

Working with India: What To Know before You Go



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Dian Schaffhauser, Editorial Director

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Dr. Karine Schomer, President of CMCT
and India Practice Leader

The **CMCT India Practice** provides cross-cultural training and consulting focused on the India-U.S. business nexus. We help managers and professionals in the U.S. and India with cross-cultural awareness, adaptation, communication and teamwork issues.

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Agenda

- Why cultural understanding matters
- Three golden principles for working with India
- Core value contrasts
- Business protocol and work style
- Communication style contrasts
- Best practices for success
- Wrap-up and Q & A



Why Cultural Understanding Matters



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You've got your business case for going to India....

7x24 operational efficiency?

Outsourcing non-core functions?

R & D capabilities?

Diversity manufacturing operations?

Source of low-cost goods for import?

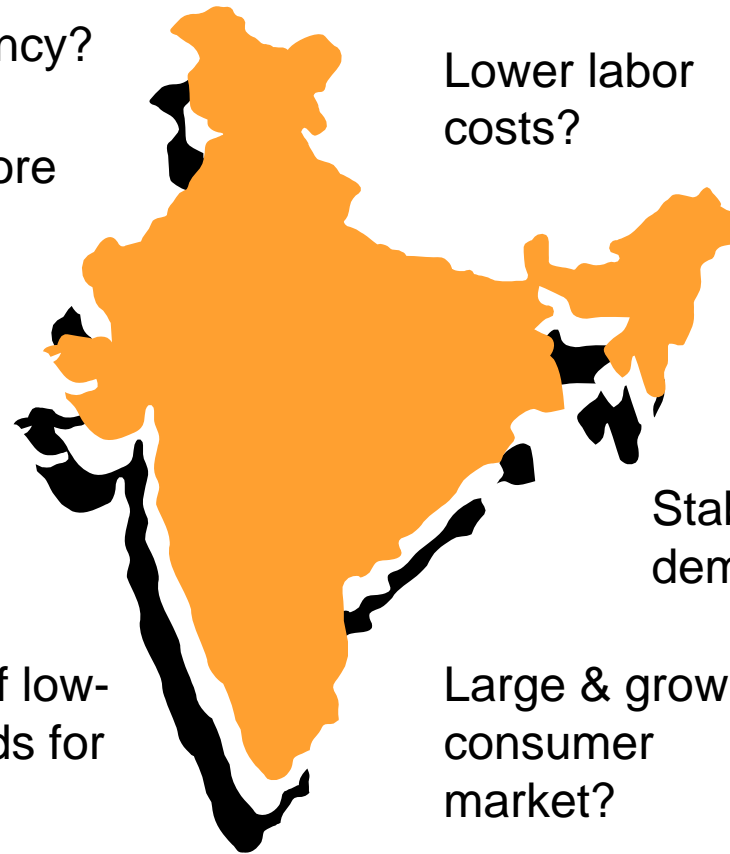
Lower labor costs?

IT talent pool and track record in IT?

English-speaking country?

Stable democracy?

Large & growing consumer market?



... what do you need to know to succeed ?

Business Implications of Cultural Differences

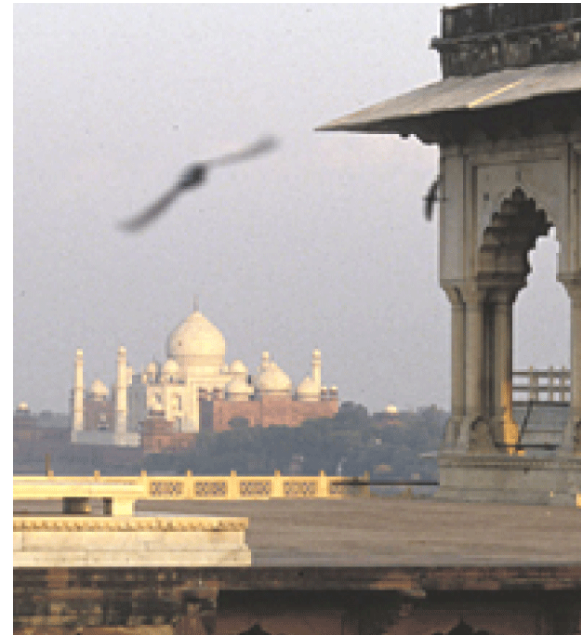
- How you approach business relationships
- How you establish trust, persuade, motivate
- Punctuality, timelines, deadlines
- Approach to agreements and commitments
- Leadership and management styles
- Teamwork styles
- How projects are carried out
- How you negotiate
- Meeting style
- How conflicts are resolved



Culture and Offshore Outsourcing

- Normal communication & team **issues exacerbated** by distance, culture, organizational differences
- As outsourcing reaches deeper into U.S. companies, more people with **little international experience** are involved
- **Unreasonably high expectations** can lead to disillusionment when daily cultural frictions occur
- Fear of job loss and poor corporate communication can lead to **prejudice** towards offshore teams

