan was acceptable in the United States and many other Western cultures, but not acceptable in all cultures (Scandura, 2019). Brian's interactions with Chan underpinned the theory that the cultural assumptions underlying management practices are often unacknowledged so, transferring practices across cultures without adjustment for cultural differences may lead to failure (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, (2010).

The one hope that Brian might have to repair the business breach with Chan is through the use of the intermediaries. Ma (1992) opined that the use of intermediaries avoids

potential face loss by by- passing confrontation, especially in conflict situations. Generally, intermediaries transact business and manage relationships unofficially but may be official mediators for larger conflict issues. These intermediaries are typically respected members of the disputants' social networks with a large amount of face. The disputants often honor the intermediary out of respect for his or her face.

Overall, Brian must follow a plan of development to address the cross-cultural communication breach that he has caused and to help prevent any future missteps. The plan involves Brian developing Cultural Intelligence. Earley and Ang (2003) defined Cultural Intelligence (CQ) as an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings—the collection of knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable an individual to detect, assimilate, reason, and act on cultural cues appropriately. Earley and Ang (2003) conceptualized CQS as comprising metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral dimensions with specific relevance to functioning in culturally diverse settings. Brian's plan of development requires him to develop the four main competencies of Cultural Intelligence:

1. **CQ Drive,** the willingness to work with others from diverse backgrounds.

2. **CQ Knowledge,** an understanding of culture and cultural differences.

3. **CQ Strategy,** the ability to flex mentally.

4. **CQ Action,** the ability to flex verbal and non-verbal behavior.

In sum, results of studies provide strong empirical support for the reliability, stability, and validity of the CQS and demonstrate that specific dimensions of CQ have differential relationships with cognitive, affective and behavioral intercultural effectiveness outcomes. Results also suggest that CQ has important implications for practice – especially for selecting, training and developing a culturally intelligent workforce.

In conclusion, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998, p.5) alluded to the dilemma that Brian and other managers working across cultures find themselves in by suggesting that, "all international managers should take the balance between consistency and adaptation to the local characteristics for corporate success since the universal application of western management theory has been challenged. Therefore, more knowledge of cultural patterns should be thoroughly considered for the internationalization of business life because "Culture is like gravity: you do not experience it until you jump six feet into the air. In practice, though, beneath the surface, the silent forces of culture operate a destructive process, biting at the roots of centrally developed methods which do not fit locally."

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