

# **CROSS CULTURAL LEADERSHIP**

## **LEADERSHIP ACROSS DIFFERENT CULTURES**

*The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people.*” Woodrow Wilson  
With the march of globalization and internationalization growing louder and stronger, few successful businesses can now escape the need to work across cultures. Today’s leaders need to be adept at leading and managing people of different cultures; they need to listen to the ‘voices of the people’ as well as understand what those voices may actually be telling them. This in essence is the crux of the challenge; when people perceive the world, communicate and view their leaders in different ways, the leader’s ears may be ringing with misunderstood messages. The leader will come across cultural issues in many different guises. By way of illustrating the challenges of cross-cultural leadership and for the sake of brevity this article will examine two interdependent issues: the role of a leader and communication.

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/leadership-across-cultures.html>

## **INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT: LEADERSHIP AMONG DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

“The art of communication is the language of leadership”  
James Humes

Today's businesses are complex entities. However, one fundamental principle of success remains constant - the need for communication. Communication manifests in various forms, both verbal and non-verbal. One area of increasing concern for businesses is how to nurture and maintain effective intercultural communication between employees. As workforces become increasingly multicultural and businesses continue to expand overseas, the homogenous workforce has become a thing of the past. The cultural diversity of businesses necessitates that internal communication now takes note of the intercultural element if it is to be truly effective. Management today have to ensure that they are understanding and being understood across cultural boundaries. The following ten tips on intercultural management are meant to provide a starting point to managers dealing with culturally diverse teams.

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/intercultural-management.html>

# **BUSINESS ETIQUETTE**

## **BUSINESS CARD ETIQUETTE**

When doing business abroad it is important to understand the local culture. Culture includes areas such as a country's norms, values, behaviours, food, architecture, fashion and art. However, one area of culture that is important for the international business person is etiquette. Understanding business etiquette allows you to feel comfortable in your dealings with foreign friends, colleagues, customers or clients. Knowing what to do and say in the right places will help build trust and open lines of communication. One aspect of etiquette that is of great importance internationally is the exchanging of business cards. Unlike in North America or Europe where the business card has little meaning other than a convenient form of capturing essential personal details, in other parts of the world the business card has very different meanings.

Source : <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/business-card-etiquette.html>

## **BUSINESS LUNCH ETIQUETTE**

Business lunches are very common in many countries and cultures. Food itself is one of the most visible manifestations of a culture and is something people are proud of and like to share with guests to their country. However, just as the food changes from culture to culture so does the intention and etiquette surrounding the lunch. In some cultures the business lunch is a time for chit-chat and building relationships, in others simply a fuel stop at which people continue to talk about business, known as the "working lunch". For the international globe-trotter it is always beneficial to have an appreciation and understanding of a local culture and any etiquette or protocol.

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/business-lunch.html>

## **FURTHER RESOURCES**

**Doing business in...Etiquette and Protocols:**

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/etiquette/doing-business-in.html>

**Businesses in different cultures:**

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles-business.html>

# **UNDERSTANDING MAJOR DIFFERENCES IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

**"...the single greatest barrier to business success is the one erected by culture."**

*Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall*

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cross-cultural/cross-cultural-awareness.html>

## **CROSS CULTURAL BUSINESS BLUNDERS**

These are some examples of how cultural ignorance can and does lead to negative (and much of the time humorous) consequences. The following cultural blunders are presented in order illustrate to people how crucial cultural awareness is in international business today.

1. Managers at one American company were startled when they discovered that the brand name of the cooking oil they were marketing in a Latin American country translated into Spanish as "Jackass Oil."
2. American Motors tried to market its new car, the Matador, based on the image of courage and strength. However, in Puerto Rico the name means "killer" and was not popular on the hazardous roads in the country.
3. A US telephone company tried to market its products and services to Latinos by showing a commercial in which a Latino wife tells her husband to call a friend, telling her they would be late for dinner. The commercial bombed since Latino women do not order their husbands around and their use of time would not require a call about lateness.
4. A cologne for men pictured a pastoral scene with a man and his dog. It failed in Islamic countries dogs are considered unclean.
5. Proctor & Gamble used a television commercial in Japan that was popular in Europe. The ad showed a woman bathing, her husband entering the bathroom and touching her. The Japanese considered this ad an invasion of privacy, inappropriate behavior, and in very poor taste.
6. An American business person refused an offer of a cup of coffee from a Saudi businessman. Such a rejection is considered very rude and the business negotiations became stalled.
7. A Japanese manager in an American company was told to give critical feedback to a subordinate during a performance evaluation. Japanese use high context language and are uncomfortable giving direct feedback. It took the manager five tries before he could be direct enough to discuss the poor performance so that the American understood.
8. One company printed the "OK" finger sign on each page of its catalogue. In many parts of Latin America that is considered an obscene gesture. Six months of work were lost because they had to reprint all the catalogues.

