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LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE: The New Secret to Success

“As more companies go global, we need a better understanding of how to function as leaders across cultural boundaries. Now more than ever, our shrinking world needs what’s in David Livermore’s new book!”

Ken Blanchard

Co-author of *The One Minute Manager*[®] and *Leading at a Higher Level*

It’s no secret that the world is shrinking. Now, getting in touch with your business partner in Dubai is as easy as sending a message from your BlackBerry, and trips overseas that once took weeks, now take a matter of hours. But despite the increasing ease of doing business abroad, countless business leaders are still missing one critical component necessary for success in a global market: cultural intelligence. In **LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE: The New Secret to Success** (AMACOM; hardcover; October 1, 2009), David Livermore cracks open the international experience and offers today’s global workforce a specific plan to become more adept at managing across cultures, whether managing at the local office or abroad.

“Leading in the twenty-first century world means maneuvering the twists and turns of a multidimensional world,” writes Livermore. “The continually shifting landscape of global leadership can be disorienting; experience and intuition alone are not enough.”

In **LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE**, Livermore provides a prescriptive, four-part plan, rooted in years of research across 25 different countries, for developing the cultural intelligence necessary to lead abroad:

- **CQ Drive** – The first element to developing cultural intelligence involves examining your level of interest, confidence and drive when it comes to cross-cultural experiences. Whether you’re the first to slurp down the spicy noodles with hints of squid and fish eyes or the less enthused traveler who would rather endure days of hunger pains than take a bite, it is critical to gain a clear understanding of your CQ Drive. How do you really feel about operating out of your comfort zone? Are you good at figuring out if a new card can transform your cell phone into one that works outside the U.S.? Only with honest answers to these basic questions can you begin to take steps to further develop your CQ Drive and ultimately become a more effective leader abroad.
- **CQ Knowledge** – Understanding cross-cultural differences is critical to becoming a culturally intelligent leader. These differences influence the way people think and behave; being ignorant to a culture’s impact on people’s thoughts, attitudes or behaviors or failing to understand how the culture differs from your own could not only stunt your development toward becoming culturally intelligent, but it could also cost you billions of dollars in lost opportunities.
- **CQ Strategy** – CQ Strategy, the third element of developing cultural intelligence, is the buffer between taking your CQ Knowledge and understanding of a culture and actually applying that knowledge. Your usual business strategy will not likely have the same effect abroad as it does at home – your CQ Knowledge can tell you that. CQ Strategy will help you determine the best ways to approach a cross-cultural experience and attain the most favorable results.

- **CQ Action** – After assessing and further developing your drive, enhancing your knowledge and strategizing the most effective way to approach a cross-cultural situation, CQ Action comes into play. Developing CQ Action will help you in deciding when to adjust your behavior to fit a cross-cultural setting – and by how much.

Further, Livermore provides research into the perils of leading without cultural intelligence, including increased time to complete a project, heightened travel time and costs, growing frustration and confusion, decreased revenues and lost opportunities, among others.

“Leaders across every profession are being propelled into a culturally rich and diverse challenge,” writes Livermore. “Without an ability to adapt to a growing number of cultures, leaders and their organizations often become obsolete.”

Rather than requiring individuals to become masters of every culture, cultural intelligence enables today’s business leaders to develop an overall repertoire and perspective of the various cultures that await us both next door and several time zones away. More than just a handbook of tips on navigating local customs and practices, **LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE** provides the roadmap for businesses interested in bringing higher cultural intelligence into their organization, ultimately increasing the business opportunities ahead.

About the Author

David Livermore, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Global Learning Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Livermore is also a visiting research fellow with Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and a senior research consultant with the Cultural Intelligence Center in East Lansing, Michigan. In addition to his regular teaching responsibilities, Livermore averages 35 national and international speaking engagements annually, addressing approximately 7,500 leaders a year, and has worked with leaders in 75 countries across the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe. Livermore is also the author of *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World* and *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*.

**LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE:
The New Secret to Success
Author: David Livermore
Publication date: October 21, 2009**

ISBN-10: 0814414877

ISBN-13: 978-0814414873

Hardcover, \$24.95

www.davidlivermore.com

DEVELOPING CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

David Livermore's interdependent four-part plan outlined in **LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE** urges readers to consider their own interest level, knowledge, strategy and action plan for tackling the leadership challenges that await us at home and abroad.

CQ Drive

The first element of the four-part plan involves taking a look at your own motivation, confidence and interest toward becoming more culturally intelligent. Evaluating your own interest level in learning how to lead and adapt to different cultural environments will give you a better indication of your cultural intelligence potential.

CQ Knowledge

This dimension of the cultural intelligence model involves gaining a better understanding of different cultures and the issues and differences that influence the way people of that culture think and behave. While CQ Knowledge remains at the core of many intercultural competency approaches, this element is just one dimension of becoming culturally intelligent and yields little results when used on its own.

CQ Strategy

CQ Strategy is the buffer between gaining a better understanding of a culture and using that understanding to achieve the desired results. Because your usual business strategy will not likely have the same effect abroad as it does at home, CQ Strategy is needed to help you develop a plan of action, revise the plan as needed and assess the effectiveness of your strategy in the given cultural setting.

CQ Action

This last element of the mix evaluates the leader's ability to act appropriately across cultures. When traveling abroad, it may seem like a good idea to try to mimic what you see; however, this could be perceived as mocking or just downright foolish. On the flip side, not adhering to any cultural norms or common behavior may come across as disrespectful. Developing CQ Action will help you in deciding when to adjust your behavior to fit a cross-cultural setting – and by how much.

Adapted from LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE: The New Secret to Success by David Livermore, AMACOM, Hardcover, October 2009, www.davidlivermore.com

Advance Praise for LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

“For those leaders who want to succeed in today’s increasingly global and interdependent environment, David Livermore’s *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* is for you. Now, more than ever, applying this simple four-step cycle will prepare you for tomorrow’s world.”

Paul Polman
CEO, Unilever

“In this inspired and intensely enjoyable work, Livermore brilliantly presents a fresh new way of grappling with the nuances and complexities of cross-cultural experiences. Based on solid academic research and years of personal experience, *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* is a groundbreaking book that is a must-read for every twenty-first century leader.”

Jim Kouzes
Co-author of *The Leadership Challenge* and Dean's Executive Professor of Leadership, Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University

“David Livermore’s *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* is an essential tool for working, living and leading in a world without borders.”

Dick DeVos
President, The Windquest Group and former president of Amway Global

“David Livermore has written a must-read book for anyone who interacts with people from different cultures. I will adopt this book whenever I teach MBAs, managers, or executives about culture.”

Lynn Shore
Management professor and co-director, Institute for Inclusiveness and Diversity in Organizations, San Diego State University

“This book should be required reading for every business school student, both the undergraduate and graduate students, and especially those Ph.D. students! I am grateful to David Livermore for putting this knowledge into such a readable and informative package.”

Cynthia Beath
Professor Emerita, McCombs School of Business, The University of Texas at Austin

An interview with David Livermore,
author of **LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE**

Q: You've worked across the globe, in and out of time zones, in different cultures and climates. What is it that draws you to this kind of work?

I'm fascinated by the different ways people make sense of the world and how that shapes the way they live, relate, and work. My mind becomes alive when I arrive in a new place, rich in culture completely unlike my own, and am presented with an international assignment. The creative juices start flowing, and I'm stretched to innovate beyond what happens when working at home. I love that challenge. I've learned far more about leadership, global issues, and my faith from cross-cultural experiences and work than from any graduate course I've ever taken or taught. I've also found that nothing enhances my work at home more than the work I do overseas.

Q: Are some people just naturally good at jumping on a plane and feeling adept in Sri Lanka and others not? Or is this Cultural Intelligence something you can truly learn?

It's true that cross-cultural effectiveness comes more naturally to some, but anyone can become more culturally intelligent. To rely upon natural ability alone would be like an individual with a "runner's build" jumping into a marathon without any training. The emphasis in cultural intelligence is that anyone can learn this skill set, and in testing leaders' cultural intelligence quotient (CQ) across the world, we've found a consistent set of strategies and practices that are proven to enhance anyone's CQ, regardless of natural ability.

