

# CULTURAL BIAS AWARENESS

○ A diverse workforce is key in every international business, according to Andreas Volz, Senior Manager at Accenture. Therefore, not only CEO's but also line managers should be aware of the impact that culture has on the daily behaviour of their workforce and the underlying sub-conscious biases.

Volz explained that such biases are mental processes, which happen spontaneously and are influenced by friends, family, up-bringing, social value standards, religion and the work environment.

"We are surrounded by 11 million pieces of information, 40 of them we recognize and on seven we can focus", emphasized Andreas Volz. The filter technique of the brain is an automatic mechanism that simplifies processes.

Nevertheless, the filter system is influenced by individual perception and culture and it is not flawless and merely biased, Volz outlined. He concluded that it is paramount that people are aware of cultural biases, examine their own behaviour, and eventually take responsibility for what they are doing.

Zohaib Burney, Software Analyst at Accenture, explained some interesting biases. One is called the illusion of control, where people believe that they play an active role in the outcome even though the probability of the outcome remains continually the same. Burney gave an example: when throwing a dice, people tend to shake their hands more fiercely when they aim to throw a high number in comparison to when they hope for a low number.

Burney also mentioned the confirmation bias where people confirm their opinion with non-credible sources and the halo effect, where people pigeonhole other persons on the basis of one specific feature. The value attribution bias, Zohaib Burney concluded, happens when people only pay attention to their surroundings if they perceive attributes such as location, persons or atmosphere as valuable. ● KS



Andreas Volz, Senior Manager at Accenture and Zohaib Burney, Software Analyst at Accenture, discussed a variety of biases and emphasised the need for cultural bias awareness. Photo: JH

# SEGMENTATION IS EVERYTHING...



Satschin Bansal, Director Hospital & Solutions EMEA at Zimmer. Photo: JH

○ Entering a market which has 1.2 billion people speaking almost 2000 dialects within 22 different languages requires that products are as diverse as the Indian subcultures themselves, according to Satschin Bansal, Director Hospital Services & Solutions EMEA at Zimmer.

If a company seeks to enter the Indian market, segmentation appears to be a crucial factor for a successful market entrance. Bansal stated that many foreign companies fail to successfully enter the Indian market, as they do not pay enough attention towards cultural peculiarities.

During a workshop conducted by Satschin Bansal, students were given the opportunity to gain an understanding of the key characteristics of Indian consumers. "For instance in terms of pricing, a company has to take the significantly lower purchasing power into account", Bansal emphasised. Therefore, to price a product for Indian middle class consumers on the exact same basis as for European middle class consumers is not recommended, according to Bansal.

By analysing and comparing an American with an Indian advertisement for artificial knee joints, the cultural differences became very explicit. An interesting aspect was the targeted public. Satschin Bansal explained that in the USA advertisers emphasise individualism and how people can pursue the freedom of life; the Indian advertisement mainly focuses on the entire family of the targeted customer and accentuate how the usage of the promoted product would improve the lives of the entire family. ● KS



# CREATING SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE THROUGH SHARED COMMITMENT

● 6+4=1 is the successful formula for sustainability at Swagelok, which is a major US developer and provider of fluid system solutions worldwide. 6 values guide its employees, 4 strategies guide its B2B business with the common - 1 - goal of creating sustainable performance through shared commitment within the global organisation. To understand Swagelok's values, we interviewed Thomas Freund, the Managing Director.

**Mr Freund, does Swagelok act in the same sustainable way like 60 years ago?**

Yes, the company's values and mission statement remained constant since 1947. And the focus for environmental protection and global action has developed even further. For example, we bound our suppliers to respect and act according to the UNO Conventions and labor laws. Furthermore, we avoid doing business in countries with conflict restrictions.

**To what extent does sustainability contribute to your business success?**

Our core value is to continuously strive for improvement and security. Especially our customers from chemical, nuclear and oil and gas industries depend on the quality and safety of our products. Other core values are respect for the environment and employees, the integrity of our behavior, the high quality standard and innovation, and last but not least, the customer focus.

**How do you differentiate from your competitors?**

We not only produce premium products but also support our B2B customers all-round. We provide support for their product selection, configuration, purchase decisions, supply chain management, employee training and maintenance.

**How do you help your customers to act sustainable in their industry?**

We supply them with high safety standard products, which they can use for a long-term period. Our customers also know that we work with suppliers who fulfill the rules and high standards. Moreover, we provide training and counseling for high risk applications.

**How do you ensure a uniform work culture despite the cultural diversity of your 7000 employees?**

Our values, our mission and vision are universally and internationally adaptable. It is also vital for us to be integrated in the respective local population. Furthermore, we respect the local laws, cultures and practices, which are a part of our integration.