Three Golden Principles for Working with India



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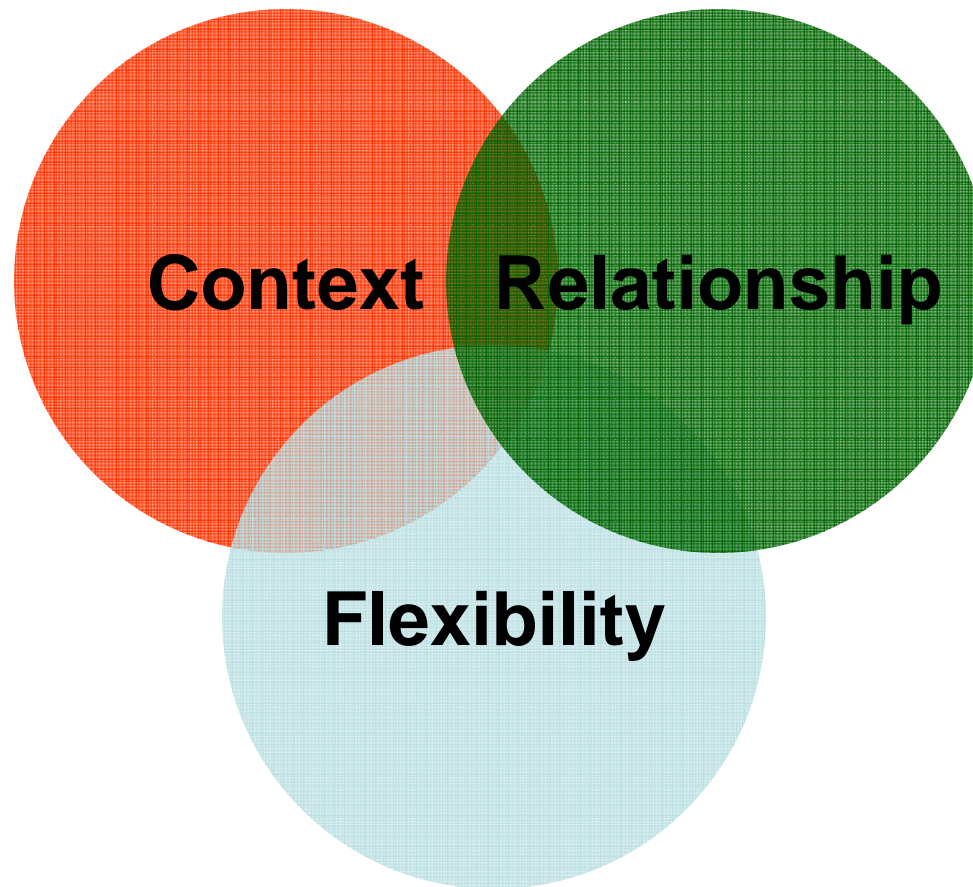
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Three Golden Principles for Working with India



Core Value Contrasts



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Core Value Contrasts

U.S. mainstream tendency

- Time as finite commodity
- More egalitarianism
- Task first
- Individual self-reliance
- Universal principles
- Quality=milestones and results

India mainstream tendency

- Time as fluid experience
- More hierarchy
- Relationship first
- Social interdependence
- Situational flexibility
- Quality=standards & processes

Business Protocol & Work Style



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Appointments & Punctuality

- Punctuality for appointments and meetings not a priority
- Saving one's time and that of others not a central element of protocol
- Making firm appointments far in advance not the norm
- Canceling meetings or changing plans at the last minute not unusual

Meeting Style

- More free-flow than the agenda-driven U.S. style
- More leader-led, subordinates less likely to speak up unless asked to
- Open conflict or causing loss of face avoided
- Decisions not expected at the meeting - made by leader(s) after the meeting



Negotiation

- Viewed as an exercise in skilful bargaining
- Patience, persistence, long-term view
- Focus on overall picture, relationship, areas of agreement
- Preference for open-endedness over closure and certainty



Agreements & Commitments

- Comfort with more general rather than precise agreements & commitments
- Contracts & agreements seen as “snapshots in time” - open to revision as circumstances change
- Latitude expected for decisions-by-exception
- Follow-through failures on small commitments tolerated if overall trust is there

Management Approach

- Boss-subordinate relationships more hierarchical
- More top-down, behind-the scenes decisions
- Rank, title, seniority, chain of command emphasized
- Less delegation of authority
- Micro-management expected and seen as a form of support
- Importance of “the human touch”



Team Style

- Self-managing team concept tends not to work
- Need an officially designated team leader with status credibility
- Leader functions as mini-boss more than facilitator
- Leader channels individual competitiveness into group competitiveness

Project Processes & Accountability

- Comfort zone: following pre-set processes and protocols
- Stretch zone: creating or improving on processes to achieve results
- Effort and quality vs. timely achievement of milestones
- “Mask-and-solve” vs. “admit-and-warn” approach to project problems
- Accountability is vested in project leader

Communication Style Contrasts



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Communication Style Contrasts