## **HIGH CONTEXT VS. LOW CONTEXT COMMUNICATION**

First used by author Edward Hall, the expressions "high context" and "low context" are labels denoting inherent cultural differences between societies. High-context and low-context communication refers to how much speakers rely on things other than words to convey meaning. Hall states that in communication, individuals face many more sensory cues than they are able to fully process. In each culture, members have been supplied with specific "filters" that allow them to focus only on what society has deemed important. In general, cultures that favor low-context communication will pay more attention to the literal meanings of words than to the context surrounding them.

Source: <http://hubpages.com/hub/High-Context-vs-Low-Context-Communication>

## **INDIVIDUALISTIC VS. COLLECTIVISTIC CULTURES**

There are **two contrasting cultural orientations**: one values **individualism**, and the other values **collectivism**. In a worldwide study of 116,000 employees of IBM, Geert **Hofstede** (1980) found that the most fiercely independent people were from the US, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands, in that order. In contrast, the most interdependent people were from Venezuela, Colombia, Pakistan, Peru, and Taiwan.

Source: [http://www.cranepsych.com/Psych/Individual\\_Collectivist.pdf](http://www.cranepsych.com/Psych/Individual_Collectivist.pdf)

### **Hofstede's Intercultural dimensions**

*An article helping to understand the factors that differentiate cultures*

Professor Hofstede's four dimensions are:

#### **Power Distance**

This dimension relates to the degree of equality/inequality between people in a particular society.

A country with a high Power Distance score both accepts and perpetuates inequalities between people. An example of such a society would be one that follows a caste system and in which upward mobility is very limited.

A low Power Distance indicates that a society does not emphasize differences in people's status, power or wealth. Equality is seen as the collective aim of society and upward mobility is common.

Read more on [Power Distance](#) or Have a look at the [world map of power distance scores](#).

#### **Individualism**

This dimension focuses on the degree to which a society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships.

If a country has a high Individualism score, this indicates that individuality and individual rights are dominant. Individuals in these societies tend to form relationships with larger numbers of people, but with the relationships being weak.

A low Individualism score points to a society that is more collectivist in nature. In such countries the ties between individuals are very strong and the family is given much more weight. In such societies members lean towards collective responsibility.

Read more on [Individualism](#) or Have a look at the [world map of individualism scores](#).

## Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension concerns the level of acceptance for uncertainty and ambiguity within a society. A country with a high Uncertainty Avoidance score will have a low tolerance towards uncertainty and ambiguity. As a result it is usually a very rule-orientated society and follows well defined and established laws, regulations and controls.

A low Uncertainty Avoidance score points to a society that is less concerned about ambiguity and uncertainty and has more tolerance towards variety and experimentation. Such a society is less rule-orientated, readily accepts change and is willing to take risks.

Read more on [Uncertainty Avoidance](#) or Have a look at the [world map of uncertainty avoidance scores](#).

## Masculinity

This dimension pertains to the degree societies reinforce, or do not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power.

A high Masculinity score indicates that a country experiences a higher degree of gender differentiation. In such cultures, males tend to dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure. A low Masculinity score means a society has a lower level of differentiation and inequity between genders. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society.

Read more on [Masculinity](#) or Have a look at the [world map of masculinity scores](#).

## An Application of the Intercultural Scores - The UK

By way of illustrating how the scores work the example of the UK shall be examined.

First think about what you know or understand about British society and culture and then try and gage what the scores may be? Would the UK have a high or low Power Distance? Is it a very individualistic society? Are they a people that entertain risks? Is it a very gender orientated society? Try and think of the scores you would give to the UK for each dimension (scores range between 0 and 100).

