

Case 5: The European Connection

In the 1960s, Cortes Avila set up Casa Avila to service the growing petro-chemical industry in Mexico in which Avila had twenty years' experience. His knowledge of the industry and his business contacts within it gave him strength to build his business. As the business developed Cortes Avila brought in Jan Prchlik, a Czech by origin, as a partner to take control of the commercial side of the business to enable Cortes to concentrate on developing relationships with several *financieros* or development banks. Through these relationships he was able to arrange local facilities for financing his customers' requirements. His reputation bred success. He entertained, and was entertained by, commercial officers of the various embassies who respected him as an able and reputable businessman. If reliable suppliers were looking for a good agent or distributor in Mexico, Casa Avila was invariably recommended for appropriate products.

In the early 1990s, Cortes Avila had a minor heart attack which brought home to him the mortality of man and he prevailed on Prchlik to discuss the question of succession in the company. Two decisions were made. Firstly, Cortes Avila looked for a successor. He had close ties with Ramon Cabral a relatively young chairman of a Mexican bank prior to its nationalisation by a previous government. An arrangement was made whereby Cabral agreed to take over from Avila. Secondly, it was decided to accelerate the return of Prchlik's son, Roberto, from a 'planned experience' abroad where he had been cultivating European suppliers who had become more competitive than American suppliers. Roberto Prchlik was to take over from his father.

In the ensuing period, both Cabral and Roberto began to sense disquiet about the company's business relationships. In a review of company operations they decided to look at what they considered to be key agencies and distributorships which appeared at risk or under severe strain. These are described as below.

There is additional information relating to Casa Avila's activities. This is as undernoted:

Distributorships

Over the last three years, La Sise sales rose from 31.3% of all distributor sales to 43.8%. Sales margin analysis shows that La Sise has a substantially higher margin than the average for the other distributorships.

Agencies

The percentage of total agency sales accounted for by each agency is:

Agency	1999	2000	2001	Commission 2001
	%	%	%	%
Klinger Kahn	4.5	4.4	2.4	4.5
Permapomp	5.5	8.7	11.6	13.5
Smith and Sanders	2.5	3.6	4.0	5.4
Others	87.1	83.3	82.0	76.6

Casa Avila sees itself as providing a complementary service to the petroleum and chemical industries. Their customers appreciate the breadth and quality of their range of services. They seek continuity rather than change at this stage.

Questions

Given the data in the case and in the above additional information:

1. Should Casa Avila try to repair the damaged relationships with all the suppliers concerned?
2. What are the cultural problems likely to be encountered by Casa Avila in its interactions with its European suppliers?

Company No. 1

Societa Italiana di Strumentazione Ellettronica S.A., Italy

The company, referred to generally as La Sise, is the foremost in Italy in the manufacture and supply of scientific recording instruments and controls. It appointed Casa Avila S de RL as its sole distributor in Mexico in 1985 after a visit to Italy by Cortes Avila. The company's export sales manager visited Mexico in 1995 and had visited potential users with Cortes Avila, Jan Prchlik or a salesman as appropriate or convenient. At the end of his visit he had professed himself satisfied at the increased level of sales but felt that Casa Avila should stock a wider range of instruments following feedback from customers during his trip. As a direct result of this Casa Avila increased stocks of instruments both in terms of volume and range, providing an off-the-shelf service equal to that of the American competitor who dominated the Mexican market. Further annual increases in sales took place. When the marketing director arrived from Italy in late 2002, he left Cabral in no doubt as to his feelings on the company's performance. They were invited to sign a new distributor in which they were expected to agree targets of a much higher level than the annual sales to date. The agreement was to be renewable annually in place of the previous three year agreement. In writing to the managing director in Italy subsequent to these exchanges, Ramon Cabral said:

‘We have enjoyed what I believe to be a mutually beneficial relationship and I am somewhat surprised at the attitude your marketing director is taking in asking us to sign a new agreement valid for only one year. We feel this is not exactly a vote of confidence in our company. We would respectfully point out that sales of your products have gone up each year as a result of our efforts and that 2001 figures are nearly double those of 1999. To tie us down to a target for 2003 which is so far ahead of our anticipated sales for 2002 is unrealistic. While we shall make our usual special effort to increase sales, we just cannot agree the target suggested is within our reach. I feel the action being taken is very different from the friendly and co-operative spirit, which prevailed in discussions in Milan during my last visit there. Perhaps you will be so kind as to look into the matter.’

