

TRAINING

THE HUMAN SIDE OF BUSINESS

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T RAINING TODAY



Foreign nationals have to acquire that skill to get a word in edge-wise with chatterhead Yanks, charges Morio Itozu, an associate with G. Douglas Lipp & Associates, an intercultural consulting firm

in Fair Oaks, CA.

"American communication style is like a basketball game—everybody chasing each other," Itozu told a session at the American Society for Training and Development's annual conference in Dallas in June.

Itozu, who was born and raised in Tokyo, thought a decade of studying English would make him a fluent speaker. But, he says, he has one more step to go: "I have to develop the skill of interrupting."

He already has some skill at fending off interruptions as Americans break into his discourse. "No, no. Wait," he tells them. "I'm not finished."

The lesson for those plying foreign markets or hosting business visitors is: Slow down. Shut up. Listen.

Some other pointers from Lipp & Associates on lowering cultural barriers:

- Even during a pause, wait. The other person may be translating what you just said.
- Allow extra time. On intercultural work teams, plan to spend up to quadruple the time on projects that you would for same-language speakers.
- Speak clearly in a normal tone of voice. Some-

times people think if they raise their voice they will somehow increase comprehension. Don't shout. And use proper grammar. Don't use slang, and no "baby talk."

- Use simple sentences with one idea per sentence. Rephrase if the meaning isn't clear.

- Draw pictures, graphs and maps to help others understand.

- Don't be afraid to ask for the spelling of a name or meaning of a word if you're not sure.

- Focus your inquiries: "Please describe the section of the invoice you do not understand."

- Summarize key points and confirm that others understand by politely asking them to repeat their version of what has been discussed.

- Don't just "be yourself." Adapt yourself to the ways of those around you. Find a local "culture buddy" to act as your mentor.

GOING GLOBAL? STIFLE YOURSELF!

When is 10 years of English not enough? When you haven't learned the proud American practice of interrupting.

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