

CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

跨文化理解

While cultural differences can be obstacles for Western firms looking to establish a foothold in China, strategies exist to make this process smoother and less frustrating.

by **Daniel Tschudy**

Before coming to China, foreign business travellers are usually aware that they should prepare for doing business by understanding some of the key issues in cultural values and behaviours. These include patience, showing respect for formalities, and knowing how to build *guānxi*.

However, a high majority of those small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which invested in China during the last decade no longer have a presence here. For some of them, the product might not have been right, for others the market did not have enough potential, and some might have simply underestimated local competition. But most of their managers and investors claim “misunderstandings” as the main reason for the termination of their China efforts. In other words, there are no specific reasons: it just did not work out, the feeling was not right, the investment budget was depleted – and ultimately the expatriates were exhausted. They returned home, disappointed, frustrated, and not understanding why they could not bridge the cultural differences.

The China challenge

Trying to understand why cultural values and behaviours can be such a disturbing element when investing in an unknown market is difficult. Even within Europe, and within European countries themselves, there are often wide differences between the way people think, communicate, and negotiate. But why it is

虽然西方企业在中国寻找落脚点的过程中会遭遇文化差异上的障碍，然而采取相关策略仍可化解阻扰，使这一过程变得更为顺畅。

作者：**Daniel Tschudy**

来 中国之前，外国商旅者通常都明白他们必须通过了解中国的文化价值和人们的行为方式中的重要方面来做好经商准备，这包括耐心、尊重当地的办事程序和掌握建立关系的方法。

然而，过去十年里在中国投资的大部分中小企业都退出了中国市场。有些是因为产品不对，有些是因为市场潜力不够，还有些是因为低估了本土市场竞争。但这些企业的大多数经理人和投资者都将在中国失败的原因归结为“误解”。换句话说，没有具体的原因：只是没有成功、感觉不对、投资预算耗尽了——最终导致这些外国投资者精疲力竭。他们返回故乡，感到失望和失意，不明白为什么不能架起连接文化差异的桥梁。

中国挑战

试图了解为何文化价值观和行为方式会成为一个未知市场投资的恼人因素是十分困难的。即使在欧洲，或是欧洲国家之间，人们的思维模式、交流和谈判的方法也往往有着很大的区别。但为什么跟中国打交道更为困难呢？

也许并不困难。外资企业在进入中国市场前必须关注以下五个细节问题，企业在市场分析、项目尽职调查以及并购前和并购中必须解决这些问题：

so much more difficult to deal with China?

It probably isn't, but there are five very particular issues for foreign companies to respect before entering China. These topics should be tackled in market analyses, due diligence projects, and before and during M&As:

Patience. Westerners who come to do business in China will complain of the indirect ways of speaking, constant need for repeating their plans, and cumbersome formalities. Firms should plan for this by allowing an abundance of time for coming to an agreement and also a sufficient budget. Foreign companies often jump to a conclusion about an investment budget without considering the pure volume of time needed to build up a successful business enterprise.

Relationships. In Switzerland, it is possible to trade with someone even if you don't like that person; it's just business. But in China, without a certain rapport having been developed, business is extremely difficult, if not impossible. That is why relationships cannot be achieved rapidly through common interest; they must gradually be built. Accordingly, *guānxi*

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耐心。来中国做生意的西方人常常抱怨中国人的间接说话方式、总是需要重复计划和繁琐的手续。为此，企业应该做好规划，留出达成协议所需的充分时间，并准备充足的预算。外资企业往往贸然对投资预算定论，而对建立一个成功的商业企业所需要的时间不加考虑。

关系。在瑞士，你可以跟不喜欢的人做生意；因为只是生意而已。但在中国，在建立一定程度的友好关系前谈生意如果说不是不可能的，也是极其困难的。这就

是因为共同兴趣不能帮助人们迅速的建立友好关系；关系需要逐步

的建立。相应的，关系既有“人际关系”的意思，也有“联络网或联系网”的意思，它需要所有包含在其中的各个方面提供支持和合作。给红包也是建立关系的一个环节，因为它是对包含

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means both “relationship” and “network or connections”, and the need to provide support and cooperation among the parties involved. The giving of a red envelope stuffed with cash, or hongbao, is also a part of developing the relationship, as it is a way to showing respect to an individual or a particular interest group within any matter.