In reply to Cabral’s letter, the managing director wrote:

‘Sig. Poletti, our new marketing director, while visiting Mexico looked closely at the market and he uncovered some interesting statistics. While we appreciate the work you have done for us in introducing our products to the Mexican market, these statistics throw a new light on our operations there. These come from the Customs Authorities and show that while our sales in Mexico have doubled since 1999, total imports of instruments for measurement and control have increased by 350% since then. It is disturbing to note that while our sales are increasing, our share of imports into Mexico appears to be falling.’

‘If you can make a special effort to reach sales targets and you recruit a competent instrument engineer to provide a reasonable servicing facility as well as ensure adequate spares for the growing number of installations, then we shall be delighted to consider a three year agreement next time. We cannot depart from policies laid down.’

Company No. 2

Klinger Kahn AG, Germany

A letter from the chairman of Klinger Kahn AG terminated the agency agreement which had been in force for many years. The event which precipitated the letter was the inability of the salesman in charge of the Casa Avila Mexico City office to locate Roberto Prchlik who was on an extended tour of the Yucatan visiting existing and potential customers. It was the first time that the chairman of the company had visited Mexico and it appeared to those at Casa Avila that his visit had been an afterthought. A fax from New Orleans gave only twelve hours' notice of his arrival in Mexico City. As Carlos Martin, salesman in charge of the Mexico City office in the absence of Prchlik and Cabral, the latter on a visit to the USA, said:

'The fax arrived at 10.00 in the morning while I was out making calls in the city. It was not until I returned at four-thirty for the mail that it was brought to my attention. I tried to telephone each of two places where Sr Prchlik was likely to be staying according to his itinerary, but you know what communications are like in the Yucatan. It was impossible to get through. I asked Senorita Palès to stay behind and get through by telephone and left a contact number for her. The rest of the time I spent getting out to the airport and meeting Dr Poppe whose plane was two hours late. I had booked him into the Embajador Hotel and took him to dinner at the Chalet Suisse where I explained the action I had taken. He said that in Germany you could dial anywhere in the world - all you needed was a number to ring. He failed to see why, if we knew where Sr Prchlik was, we could

not get in touch with him overnight. In the morning I suggested to him that communications with the Yucatan could be better and that normally we could get in touch at short notice. I listened to what he had to say but informed him that I could not help on matters of policy. He had to leave that evening on the nine o'clock flight to New York where he had an appointment the next morning and repeated his disappointment at being unable to contact either of the principals of the company.'

Prchlik commiserated with Martin and explained how he had been delayed by a new prospect in Valladolid and subsequently his car broke-down which threw his itinerary completely awry. Cabral was of the opinion that this of itself was unimportant, but taken with the reasons given in the letter might explain the source of Dr Poppe's frustration. Cabral passed the letter round for all to study once more.

'You will recall in our export manager's letter of 17th September 2000, we reviewed the history of our competitive position. We lost market share due to the strong Deutsche Mark in the early 1990s and the uncertainty surrounding the subsequent introduction of the euro. We invited you to help us recover market share by accepting a reduction in your percentage commission which would be matched by an equivalent reduction by ourselves. The combined reduction would have made our prices highly desirable. Nobody should be more aware than yourselves of the opportunities in the Mexican market, as we have lost a number of orders due to high prices. Our market is a highly competitive international one and it was our belief that the price reduction to the customer would counter the tariff advantages of the US and Canada and stimulate demand to provide increased sales and an aggregate commission than has been achieved up to now.'

‘Your own view at the time was that you did not in any way wish to prejudice the rate of commission agreed in the agency agreement. Recent problems in the Mexican economy were made clear to me while on a visit to the United States. With the devaluation of the peso in the late 1990s, the burden of International Monetary Fund (IMF) repayments and weak oil prices, your government has advanced plans to increase the petro-chemical market by over two and a half times in the next four years. At the same time is holding down domestic demand and encouraging export activity. This could still be to our joint advantage and is what precipitated my visit to Mexico City. It was my intention in the short time at our disposal to discuss these developments with you. In the present circumstances the issue of import licences is related to price. I was hopeful of re-opening the subject in our mutual interest and of being successful in getting you to move from your uncompromising position.’