Q: We all know that it's more common now to be asked to communicate, work or travel to far flung locales in a global economy. Do you see things moving further in that direction as the century progresses?

Absolutely; everything points toward more of a globalized, interconnected world. The distinctions between local and global are becoming more blurred everyday, which could be why 90 percent of leading executives from 68 countries name cross-cultural leadership as the top management challenge for the next century.

Q: Is leading in culturally diverse environments different than just working in them?

Definitely. Cultural intelligence is important for any professional, but it's absolutely essential for leaders. I'd go as far as saying it's impossible to be an effective leader today without some insight into how culture affects the way you do your work (e.g. managing and motivating staff, casting vision, marketing, addressing conflict, negotiating, etc.). And different cultures have preferred leadership styles. In my own leadership, I like to involve several people throughout the organization in decision-making. While this style that works well for me when working with colleagues from Germany, the same approach is incredibly disorienting to my colleagues who come from a culture like Saudi Arabia.

Q: Your book is unique in that offers a plan of action for tackling culturally diverse projects and assignments. What pushed you to move from just the dos and don'ts, to something more comprehensive and prescriptive?

One week I'm in my U.S. office meeting with visitors from Indonesia, Mexico, and Spain and the next week I'm jumping on a plane to Dubai. For the longest time, I was frustrated because I

knew I shouldn't wing it when I jumped into a new cultural situation, but there just wasn't time to master all the do's and don'ts of every culture I encountered. And frankly, I watched several Americans look pretty foolish when they tried too hard to follow the "do's and taboos" they learned in some books. I saw the value of gaining an overall skill set that could be applied to any cultural context through the use of the cultural intelligence model. Cultural intelligence is uniquely suited to those of us who travel widely more than deeply and for everyone working with the growing multiculturalism in their own contexts.

Q: What's the most difficult situation you've personally navigated abroad?

Like most people who travel extensively, I've had my fair share of "close calls," being duped, eating things like rats and worms, and making a complete fool out of myself. But my most difficult situations consistently revolve around brokering the interests, demands and expectations of my own company versus those of an international affiliate. And the challenge isn't always with the international affiliate, as might be expected; I once spent days trying to convince my senior leaders at home that a slower, more relationally driven process would be more profitable in the long run with our Brazilian client. My U.S. colleagues didn't understand this initially, because they hadn't yet tapped into their cultural intelligence.

Q: You speak a bit in the book about the changing perception that most people have of Americans. Can you talk about that shift?

For several years, there was a sense that a leader from the U.S. could be welcomed anywhere in the world with our services, products, and ideas. But in recent years, there's been a change of attitudes toward the U.S. and what it means to work with us. We must change our role from superpower to more of a global broker. As we posture ourselves with a spirit of openness, collaboration and even compromise, we may regain a reputation for being a nation known for innovation as well as a place where people from any country, culture or background can converge and work together.

Q: Is there a single problem that is the biggest for most people who find themselves involved in cross-cultural work?

I'd have to say it's the tendency to rely too heavily upon our intuition and common sense. In our own cultural contexts, we intuitively use a set of social cues to lead effectively. We have a wealth of information, most of which is subconscious, which helps us interpret people's nonverbal responses, confront conflict, make a sale, etc. But those rules change once we start leading in a different cultural setting. The four-step cycle toward cultural intelligence—CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, CQ Strategy, and CQ Action—offers a compass for navigating through this uncertain terrain.

Q: What's the most rewarding aspect of conquering a global assignment?

The world's major problems are all global in their reach—environmental degradation, economic sustainability, poverty, terrorism, etc. Business leaders can either perpetuate these problems with ethnocentric and imposing business practices, or they can be catalysts for solving the problems through international cooperation and sustainable development. Global assignments done with cultural intelligence provides the chance not only for personal development, but also to finding a solution to some of the greatest challenges in the world.