**Power Distance:** The UK's score in this dimension is 35. This indicates that rank, status and inequalities between people are reasonably low. On a macro level this manifests in a number of ways, such as legislation protecting ethnic minorities' rights. On a micro level this is witnessed in the office where the relationship between superiors and subordinates is relatively casual and incorporates little ceremony.

**Individualism:** The UK scores 89 for Individualism. This is high and therefore points to that fact that British culture values and promotes individuality. On a macro level we see that the nuclear family is the more predominant form of basic social structure. On a micro level, in the business environment the individual may be more concerned with themselves rather than the team.

**Uncertainty Avoidance:** For this dimension the UK scores 35 which is quite low. This means British culture is relatively open to taking risks and dealing with change. On a macro level this can be seen in the constant revision of laws and government structures. On a micro level, conflict or disagreement in the workplace, even with superiors, is considered healthy.

**Masculinity:** The UK scores 66 which indicates that it is somewhere in the middle. This may reflect the fact that British society and culture aims for equality between the sexes, yet a certain amount of gender bias still exists underneath the surface.

- 1) If you are playing the Intercultural Awareness game you can now proceed to read the [Intercultural Awareness Rules](#) or go straight to the [Intercultural Awareness](#) game.
- 2) If you are using the graph tool please go back to [Intercultural Business Communication](#).

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **Cultural Etiquette:**

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/>

<http://www.culturecrossing.net/>

### **Travel section:**

<http://www.homefair.com/articles/adapting-to-foreign-country.asp?cc=1>

### **Getting adapted to the new environment:**

<http://www.newcomersclub.com/>

### **Intercultural communication:**

<http://www.diplomacy.edu/Language/Communication/default.htm>

### **Multicultural issues - Videos:**

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/intercultural/diversity-videos.html>

### **Guide to country profiles:**

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html>

# **CROSS CULTURAL WORKPLACE**

## **RELIGION, CULTURE AND WORKPLACE**

Many religions carry dress codes or guidelines on appearance and presentation. Khalsa Sikhs wear five religious symbols known as the five K's. Two are not visible, but the 'Kara' (a steel bangle worn on the wrist) and the 'Kesh' (uncut hair usually underneath a turban) are worn on the outside. The 'Kirpan' (a decorative sword) does not necessarily have to be visible. Muslim women are required to cover their bodies as a sign of modesty. Interpretations of the Quran differ so you may see Muslim women wearing just a head covering whereas others may only show their eyes. Muslim men on the whole do not have specific restrictions on their dress although they are strongly encouraged to wear a beard. Again, interpretations as to what constitutes a beard vary...

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/religion-belief-hr-2.html>

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/religion-belief-hr-3.html>

## **CULTURE IN GLOBAL TEAMS**

The homogenous team is a thing of the past in most international organizations and companies. More and more teams are made up of people with different nationalities and therefore different cultures, languages, ideas, behaviors and ways of doing things. Some would argue that the 'international language of business' negates any communication issues within such a cross-cultural team; however those with hands-on experience of such teams would disagree. When people of different cultural backgrounds come together in any setting there will always be issues in terms of interaction. This is because they bring with them their own cultural baggage in terms of how they do things and expect things to be done. Cross-cultural issues will not always be a hindrance, in fact they can many a time be a force for positive creativity, but as and when a clash of cultures occur it has a negative impact, especially within a team...

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/culture-global-teams.html>

## **CROSS CULTURAL INTERVIEWS**

At this moment in time, the increase in cross border human traffic has meant that companies are no longer dealing with a homogenous native community from which they recruit their staff. Companies are now facing cross cultural challenges in how they recruit, manage and develop a multi-cultural staff. One area of note where HR and management are finding difficulties is in the interview room. With companies recruiting from a pool of candidates from different nationalities, cultures and faiths the cross cultural interview is an area that must be analyzed properly if recruiters wish to capitalize on the potential available to them. This is necessary to ensure that candidates in cross cultural interviews are not discriminated against through misperceptions and poor judgments...

Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/cross-cultural-interviews.html>

# **STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK**

'Culture shock' is used to describe the emotional rollercoaster that someone experiences when living in a new country. Anyone that has worked and lived in a foreign country will experience culture shock of some sort. Culture shock affects anyone from business personnel and their families, to EFL teachers to sports stars. Recognizing culture shock is an important way of being able to deal with it. Dealing with it helps minimize the risk of becoming disillusioned with a new country and the possibility of deciding that a quick return 'home' is the only solution. Experts agree that culture shock has stages and all agree that once people get beyond the initial and most difficult stages, life in a new country becomes a lot better. Outlined below is an example of the stages people go through with culture shock:

## **Stage 1 - Excitement**

The individual experiences a holiday or 'honeymoon' period with their new surroundings.

They:

- Feel very positive about the culture
- Are overwhelmed with impressions
- Find the new culture exotic and are fascinated
- Are passive, meaning they have little experience of the culture

## **Stage 2 - Withdrawal**

The individual now has some more face to face experience of the culture and starts to find things different, strange and frustrating.

They:

- Find the behavior of the people unusual and unpredictable
- Begin to dislike the culture and react negatively to the behavior
- Feel anxious
- Start to withdraw
- Begin to criticize, mock or show animosity to the people

## **Stage 3 - Adjustment**

The individual now has a routine, feels more settled and is more confident in dealing with the new culture.

They:

- Understand and accept the behavior of the people
- Feel less isolated
- Regains their sense of humor

## **Stage 4 - Enthusiasm**

The individual now feels 'at home'.

They:

- Enjoy being in the culture
- Functions well in the culture
- Prefer certain cultural traits of the new culture rather than their own
- Adopt certain behaviors from the new culture

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Source: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/cultureshock-stages.html>

# A Glance at Asian & Singapore Culture & Etiquette

Presented by  
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29 January 2009

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- Disclaimer for this Presentation
- Statistics on Singapore
- Culture Shock?
- Awkward Cultural Mistake?
- Basic Social Etiquette
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- Concluding Remarks

# Define Asia

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- **Central Asia:**

Monogolia; Russia, Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan

- **South Asia:**

The Subcontinent of South Asia; India; Pakistan; Nepal

- **Northeast Asia**

China (and including Hong Kong); Taiwan; North Korea; South Korea; Japan; Taiwan

- **Southeast Asia:**

Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei; Cambodia; Laos; China; Indonesia; Laos; Malaysia; Maldives; Myanmar; Papa new Guinea' Philippines; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Vietnam

# Map of Asia



# Singapore, a part of Southeast Asia



# Asia at a Glance

- **3 Largest Nation:** Russia, China, & India
- **Former Communist State:** Russia, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma/Myanmar
- **Current Communist Nations:** China
- **Christianized Nation:** Philippines (R.C.)
- **Islamic Nations:** Malaysia; Indonesia
- **Buddhist Nations:** Thailand, Burma, Japan, Nepal, Sri Lanka
- **Confucianist Nation:** Taiwan (debatable)
- **Strong Chinese Religious Representation in these Nations:** Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore
- **Others:** India (Strong Hindu, and Buddhist influence)

# The Lion City of Singapore

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- The Story of “Singapura”



# The Singapore Skyline at the Central Business District Area

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- A Clean and Green City – A “Fine” Society



# National Statistics & Data (June 2008)

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- Total Population:  
4.839 millions, of which are  
3.642 millions Singapore  
Citizens & PR.
- National Flower: Vanda Ms  
Joachim
- Land Area: 682 sq. km.
- Temperature: 73 - 88FH
- Population:  
75% Chinese; 13.7% Malays;  
8.7% Indians; 2.6% others.



# Language & Education

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- Official Language: Malay
- Business / Administration / Educational Language: English
- Literacy Rate: 94.2%
- Of which, 56.7% has Secondary Education & above (from @15 onwards)
- Reputable international standing for its Tertiary Educational Institutions

# Religions in Singapore –at a glance

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■ Buddhism	42.5 %
■ Chinese Religions	8.5 %
■ Christianity	14.6 %
■ Hinduism	4.0 %
■ Islam	14.9 %
■ No Religions	14.8 %
■ Others	0.6 %

# Snapshots of Some Chinese Customs and Festivals

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- Chinese Lunar New Year
- The worship of the 'Monkey God'
- Hungry Ghost Festival



# Buddhism in Singapore

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- A Buddhist Temple in Singapore



# A Buddhist Religious Event



# A Buddhist Religious Event



# A Buddhist Religious Event

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# Christianity at a glance

## Appendix 1: Breakdown of Christian Population in Singapore

- taken from *Operation World*, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition, 2001, p.566.