‘In the middle term we may have to consider some sort of manufacturing in Mexico to meet your government’s aspirations of developing a capital goods sector. We have no doubt that the long term prospects for importing goods we supply will be affected by intense competition as companies respond to the realities of North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA). These prospects may be restricted by the need to conserve foreign exchange; hence my desire to keep prices down at this stage.’

‘You will further recall that the negotiation of the sale of glass-lined vessels to Allones Hermanos y Sucesores could have been handled by yourselves. While we were always prepared to help on the more substantial contracts (at no cost to yourselves) we feel you

could have negotiated the small reduction which our representative had to concede. If you had done so, I think we would have been inclined to meet the costs involved. However, there is mutuality in all these things and more and more we have the impression that concessions are only being made by us.'

'Perhaps, if we had met in Germany we might have worked out a formula agreeable to both of us, but Herr Schumann was on an overseas visit and I was on holiday. If you had scheduled your visit for earlier or later in the year I would not have missed you. We cannot really continue to do business in this way consequently it would be more satisfactory if we were to discontinue immediately our relationship. I feel certain that in the circumstances you will not put any obstacle in our way. May I thank Sr Martin for his attention and hospitality during my brief visit. He was an excellent host in what must have been for him very trying circumstances.'

Company No. 3

Permapomp NV, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Permapomp NV was one of the most successful of the agencies held by CA. In the late 1980s CA took on their range of pumps with integral motors for the handling of liquids of varying viscosities. These pumps had synthetic rubber stators and stainless steel rotors which had an application in most industries. Jan Prchlik had saw these on a visit to Europe and the glowing reports on performance and reliability in handling normally difficult slurries had made him arrange to meet the principals in the Netherlands. After a visit by the sales director to Mexico City, CA was appointed exclusive agent in Mexico.

Jan Prchlik brought over an engineer from Utrecht to train his salesmen on the application of the pumps.

Such was the demand for the pumps that CA always kept a number in store by buying them for stock in addition to those supplied against orders. When the Dutch company extended its range further, CA prevailed on it to maintain a range of pumps on consignment account. With the market potential as yet unexploited, much time and energy was expended on developing the market for these pumps.

It came as a surprise to Cabral and Prchlik to hear from Permapomp that they were proposing to set up a manufacturing organisation in Mexico and that, in accordance with the terms of their agency agreement, it was giving notice of termination of that agreement. Outstanding commission would be paid together with any commission on orders placed in the next six months.

Company No. 4

Smith and Sanders plc, England

The company designs and builds distillation units to customer requirements. Stills are fitted with steam economisers as standard which gives a 20% saving in steam costs. The removal of fuel oil and the recovery of spirit reduce cleaning frequency. The equipment has greater effective capacity and the capability of controlling product quality within narrow limits. The equipment is competitive in price. Supporting steelwork and interconnecting pipework is supplied by CA which has its own workshop that can buy in

Mexico and quote separately for the supply of these items. Such orders are infrequent but the unit value is high and interest in the equipment is growing as the operating advantages become evident. In a recent installation of distilling columns the commissioning work was carried out by a Smith and Sanders engineer who criticised the standard of pipework fabricated and installed by CA. Ramon Cabral averred that while Smith and Sanders were known to be pipework specialists with exceedingly high standards of internal cleanliness and outside surface polish, the Mexican market was not yet ready to pay for such a facility. In any case, one of the clinching arguments in winning the order was the attractive price of installation, erection of supporting structure and pipework supplied by CA.

Further dissension was brought about by the commission payable being released only pro rata to the receipt of payments. Payment was made over three years and, according to Smith and Sanders, the Financial Authority required them to hold a lien on the agent's commission to ensure that commission payments were made only against receipt of instalments. Cabral had approached Smith and Sanders with the suggestion that the full commission be paid to them without advising the Financial Authority. Cabral and Roberto Prchlik were shocked when Smith and Sanders informed them that they had every intention of keeping faith with the Financial Authority. They had this rule which was established to ensure the agent had a stake in the customer's payments and they were going to abide by it.

A further attempt was made by Cortes Avila in his new capacity as consultant to explain how in these large orders they did not normally ask for inclusion in the customer price of

any confidential payments made to individuals who had assisted in the winning of the contract. They were committed to these payments despite the only commission they had received was on the down payment of the 10% and the 10% against documents on shipment. Smith and Sanders expressed sympathy but explained that this could not alter the position. Cabral and Roberto Prchlik felt that this was discrimination against their interests and constituted a breach of the principle of inviolacy of the agent's agreed commission. They felt that they could not react any more strongly due to the Smith and Sanders agency growing in importance to them.

