

Interview with an International Businessman

Student Name:

University Affiliation



Logical discussion

Delving into international business is often considered an uphill task, and it is really such. The interview has been conducted with Mr. Z., an international food, and beverage business mogul. People say that the end justifies the means, but for this person, the end of one war is the beginning of another. He has been in business running his company known as the Hangzhou Group for over twenty years. Mr. Z. is the chairman and CEO of the company. During the interview, he was asked about the challenges that he had come across in his international business endeavors. He talked about many issues, but singled out the one that affected his business the most, namely cultural differences. He shed light on this problem, which made the topic of discussion.

Detailed discussion

Why are Cultural Differences the Major Hurdle in International Business?

It is the most complicated challenge of doing business internationally because businessmen have to adapt and become accustomed to cultures that are totally new to them. As easy as it may sound, learning another people's values, perceptions, cultural diversities, beliefs, and stereotypes is a daunting task. Even a simple handshake can ruin a business.

Give Examples of This Issue, Mr. Z.

A good example that I can give is the restaurant that I have recently opened in Germany. Here, in the United States, people do not mind shaking hands every time doing business. however, the other side of the coin is that the Germans use a firm and very brisk handshake only. They do this twice, once on arrival and again on

departure. In order to perform in such an environment, it is important for us to know their values, what they appreciate, and what vexes them. Stereotyping and generalizing should be avoided, since what is accepted in China is not acceptable in Russia, for instance, due to the cultural differences. Thus, it is important to learn and appreciate differences that exist between various cultures all over the world.

What Other Issues are Brought forth by Cultural Differences?

Another issue that cultural differences tag along is the difference in values. For example, Chinese people regard the eating of snakes normal. In fact, it is considered a delicacy. On the contrary, in such places as Kenya, where I also have a restaurant, it is not culturally right to eat a snake. In the Christian religion, it is a cursed animal being the cause of the initial fallout in the relationship between God and man. It is true, but the fact is that the Kenyan culture does not allow snake eating. It is a no-go zone for my restaurant in Nairobi, Kenya. Such delicacies as snails, frogs, and other reptiles are also not considered as food in most African countries. As such, my chains of restaurants in Africa do not cook these animals. However, to cater to the small percentage of Chinese in these cities, such meals are cooked strictly in order.

Another value that affects my business is eating habits. In China, it is customary that dinner has to be the heaviest, with lunch and breakfast being considerably lighter. In most places, such as the United States of America, lunch that is the heaviest with dinner being light. This difference in eating habits has also affected the business since we have to mold and adapt to them. The chain of restaurants in the United States has changed becoming fully compliant with the values of people there. It applies to all restaurants across the globe.

One more hurdle that comes with cultural differences is work ethics, as well as managerial skills. The former differs from continent to continent, and what is con-

sidered right in China may result in a lawsuit in other countries. A good is an example is Dutch. It is cultural for them to rest on Saturdays and work on Sundays, whereas in some countries, it is vice versa. These structured situations affect the way of doing business and managing locals as our employees.

What is an Impact of Cultural Differences on You as an Individual and on the Organization?

First, I have learned to appreciate differences in culture. I know a lot of foreign languages, have traveled the world, and have many friends, for example, in Kenya, Ghana, and the United States. Thus, cultural differences help me understand why people are such. Second, I have also managed to expand my businesses globally with the presence on all continents in the world. It is an accomplishment that has changed me as a person. Third, I can employ people, and due to this, I have helped eradicate poverty in poverty-stricken countries. Cultural differences also have impacts on the organization as well. For instance, I had to shut down an eating joint in Bulgaria, since people thought that we dealt with cat meat. It is a negative hurdle associated with differences in cultures. Sales have increased since new markets are exploited today.

Did Company Train You?

No, I had to do it all myself. I also employed personal tutors to tell me the particular details that I wanted to point out. It was a very hectic process, but I had no other alternative.

What are the Strengths and Weaknesses of Doing International Business?

The benefit of doing international business is the expansion of markets, which translates to better sales. It is the main reason for the existence of any business

entity. The major weakness is the risks associated with international business. These include the Forex risk, translation costs, strict laws and regulations, and currency rates.

Thank You for Your Time Mr. Z., I Appreciate.

