

Interview MICE Poland with Daniel Tschudy

## **Cross-Cultural business and relation to the international MICE-industry**

**MICE Poland: You are promoting the idea of cross-cultural business. Can you tell more about it, what are the main assumptions?**

Daniel Tschudy: It can be said that the "globalisation-euphoria-decade" (as I call it) after the fall of the Soviet Union, only lasted until 9/11. Since then, we see a resurrection of complicated national and regional sensitivities. Crimea is one keyword, but there are many others (Scotland considered an exit from the UK, Catalonia wishes to leave Spain, the island-disputes between China and Japan, etc.).

During the last century, global understanding was about the differences between developed and emerging countries; with language, race and religion as dominating comparisons. Today, it is a wild matrix of values, interests and objectives among 200 nations and even more major ethnicities – and all that within a new wave migration and refugees. Doing business around the globe has become more challenging again and global leaders and international managers need to apply cultural intelligence (CQ). Global business, and our hospitality industry is right in the centre of it, must consider and respect the individual needs, values and behaviours – in order to build business in morally excellent and sustainable fashion.

**Why doing business in accordance with the principles of cross-cultural business is important for the MICE industry?**

One has no choice, because every entity is now linked or connected to global interests or backgrounds. Clients, partners, stakeholders and suppliers come from every part of the world – a constant multicultural and multi-interest process. And then, at least in Western Europe and in the US, employees too origin from every corner of the world. I know of one large hotel in Monte Carlo with some 500 staff originating from no less than 102 countries. And major hotels in London regularly employ more foreigners than British citizens (as you know many coming from Poland, for example). But most of all: corporate clients have international management, use English as corporate language and see the world (and the markets) as one. Which, of course, at the end, is not true.

**What can happen when negotiating with business partner representing a different culture?**

The sources of misunderstandings can lie very deep, when different core values (for example on status, gender issues or perception of time and space) clash. But in international business, it is foremost about communication. This means body language, eye contact, listening habits and speaking behaviour. The way we stand physically and mentally in front of a foreign business partner or client is different, almost from country to country. Some like to touch long, like the Arabs, some prefer to stand in distance, some need direct and ongoing eye contact, others, like many Asians, do not feel comfortable with that.

Some speak linear (naming issues precisely), others would refrain from any confrontation and speak indirectly and vague. It is a wonderfully complicated issue – but if approached with respect and certain easiness, not difficult really. Respect is the key word, but respect can only be obtained with information, exchange and an interest to build relationship. Guanxi; as the Chinese say.

## **What is the strangest situation you encountered?**

I guess initial greeting create the strangest moments, if not to say the funniest. Not to know when to sit down or stand, who to greet with your hand or with a bow, how long an eye contacts should last, is the issue. But, again, with a certain polite- defensive posture (upper body and hands) that's easy. And one can always ask.

## **In your opinion, people from which countries are the best business partners? And who are the most difficult?**

There are no perfect matches. Sometimes, a Mongol and a Mexican might find each other quickly; and then a Spaniard and a Portuguese feel uncomfortable with each other. People still like each other, or not. Sometimes unexplainably. Cross Culture Competence does not avoid this – but triggers awareness of how best, or smoothest, to prepare selling or buying or trading with somebody from a foreign market.

## **What do you recommend to people who starting to do business with people from Asia, Africa, and South America?**

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is not about how we Europeans deal with those unknown long-haul markets of China or Brazil. It is about each individual cultural group and their needs to be respected, appreciated and dealt with fairly. So, if we start a business project in Romania, for example, maybe we should study first about the country, the people, a bit about the history, the social values and the cultural identity. Whatever we can learn about Romania (and even if it's Google-based) will help us approaching that market better balanced. And therefore likely be more successful.

## **Recently you visited Poland. How would you rate Polish MICE market compared to international meetings industry?**

First of all, my experience was fabulous and I am glad that, prior the conference, I had a few days on my own in order to access Poland's cultural roots, history and behaviour; for example by visiting the impressive POLIN museum. Talking about the MICE industry in your country would require much more time, but one crucial cross-cultural issue is self-awareness and then (by accepting who you are and where you come from), build those values and elements into your products and services. Poland can be proud of its history and achievements, and should not hesitate to feature those values in the meetings and events activities.