Discussion topics and answer guide

(Reference Chapter 5: International product development)

1. Given the data in the case and in the above additional information, should Casa Avila try to repair the damaged relationships with all the suppliers concerned?

La Sise

This is the key distributorship held by Casa Avila as it is becoming increasingly important in terms of profitability. Casa Avila sees itself as supplier of a range of complementary products to the petro-chemical industry. So the loss of a significant product in what they have to offer could have an adverse effect on the other products handled. La Sise would appear to be a 'must' for relationship repair.

If the company has not been tracking its performance in relation to total imports of similar products, then it is high time it did. The first move is to check the claim made by Signor Poletti and to establish whether the 350% increase in imports accurately reflects what La Sise supplies. It will have to establish if there are categories of instruments included in the custom classification which are not supplied by La Sise, e.g. clinical thermometers.

Whatever the data used, there is little doubt that the increase in imports is substantial and would justify the appointment of a qualified instrument engineer. Until now the whole

problem of co-ordinating control systems has been left to the sales force. This could well be a key decision.

There remains the possibility that Poletti has deliberately raised the share of the percentage increase in imports exceeding that in Casa Avila's sales to get Casa Avila to institute a system of monitoring its own performance. If this is so, and Casa Avila can demonstrate that it matches or performs better than the increase in total imports, then the matter will have been handled in a way in which no one loses face.

The spares position will also have to be reviewed by Casa Avila. It has already demonstrated that willingness to extend the range and the amount of spares carried. Central to their being able to further extend this activity is a three year contract which would give an opportunity to capitalise on this investment in a way which a year's agreement would not.

Klinger Kahn

Despite having only 2.4% of agency sales in 2001, the commission as a percentage of total commission earned was more than twice that percentage.

There was a personal aspect to the displeasure of the chairman of Klinger Kahn, but this appears to be the expression of a more lingering sore. While his disappointment at not meeting the principals is understandable, it is not defensible, for such visits should be notified well in advance. However, certain actions by Casa Avila would appear to run

counter to what Klinger Kahn would normally expect of its distributors. This is a matter of policy that Prchlik and Cabral will have to address, particularly in relation to their propensity to call on Klinger Kahn staff to solve problems like concessions.

Casa Avila's insistence on the inviolacy of their agency commission is a short-sighted view, as conditions can change in the environment in a very short time. In the current situation of a weak peso, it would appear to make commercial sense to reduce the agency commission provided there is an equal concession in the sacrifice made. This is an important agency and the uncertainty will have to be resolved despite the apparent finality of the German company to end the relationship. The language used does not match the actions 'Perhaps it would be more satisfactory if were to.... .' is not a statement of finality and would appear to leave the door cracked open for a conciliatory approach.

The possibility of manufacturing in Mexico might be a subject for discussion in any negotiations that take place. This would give Casa Avila the opportunity to press for the opportunity to participate in the equity of the Mexican company and in this way to have a say in the decisions that are made. There might be a lesson from other agency situations (see section on Permapomp).

Permapomp

This is the jewel in the crown of the agencies held producing a massive 13.5% of agency commission providing an excellent return on the investment made in time and money. Casa Avila invested to support the agency strongly. That Permapomp should see fit to

terminate the agency agreement without prior discussion with Casa Avila would appear to be high-handed in the extreme. However, it might just have been the result of Casa Avila's inability to foresee this action as a result of the success of the pumps supplied by Permapomp. Even distributors have to take a strategic view of their activities. Had Casa Avila looked far enough ahead it could have prepared against this contingency. A clause could have been included in the agency agreement that in the event of a manufacturing facility being set up in Mexico, Casa Avila should have the opportunity to take a stake in the equity of the company. This would also have made the company more competitive in the NAFTA market.

In the event, Casa Avila is not without influence. Its people who know the customers and the market. If Permapomp establishes manufacturing operations in Mexico, it will need a competent sales force and that is what Casa Avila has. It would not be difficult to effect the change from an agent who acts as distributor for spares to a specialist sales force for the new manufacturer. Casa Avila might even sell its skills in the Central American Common Market where knowledge of the local requirements and the language would place them in a strong position.