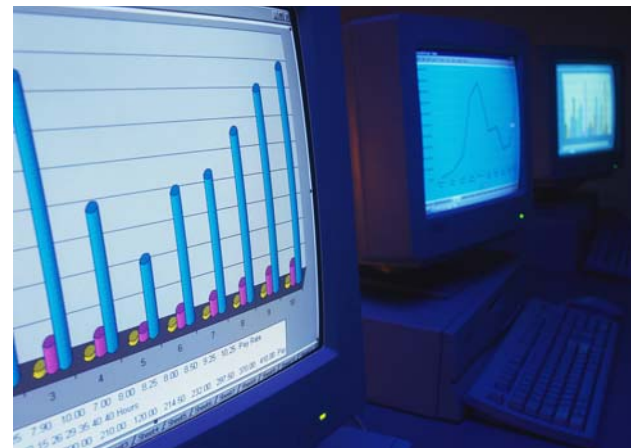
U.S. mainstream tendency

- More explicit
- More direct
- More linear
- Specific-to-broad
- More emotionally neutral

India mainstream tendency

- More implicit
- More indirect
- More associative
- Broad-to-specific
- More emotionally engaged

Best Practices for Success in Working with India



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Communication & Rapport-Building Strategies

1. Establish a personal connection before “getting down to business”
2. Provide context - the big picture and the “why”, not just the “what”
3. Pay attention to implicit messages and emotional impacts
4. Approach problematic issues with tact and indirectness



Negotiation Strategies

1. Allow ample time for multiple meetings and discussions
2. Focus on building trust and shared vision before getting to details
3. Don't come across as excessively legalistic
4. Ask for more than you expect, offer less than you are ready to give
5. Show willingness to engage in some bargaining-type interactions

Organization & Process Strategies

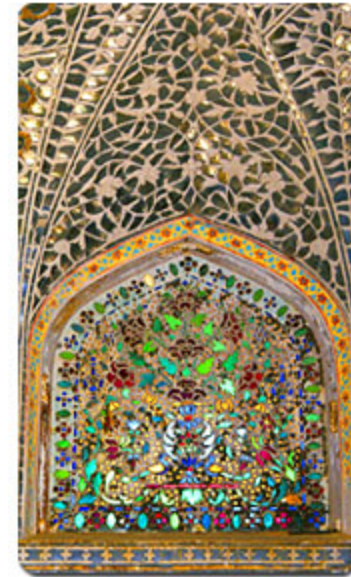
1. Umbrella function/forum to support internal units involved in outsourcing relationship
2. Mutual clarity about organizational structures, roles and chain of command
3. Strong leader-to-leader peer relationships at all levels for resolving issues
4. Copious formal protocols & checklists to support processes and deliverables

People & Team Development Strategies

1. Communicate your India strategy and its impacts to your internal team
2. Convey to Indian counterparts that they are partners, not just performers of tasks
3. Cross-cultural awareness training on both sides - “Working with India” & “Working with Americans”
4. Invest in appropriate virtual team-building efforts throughout the engagement



Wrap Up and Q & A



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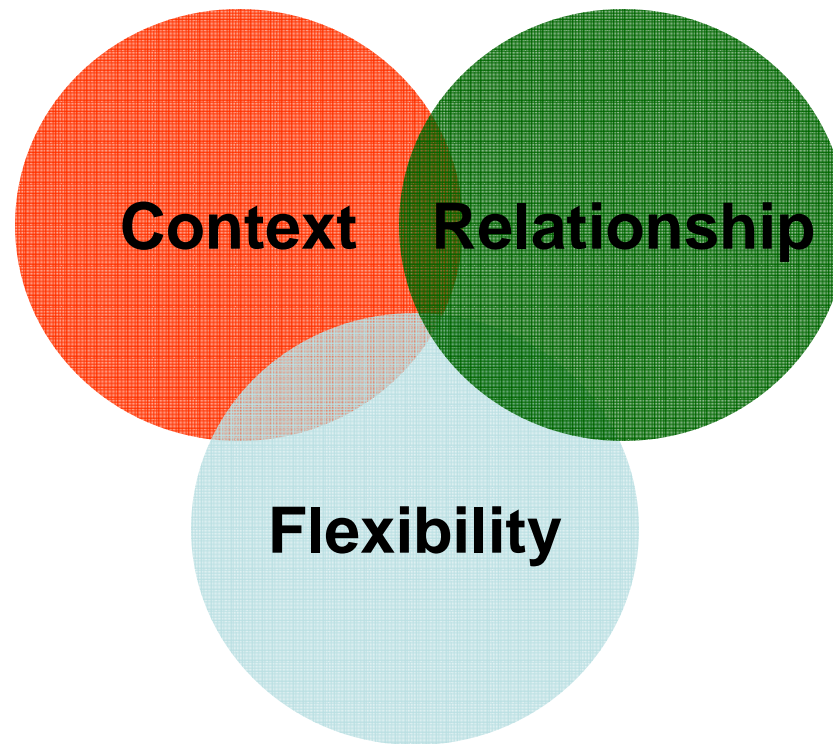
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Summary Recommendations

- Be aware of core value differences
- Understand their implications for business protocol and work style
- Be aware of communication style differences
- Follow best practice strategies for bridging the differences
 - Communication & rapport building
 - Negotiation
 - Organization & process
 - People & team development

And remember above all ...



**... the Three Golden Principles for
Working with India**

Thank you for your participation!

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