

Lead 705 Organizational Development – Spring 2020 Term 1  
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Case Study #5 – Dropbox

Case Study 13.2: “A Person Needs Face, Like a Tree Needs Bark”

Discussion Questions #3 – What should Brian do now? Develop a plan for addressing the situation.

Brian Cook, an American, meets with his Chinese manager, Chan Ling, to discuss the underperformance of their team. Brian is unaware of the different types of culture. Brian is from a low context culture where the people pay more attention to words spoken themselves and less to the context in which they are spoken, and Chan is from a high context culture where the people consciously value the context of communication and pay less attention to the actual words spoken (Scott et al., 2004). Therefore, Chan “lose face” because Brian told him negative news about his performance publicly. Chan quit his job due to the harsh public treatment from Brian. What should Brian do since all do not share his perspective?

Brian should learn about the cultures of the people where his company operates, so this situation will not happen again. Matsumoto (2018) posts low context culture face is more about personal integrity where truth and rightness mean to respect objectivity and facts. The law applies equally to everyone, and behavior is something that should be directed by personal consciences. On the other hand, (Matsumoto 2018) says the high context culture has always functioned based on personal relationships and social harmony. Rules and laws laid down were often to serve those in power, and were often arbitrary and ever-changing; as such, the concept of the ‘truth’ is not black and white.

Finally, the creation of a plan, find a way to “give face” to Chan; according to (Mike 2020), publicly praise Chan about how good he was in doing his work on all the other parts of the job in front of his bosses and co-workers. Then offer Chan his job back.

## References

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