Communication. As communication in Sino-European dealings is often in English, it means that in many cases both parties, Chinese and European, are speaking a foreign language. The sheer number of potential misunderstandings when two parties speak in a third-country language is amazing. Hidden agendas, for example, are extremely difficult to identify and comprehend. Yes, we need to motivate our Chinese partners to improve their English, but we too must continuously work on ours.

Persistence. It is unwise to assume that things will go smoothly. Administrative burdens in setups and daily operations can be exhaustive, but there is no quick way around these. The temptation to change the direction of an effort can be high, though re-direction often leads to further confusion. Persist, take a deep breath, and do it again. Testing a counterpart's endurance is part of the Chinese business culture and deeply rooted in their competitive behaviour.

Flexibility. Of course, this is important around the globe, but with the present speed with which the Chinese economy grows, flexibility has become a major skill to allow best manoeuvring between new laws, regulations and trading conditions.

It is fair to say that ‘soft factors’ – i.e. intangible, non-measurable factors -- are the main reasons why many SMEs fail in China. Soft factors cannot be calculated and quoted in advance, but must be experienced and personally handled on-site. An empathy which allows for embracing Chinese cultural differences and not being judgmental or dismissive will be central to success, and is embodied in the Chinese proverb 和谐 尽管 分歧, meaning ‘harmony despite differences.’ ○

“An empathy which allows for embracing Chinese cultural differences and not being judgmental or dismissive will be central to success

建立接受中国文化差异、不主观下定论和不轻视的共鸣是成功的核心

在某件事中的某个个人或是某个具体利益群体表示尊重的一种方法。

沟通。中欧之间做生意的沟通语言一般是英语，也就是说，在许多情况下，中方和欧方都是在用非母语进行交流。当双方都用非母语进行交流时所带来的潜在误解数量是十分惊人的，举个例子来说，人们很难识别和理解语言背后隐藏的动机。当然，我们需要鼓励我们的中国伙伴提高英语水平，与此同时，我们也必须不断提高自身的英语水平。

坚持。认为事情会进展的很顺利的想法

是不明智的。企业建立期间和日常运营中的行政负担十分耗费精力，但它没有快速的解决办法。改变某项努力的方向的诱惑很大，但改变方向往往会带来更进一步的困惑。我们要做的是坚持，深吸一口气，再做一次。测试对方的耐力是中国的经营文化，深深的扎根于他们的竞争行为中。

灵活。这一点在全球来说都很重要，但在目前中国的经济增速下，灵活已经成为在新法律、新规定和新贸易条件下进行部署规划的主要技能。

可以说“软因素”——如不可见、不可测量的因素——是许多外资中小企业在中国失败的主要原因。软因素无法预先计算和引用，必须在经历后由个人在现场解决。建立接受中国文化差异、不主观下定论和不轻视的共鸣是成功的核心，这种精神在中国的成语‘和而不同’中也有所体现。○

About the author

Daniel Tschudy is lecturer, publicist and consultant in cross-cultural competence (cultural intelligence) in the global business environment. He provides cross-cultural seminars, keynote-speeches and presentations to management groups. Daniel focuses on emerging markets in Africa, Arabia and Asia, with a specific concentration on China and Japan.



朱帝

朱帝是一名演讲者，培训师，顾问及公关学者。他的演讲内容侧重于在全球经济环境、国际关系、东西方的转变、及世界旅游业方面的跨文化价值观和行为。他专注于亚非拉地区的新兴市场，并且他对中国和日本也非常感兴趣并参与其中。朱帝定期为各种报刊和商务杂志撰写文章，并经常在大学和国际商务学校发表演讲。