● AY



Thomas Freund, Managing Director at Swagelok Switzerland interviewed on creating sustainable performance through shared commitment at the ConnectUS 2015 Preparatory Seminar. Photo: AY

# IMPACT HUB ZURICH: PROTOTYPING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

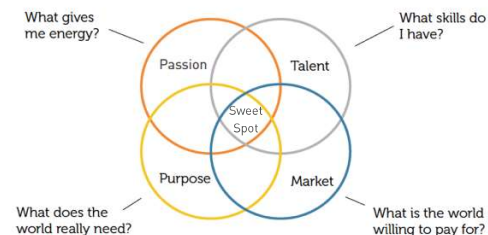
● **What does the future of business look like? For Impact Hub Zurich the future business world should work for all people, be built upon the idea of positive impact on the society and the environment and should create meaningful employment opportunities.**

Rahel Aschwanden, Program Manager at Impact Hub Zurich, told the seminar participants about current trends which are influencing business models such as circular economy, crowdfunding, sharing economy, impact investment or new organizational forms such as holacracy. These trends are mirrored by the start-ups which are currently hosted and incubated at Impact Hub Zürich as well as its growing local and global member community.

Impact Hub Zürich wants to foster a collaborative business environment in Zurich where start-ups work closely together with corporates, NGOs and the public sector building together valuable entrepreneurial solutions for our societies' challenges. Through its incubation services, its coworking space

as well as events and community hosting, Impact Hub Zürich brings together changemakers from diverse backgrounds such as health, education, energy, finance, farming or food. Besides pointing out the opportunity for each and everyone to become impact-driven entrepreneurs, Rahel Aschwanden's goal for the Preparatory Seminar was also to make participants aware of their personal Sweet Spot. ● AY

## DISCOVER YOUR SWEET SPOT



Source: Impact Hub Zurich

More Participant Profiles can be found under

[WWW.CONNECTUS.CH](http://WWW.CONNECTUS.CH)



Laura Seifert is in her last year of her degree in International Management (Business Administration).  
Photo: DM

"I wish to get an insight into U.S. companies and their work environment from a different angle which will help me to develop new skills."

Her dream job: in Retail Industry



Simon Werz is finishing his Bachelor in Energy and Environmental Technology with a focus on Energy in Buildings.  
Photo: DM

"When it comes to an application for employment, it is a benefit if one has participated in extracurricular activities. ConnectUS gives me the opportunity to get to know the US work culture and how the visited companies deal with sustainability. This could be an advantage towards competitors."

His dream job: in Sustainable Building

# ZWEIFEL: HOW TO DECODE A CULTURE IN A FEW HOURS

● Imagine you have a business trip to China next week and you have never been there before. How much do you know about the Chinese culture to work successfully in a team or as a leader? How can you be sure that your knowledge is not based on prejudices? And most importantly, how can you learn the Chinese culture effectively so you do not lose too much time in your already busy schedule?

Thomas D. Zweifel developed a smart practical and quick way of how to decode a culture in a few hours and authored *Culture Clash 2: Managing the Global High-Performance Team*. Zweifel emphasized that leadership requires the willingness to learn continuously and to be curious. These are also attributes needed to decode a culture.

Culture is “the unexamined assumptions that you never question”, in Zweifel’s definition. “Culture is that which you are blind to, so you do not know that you do not know, because it is just the way it is done”.

For example, Swiss people are used to being punctual, so no Swiss person questions this value, whereas punctuality has a different value order in India. Consequently, an indirect effect of attempting to understand another culture is the awakening to one’s own cultural values.

Language skills are vital aspects in understanding a culture and Zweifel quotes the German philosopher Martin Heidegger who once said, “Language is the house of being”. This means that mastering the other culture’s language opens the door to their humanity, their values and beliefs. However, visitors need to be aware of diversity at various levels. There is for instance no one Chinese culture – when doing business in China, for instance, the “local way” has to be researched and applied [see box].

● AY



Thomas D. Zweifel, Principal of ThomasZweifel.com (New York & Zurich), talked about decoding a culture in a few hours at the ConnectUS 2015 Preparatory Seminar. Photo: DM

## Zweifel’s steps to Decoding a Culture

- Learn about the country’s founders.
- Learn about the country’s heroes.
- Learn about the country’s villains and taboos.
- Learn about the country’s defining moments from history.

