Bridging the Culture Gap: How to **Thrive**, Not Just Survive, in the Global Marketplace
Panelists:

Pamela Dong, SANY Corporation
Pam Light, HOK
Lizbeth O’Shaughnessy, Steelcase Inc.

Moderator:
Mary Beth Lamb
Pamela Dong
Global Training and Development Officer
SANY America

SANY is one of China’s largest global companies
• 45,000 employees
• 2012 revenues = 13 billion dollars

One of my roles with Sany is as a “Global Boundary Spanner.”

In that role, I leverage two decades of experience bridging the cultural gap between Chinese and U.S. global companies. That helps ensure maximum return on global business investment.
Lizbeth O’Shaughnessy
Senior Vice President,
Chief Legal Officer and Secretary
Steelcase Inc.

Steelcase today: 12,000 employees around the world (5,500 in the U.S.)
Why Should We Care About Culture?

*Because culture matters.*

- Culture is any group of people with common rules; often those rules are unspoken. *We all cross cultures daily.*

- By age three the lens through which we see the world is firmly fixed in place. *It’s hard to have a global mindset.*

- Assumptions trip us up.

- Cracking the “secret code” of culture is key to global success...in every business, in every country.
So What is Cultural Competency?

The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to work effectively across cultural, geographic, organizational, and language differences to achieve peak results worldwide.
What Happens If We Ignore Culture?

- 70% of global mergers and acquisitions fail because of cultural differences*.

- Almost 90 percent of top executives from 68 countries named cross-cultural leadership as their top management challenge for this century**.

- Executives surveyed cited understanding customers across cultures as the greatest of all the global leadership challenges.

Sources:

* Yan & Luo

** The Economist Intelligence Unit
# U.S./China Cultural Styles

(from Tomalin & Nicks, 2008)

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Case Study

In Phase I, the Chinese-U.S. team did not:

- Conduct a face to face global team launch and cross-cultural training
- Establish trust or team operating principles
- Adapt to each other on project timing
- Achieve the goal. ‘Spent two years fighting about the right way to work, which cost SANY millions of dollars

In Phase II, this same team:

- Took time to meet and learn about each other’s preferred work style/constraints
- Created team values, processes, and goals
- Communicated daily; held weekly meetings
- Built a successful prototype in one year
How To ”Mind the Culture Gap” And Get Top Global Results

• Identify the right candidates for the global assignment. Are they culturally competent as well as technically competent?

• Plan and budget multiple trips to a new country so you can learn how culture impacts business and develop relationships that work.

• Develop/identify boundary spanners on every global team who can bridge the gap between cultures. Listen to their advice; trust they know how to make it work.
Symantec
A U.S.-based global company, 7,000 employees

Brand / Design support company mission
Brand supports worldwide company culture
Brand must be flexible enough so Symantec culture and country thrive and grow together

• Meetings
• Observations
• Informal conversations
• Food events
Financial Services

A U.S.-based global company, 175,000 employees

Real Estate / HR / IT support cost control and employee effectiveness

- Survey
- Focus Groups
- Observational Studies
- Leadership Workshop
A-HAH!

• You need to really **listen**
• You need to really **look**
• **You will be surprised by what you do NOT know** – but now makes sense
• In “fast” information gathering, **you need to be introduced by people that are respected and trusted**

**LISTEN AND RESPOND**
The Challenge:

• Become a “Globally-Integrated Enterprise” while respecting and leveraging country cultures
  Trust
• Significant trends affecting work, workers and workplaces
• Patterns of work culture
Significant Trends Affecting Work, Workers and Workplaces

- Compression of Workspace
- Miniaturization and Mobility
- Changing Nature of Work
- Multigenerations at Work
- Globalization
Patterns of Work Culture
Key Takeaways: The Globally-Integrated Enterprise (GIE)

**CHALLENGE**
How to Change Company Culture to become GIE, while respecting and leveraging local culture?

**UNDERSTAND**
- People need technology
- People need people
- People need spaces that bring technology & people together

**OFFER**
Choice and control = trust over where and how people work

**CONSIDER AND LEVERAGE**
Cultural context

**CREATE**
- **Palette of Place**: An ecosystem of interrelated zones and settings that provide users with a range of spaces that support their modes of work.
- **Palette of Posture**: A range of solutions that encourage people to sit, stand and move and support the multiple technologies they use.
- **Palette of Presence**: A range of mixed-presence experiences (physical and virtual) in destinations designed to augment human interaction.

Toll Brothers
America’s Luxury Home Builder®

Center for Real Estate
Wisconsin School of Business
Top Eight Global *Don’ts*

1. Assume your way is the right way.
2. Refuse to modify your behavior, words or actions.
3. Ignore subtle cues.
4. Stereotype. All Chinese are like no Chinese, are like some Chinese—some of the time.
5. Expect everything to happen the way it does in the home office.
6. If it didn’t work the first time do the same thing again, only talk louder and be less flexible.
7. Assume someone is culturally competent because he/she has traveled.
8. Continue email strings after four exchanges. Pick up the phone, get on a videoconference or walk down the hall. You are wasting time and likely making the situation worse.
Top Eight Global Do’s

1. Reflect: Is culture a factor in this situation? It isn’t always!
2. Remember that “cultural preparation is better than reparation.”
3. Ask people how they like to communicate. Email is a terrible medium for relationship building or addressing conflict. It works great for exchanging date.
4. Hold people in unconditional positive regard.
5. Assume that actions are done with positive intent.
6. Ask: What cultural dimensions of difference might help me understand the real message being communicated?
7. Ask: How might I get more information, perhaps indirectly, to give me a clearer picture of what is really going on?
8. Listen hard 80% of the time. Really.
“Outside the realm of right-doing and wrong-doing, there is a field . . . I’ll meet you there.”

-Mevlana Jallaludin Rumi
Mind the Gap

“The central issue here is not how dissimilar distinct societies may be from one another, but what ability and opportunity the members of one society have—or can develop—to appreciate and understand how others function.”

- Amartya Sen