



# Building Global Diversity Intelligence

## Global Diversity Panel

by Dr. Nara Venditti



Dr. Nara Venditti is president of Succeed in America!, LLC, a Danbury, Connecticut-based company specializing in cross-cultural understanding and career development. She may be reached at 203-791-1107 or [nv@SucceedinAmerica.com](mailto:nv@SucceedinAmerica.com). Additional information is available at [www.SucceedinAmerica.com](http://www.SucceedinAmerica.com).

**T**his past October at the 34<sup>th</sup> AFSMI S-Business Education Summit and Expo in Dallas, Texas, a panel of experts representing a wide variety of s-business sectors, nations, and geographic backgrounds addressed the topic, “Diversity and How It Affects Domestic and Global S-Business.” The Power Panel consisted of Nara Venditti (moderator), president of Succeed in America!, LLC; Pim Bonsel, AFSMI executive vice president of EMEA operations and executive director of research and studies; Dick Guenther, AFSMI chairman and president and vice president and general manager of maintenance support services, Unisys Corporation; Reinhard Klein, AFSMI President’s Advisory Board member and IBM technology transformation services executive ITS/IGS EMEA; Masafumi Kohmoto, AFSMI vice president of Asia Pacific and president of Service Strategies, Inc.; Mauri A. Korhonen, general manager of U.S. and Canada for Ingenic; and Tom Schlick, AFSMI vice president of Americas and senior vice president of global service and solutions for Datacard Corporation.

Following are key issues addressed during the panel discussion.

### Language

Language is the cornerstone of diversity. When communicating with non-native speakers, you must speak slowly and clearly and use pauses frequently. Avoid slang and use simple language. It is wise to have an experienced interpreter during negotiations. When using an interpreter, be sure to allow time for translation.

## Global Diversity Panel



Pim  
Bonsel



Dick  
Guenther



Reinhard  
Klein



Masafumi  
Kohmoto



Mauri A.  
Korhonen



Tom  
Schlick

Use visuals whenever possible to facilitate better understanding of the ideas you are communicating.

Also be aware of the cultural aspects of communication. For one organization, outsourcing a call center from Japan to Brazil was not feasible because of cultural barriers. The Japanese in Brazil speak the Japanese language, which might not seem natural for the Japanese in Japan, and which is difficult to accept in call centers, as the call center representatives are expected to speak in an “ultra polite” manner (from Brazilian culture’s standpoint). So to speak, in Japan, the customer is not only always right, the customer is the god!

### Logistical Issues

There are also taxation and logistical issues to consider when doing business globally. Keep in mind that the tax structure varies greatly by country. Always consider the tax laws when deciding in which country you will locate a new business. Even the European Union is not unified on all aspects. You could drive a few hours within Europe and cross borders and encounter completely different tax laws. What is allowed in one country may be against the law in another. For instance, the treatment of business meals, stock options, and parts replacement policy can vary greatly from country to country. Know your geography, and learn the laws governing each area.

### Negotiating

Negotiations start long before you get to the table. Before setting the pricing, understand the culture of those you will be negotiating with. Recognize the value of developing relationships with locals. One way to build good relationships is to engage local people. A local CPA with a global perspective can combine a global strategy with local implementation.

### Motivation

Employees in a multicultural setting may respond differently to motivational techniques; however, most cultures react favorably to respect, openness, and effective leadership. Most often, a simple “thank you” can take you a long way.

### Time Zones

When it is necessary to communicate across time zones, meeting times may not be convenient for everyone. When it is morning in the U.S., your counterparts in Europe are having dinner, while your colleagues in Australia are sound asleep. Arrange to share the inconvenience by holding alternating day and night meetings. Introduce each person attending a conference call, and always ask if everybody has connected. Also keep in mind that workdays vary from country to country. In the U.K., the workday is typically 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., while in Europe, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. is a normal workday. In Muslim countries, Friday is the beginning of the weekend, and in Mexico, Saturday is a regular working day.

### Dress Code

Dressing in the proper attire is a silent power—it is a sign of respect and creates a social chemistry. In certain situations in Europe, not wearing a tie can make you feel very much out of place. Adjust your wardrobe when doing business overseas. Ask locals what is appropriate.

Attendees of the panel discussion at the 34<sup>th</sup> Education Summit in Dallas learned a lot about global diversity, but two hours was not adequate time for discussing the vast diversity of challenges inherent when doing business globally. With so many cultures in the world, how can we learn about all of them? Do your homework, ask the experts, work with locals, and utilize your valuable AFSMI contacts for information. ▼