Smith and Sanders

This company also out-performs the average. Much of this is due to its ability to provide competitive quotes for the supply and erection of supporting structure and pipework. It is a desirable agency. The standard of pipework criticised by the commissioning engineer represents a particular viewpoint based on his own experience. Students will have read in the text of Juran's definition of quality as 'fitness for purpose'. This is what Casa Avila

has been supplying with its pipework geared to the needs of customers who did not see the relevance of stainless steel when an acceptable quality could be achieved without it.

The question of confidential payments is one in which the British company is unable to think in terms of its customer's culture. This is an accepted practice and not regarded as a form of corruption although like other practices it can be exercised corruptly. Smith and Sanders appears to be unaware that Casa Avila had paid out sums of money not covered by the commission. It is understandable that Smith and Sanders should wish to maintain its good relationship with the Financial Authority (a euphemism for Export Credit Guarantee Department or ECGD). What is more difficult to accept is that there is nothing Smith and Sanders is prepared to do, even without breaking faith with the Financial Authority, whereby it could make some kind of restitution to Casa Avila for inability to compensate for the expenses incurred in obtaining the order.

There are various ways in which Smith and Sanders can make up to Casa Avila some of the expenditures paid out. One way would be to provide spares parts on consignment account whereby the parts are owned by Smith and Sanders until they are sold by Casa Avila. Longer time for pay for any ancillary items could also be given. The ECGD's insistence on the agent having a vested interest in the payment made by the customer implies an inability to evaluate the customer's ability to pay. Casa Avila will have its work cut out to convince Smith and Sanders of the unfairness of the position. Nevertheless, the agency is another important one and should be supported in every possible way.

2. What are the cultural problems likely to be encountered by Casa Avila in its interactions with their European suppliers?

There is some indication of cultural differences given in the text. A conceptual framework is provided that demonstrates the cultural differences between nations based on Hofstede (1991) who dominated this aspect of international business relations in the 1980s and 1990s. He identified four cultural universals based on considerable and sophisticated research. These were:

1. Power distance

This is concerned with authority and the extent to which members of a society accept that power in organisations is distributed unequally. In high power distance countries subordinates do what the superior wants them to do. They tend to accept authoritarian attitudes. In low power distance countries, the individual has far greater room to meet explicit or implicit objectives in his or her own way. Countries such as Malaysia, and the Latin American countries typify the high power distance countries.

2. Uncertainty avoidance

This is the degree to which members of a society or organisation feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. High uncertainty cultures experience anxiety and perceive uncertainty as a threat to their well-being. Emphasis is on security, career structure etc. Greece, France, Belgium and the Latin American countries exemplify the high uncertainty countries. Singapore, Hong Kong, the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries are examples of weak uncertainty avoidance.

3. Individualism

This describes the relationship between the individual and the groups within which he or she works and reflects the ways in which people live and work together. Highly individualist countries encourage the individual to emphasise the satisfaction of his or her own needs. Such people are ambitious, enjoy responsibility, have a life outside the organisation and enjoy the right to self-actualisation. In collectivist organisations people identify with their own organisation. Scandinavian countries and Anglo-Saxon countries are high on the individualism index while Portugal, Pakistan and the Latin American countries are all low.

4. Masculinity

Depending on the society one is in, sex roles will differ. In strongly masculine societies sex roles are clearly differentiated. Values such as decisiveness, assertiveness, and an ability to accumulate material wealth are applauded. In feminine cultures, members place emphasis on co-operating with others rather than competing with them. Elitism and acknowledgement of individual achievement are perceived negatively. The Anglo-Saxon countries have masculine cultures with Japan being the most masculine. Countries with a feminine culture include the Scandinavian countries, Thailand, Mexico and Germany. These characteristics were developed into indices. By plotting power distance and uncertainty together, Hofstede shows that different combinations of the two dimensions lead to different implicit models in people's minds as to what an organisation should be. Large power distance and strong uncertainty avoidance leads to people viewing an organisation to be what Hofstede characterises as a 'pyramid of people', i.e. a

hierarchical bureaucracy typical of France and other Latin countries. When small power distance and strong uncertainty avoidance are combined, this leads to viewing it as a 'well-oiled machine' typical of Germany and other central European countries. Small power distance and weak uncertainty avoidance leads to viewing it as a 'village market', that is an *ad-hocracy* (typical of Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries). Lastly, large power distance plus weak uncertainty avoidance leads to viewing it as a 'family', i.e. a personal bureaucracy as found in India, West Africa and countries with a strong Chinese influence. In this latter type, the organisation is built around a strong leader who controls directly and is assisted by aides who carry out such tasks as are given to them.