## HINDI LESSON

# हिन्दी

Hindi is one of the most spoken language of the world. In order to gain first insights into Hindi, Sanghamitra Pujari from RHZ Sprachen in Zürich visited the preparatory seminar of Focus India and taught the diligent students first steps and words in Hindi. Gratified by the curiosity and motivation of the delegation, she was happy to answer questions about pronunciation and spelling. Students have started practising in the hope of mastering a few sentences and words from the Hindi lesson by the time they travel to India for the on-site Seminar.

● KS

# SUPPORTING EXPATS IS VITAL FOR RETENTION AND COSTS



The expat talk - from left to right: Bas Visschedijk, Corinne Raez, Nicolas Baer, Dr. Erhard Lüthi. Photo: JH

● An international assignment costs companies more than a local employee. Moreover, many expats leave the company shortly after repatriation. What can companies do to support their expat employees before, during and after their assignments abroad? Dr. Erhard Lüthi, professor of Human Resource Management at the FHNW discussed this issue with expatriates Corinne Raez (India), Bas Visschedijk (China) and Nicolas Baer (Singapore).

Although all expats experienced personal and professional growth during their assignments abroad and while the compensations and benefits were attractive, they faced many bureaucratic, organizational and local challenges, mainly because their employers did not support them enough. The expat panelists wished their company's HR department had provided more service support and preparation beforehand, maintained continuous and close contact during the stay and provided reintegration support in the new position whilst repatriation.

Expatriating is challenging and preparation is therefore a key factor for success. Raez, for example, took Hindi classes, dealt with governmental authorities and experienced a culture clash. "In India you can't plan ahead because of the fast moving daily lifestyle, so as a Swiss person it was very difficult for me to adapt to the local norms", Raez said. Visschedijk, on the other hand, faced reentry cultural shock back home. In addition, Baer had to improve his language skills to survive. As a very young employee in Singapore, he also experienced the importance of seniority in the Asian culture and the thereby linked prejudice that he was inexperienced.

In a nutshell, they recommend employees who are interested in international assignments to be open to other cultures, take risks to cope with, go without expectations, and learn the language. "This is especially important for Asian languages, because people are afraid to lose face in the attempt to speak English", said Visschedijk. Moreover, it goes without saying that employers should support their employees abroad closely to avoid high costs and high employee turnover rates after repatriation. ● AY

## THE WORLD IS NOT FLAT



Dr. Franco Gandolfi, Dean at the School of Business California Baptist University, raised awareness of global competence and its ingredients, which are strongly related to globalization. These ingredients are process, integration and culture. Therefore, in his view "globalization aims to bring unity in a world of diversity". Photo: LV



# WE THANK OUR SUPERB SPONSORS

Without them, this newsletter would not have been possible.

Thank you!

Joint Sponsor



Insight China



Focus India



connectUS



## IMPRESSUM

### EDITORIAL STAFF

Aieda Yusufi	AY
Jessica Nussbaumer	JN
Katrin Steiner	KS

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Dominique Maschke	DM
Jonas Hufschmid	JH
Leandra Vogt	LV
Lukas Eisenhut	LE
Manon Berger	MB

### EDITOR

Brigitte Sprenger

### CREATIVE

#### CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Antonio Canarini  
canarini communications gmbh,  
Basel

#### LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Lukas Eisenhut

# PREVIEW: ON-SITE SEMINARS



Photo: JH



## INSIGHT CHINA

The Insight China delegation will experience Chinese non-state enterprises – China’s unfolding catalyst for success with company visits at **Raisecom**, **Lenovo**, the **High Fashion Group** and **Bash**. In addition to that, speakers will talk about major Swiss-Sino success stories. Alongside visits to the major cities **Beijing** and **Shanghai** the delegation will stop in **Lanzhou**, the capital of the Gansu province as well as in the major economic centers **Suzhou** and **Hangzhou**.



## FOCUS INDIA

During the trip to India, Focus India will be visiting local and international companies and discover Indian culture in cities such as: **Delhi**, **Mumbai**, **Bangalore**, and **Pune**. Among the companies that will be visited are sponsors such as **Accenture** and **Blaser**. The delegation will be hosted by the well-known Swiss company **Novartis**. Delegation participants will also visit local non-profit and profit oriented organizations - among many others are **Saahans** and **Somalyah**.



## CONNECTUS

connectUS is going to look into networking strategies, innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit in the US. They will visit companies, official bodies, and educational institutions in **Boston**, **New York City** and **Chicago**.

## PREVIEW ITINERARIES

The on-site seminars will take place from 26 March to 12 April 2015. The next newsletter will document the unique learning experiences made on the trips to China, India and the United States of America and will be out early in May.

Keep in touch with us! Visit the relevant websites for daily updates and news or follow the groups on Twitter and Facebook.