Catholic	37 congregations;	104,895 members;	150,000 affiliates
Methodist	43 congregations;	30,000 members;	56,000 affiliates
Independent	117 cong.	22,000 members;	48,000 affiliates
Anglican	57 cong.	18,000 members;	42,000 affiliates
Assemblies of God	46 cong.	13,877 members;	41,060 affiliates
Bible Presbyterian	30 cong.	7,500 members;	19,000 affiliates
Baptist Convention	31 cong.	6,761 members;	17,000 affiliates
Christian Brethren	22 cong.	6,500 members;	13,000 affiliates
Presbyterian	43 cong.	6,800 members;	13,000 affiliates
Faith Community Baptist	10 cong.	5,000 members;	11,000 affiliates
City Harvest	3 cong.	6,785 members;	11,000 affiliates
Other Independent	25 cong.	3,000 members;	5,700 affiliates
Trinity Christian Centre	5 cong.	3,125 members;	5,000 affiliates
Lutheran	7 cong.	2,400 members;	4,500 affiliates
Seventh-day Adventist	6 cong.	2,240 members;	4,000 affiliates
CNEC-churches	10 cong.	1,500 members;	3,500 affiliates
Evangelical Free	10 cong.	1,100 members;	3,200 affiliates
Other Denominations	93 cong.	12,400 members;	22,000 affiliates

# Sunday Worship Service with the Methodist Church in Singapore

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- Paya Lebar Chinese Methodist Church
- Choir picture from another Methodist Church



# A Mega-Youth Worship Service at City Harvest Church

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# A Mega-Youth Seminar organized by the City Harvest Church at The Singapore Indoors Stadium

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# Hinduism in Singapore

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- Sri Mariamman Temple



# Hinduism in Singapore

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- The Thaipusam



# Hinduism in Singapore

- Praying in the temple during the Deepavali festival
- Offering of the body during the Thaipusam festival



# Hinduism in Singapore

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- **Thaipusam Preparation, a shot inside the Hindu Temple**



# Islam in Singapore

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*Sultan Mosque*

The Sultan Mosque of  
Singapore

# Islam in Singapore

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- Visiting during Hari-Raya
- Malay Schools



# Culture Shock???

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- 1. Bubble Gum Sales
- 2. Singlish
- 3. No Refills (of drinks) in fastfood outlets

# Awkward 'Cultural Mistake'

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- 1. Face-value meaning in conversations?
- 2. Wearing shoes in someone's home
- 3. Homogeneity of all races?
- 4. Addressing acquaintances?
- 5. Casual remarks on meeting up?
- 6. Giving of hugs and kisses?

# Basic Social Etiquette

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- 1. Appropriate & inappropriate gifts
- 2. Reciprocation of gifts
- 3. Opening gifts before giver(s)
- 4. Social protocol on timing for events
- 5. Chinese seating protocol for seat-down meals
- 6. playing with your fingers

# Business Etiquette

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- 1. Symbolism of Numbers
- 2. Concept of Time
- 3. Gifts
- 4. Small Talks
- 5. Malaysian Business 101
- 6. Chinese Biz Relationships
- 7. Chinese Negotiation Tools

# Concluding Remarks

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- 1. Forgiving towards westerners?
- 2. Air-Conditioned Society
- 3. Efficiency, Effectiveness & Convenience
- 4. Availability of Cosmopolitan food?
- 5. Vibrant night life?
- 6. Medical & Pre-scheduled appointments
- 7. Brick houses / apartment?

# Some Prayer Items

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- 1. That the materially blessed Christians in Singapore would hunger for more of God and walk with Him!
- 2. That the Christians in Singapore will be FAITHFUL and CREATIVE witnesses in the midst of religious pluralism, and to operate wisely whilst complying with the Religious Harmony Act.
- 3. That we will not become too comfortable with the peace and prosperity God has given to Singapore, but that we would be the salt and blazing light for Him, i.e., to take up our role as the "Antioch" people of global Christian missions, and be exemplary in our efforts to reach those from the different strata of our society, allowing them to experience God's love!

# Conclusion

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- Please Keep in Touch:

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- Thanks & God Bless!

## Comparative Cultural Etiquette

Please give us your [feedback](#).