Using these characterisations, it is possible to foresee some of the organisational problems that are likely to arise between people of different cultural backgrounds. An Austrian, (well-oiled machine) is appointed to set up and run an agricultural project in India (family). He will establish rules and procedures only to discover that nobody keeps them and that his physical presence is required to get the job done. A doctor from Hong Kong (family) gets a job in an American hospital (organisational pyramid, national village market). He will expect structures to give way to the personal authority of bosses and it may take him some time to understand the rigidity of the bureaucracy and how it can, on occasion, be replaced by personal relationships. Hofstede has developed other combinations of his dimensions that seeks to show culture and the self-concept in organisations. Another shows culture and the motivation of the individual.

It will be seen that Mexico is close to Italy on the power distance and uncertainty avoidance plot which should augur well for understanding the La Sise personnel. Casa

Avila should be aware of the differences between the Mexican and the Netherlands, (Permapomp) and the British (Smith and Sanders) companies which lie in the diametrically opposite segment, whose officers will have a greater degree of authority to which an appeal can be made, e.g. for a particular concession. With the German company, negotiators are more likely to refer to rules to which they have to adhere and arguments should be made within these rules.

Another framework useful in cross-cultural interactions is that of Casse (1994), a Belgian who studied communication. He identifies four styles of persuasion. While we all have characteristics of each, one is likely to be dominant. If we can identify the style of the person addressed, we can select the most appropriate style to communicate meaning.

The four styles are designated action, process, people and ideas. In the *action* style the focus is on performance, experience, change, achievements and decisions. Those who embrace this style are pragmatic and to the point; they jump from one idea to another, challenge views other than their own, are impatient and decisive. To influence a person with this dominant style, it is necessary to present the preferred outcome at the beginning, defend it strongly from a minimal number of possibilities and do this in a brief time span. It is advisable to emphasise the practicability of what you are proposing. Where the *process* style is the predominant orientation, people talk about facts, analysis, planning and controlling, testing and proof. Such people are systematic and logical; they rely on facts to determine positions and exercise patience in evaluation of the facts. In communicating with a person embracing this style it is necessary to be precise, logical in

presentation and argument, ready to listen to the counter-arguments and show a sequence reflecting cause and effect in your proposals.

With persons having principally a *people* style they talk about feelings, understanding, co-operation, expectations awareness and values. They tend to be spontaneous and perceptive, emotional and subjective. With people of this predominant orientation, it is advisable not to get down to business straight away but to engage in small talk and rituals. It is often important to stress the relationship between what you are proposing and the people concerned. The *ideas* style person talks about concepts, issues, opportunities, innovation and alternatives. Such people are imaginative, ego-centred, creative and provocative. They have to be allowed time for discussion and to go off at tangents. It is good to try to relate the topic for discussion to a broader concept or idea. Stress the uniqueness of a topic or idea with persons like this.

These styles correspond to national styles. The *action* style is dominant in the Anglo countries, the *process* style in countries like France, Russia and Poland and the *people* style in the Arab countries, parts of Latin America and Africa. Mexicans, for example, are not likely to be impressed by the direct and pragmatic approach of the first or the hard evidence and rational argument of the second. They tend to start from the point of view of principle and then seem to place more emphasis on feelings and intuition. The *idea* style relates to individuals rather than cultures and is to be found in all cultures although not necessarily to the same degree. In a relatively small number of individuals it will be dominant. If we can identify our own styles, we are in a better position to know how to deal with others.

The attribution of traits to individuals from a given culture or of a perceived communication style is what known as stereotyping. The word has negative connotations, but we should be aware it is not necessarily bad. It is a natural outgrowth of the ways of communication. Stereotypes are automatic and cannot be avoided. They are the ways used to organise thinking in new situations. These stereotypes can be moved closer to reality by increased contact with the group that is being stereotyped. Of themselves, stereotypes do not lead to bad communication. The problems arise if they are inaccurate and held too rigidly. If we want to communicate effectively with strangers, we should not seek to avoid stereotypes. That will only conceal difference. What we need to do is to increase the complexity and accuracy of our stereotypes. We do this by constantly questioning them and establishing a habit of studying the cultures from the sources available to us. A summary of the content, process and approach of these style is given at the end.

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