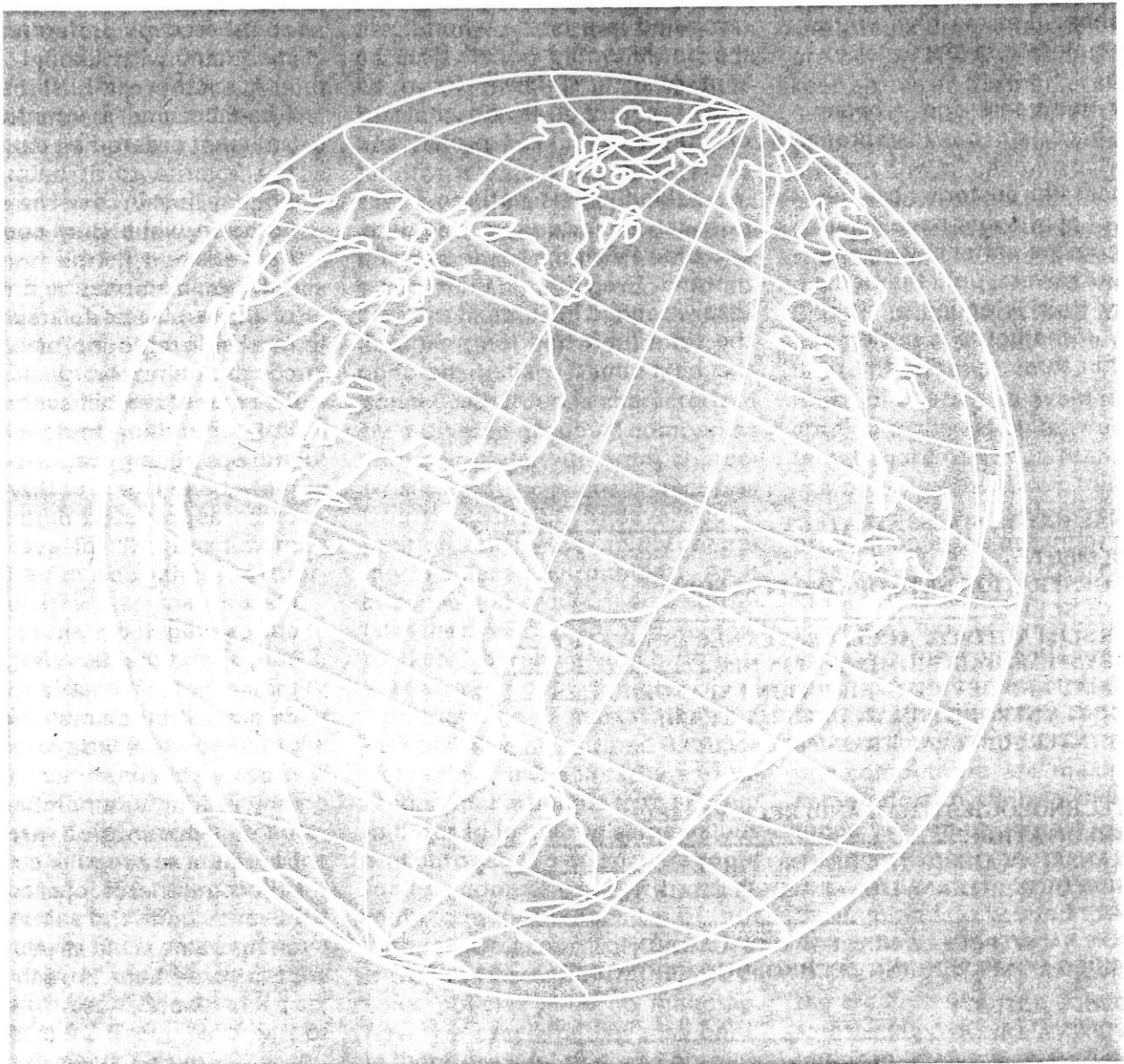


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BUILDING A STRONG MULTICULTURAL TEAM: HOW INTERCULTURAL TRAINING CAN HELP

BY DOUG LIPP, NECEL ROSEVILLE

Research shows that even the most successful business people, armed with impressive professional and educational credentials, will be likely to fail if they conduct business in a foreign environment the same way they did in their home environment. This can result in a frustrating experience for both the local employee and visiting "foreigner."

For the past three years, NEC Electronics, Inc., Roseville, California, U.S.A., has been providing two different intercultural training programs to help employees maximize the benefit of our culturally-diverse workforce. One is known as "Teamwork In a Multicultural Environment" (TIME). The other program is entitled "Business Relations With the Japanese" (BRWJ). The objective of the TIME program is to teach managers from many different cultural backgrounds to use a new set of communication and teambuilding skills in the context of the multicultural environment at NECEL. A detailed overview of TIME was presented in the May, 1989 issue of **NEC Management News**. The following is an overview of the BRWJ program.

The BRWJ program focuses specifically on how the American employees of NECEL can be more effective when working with the Japanese. BRWJ was originally designed to help the American engineering staff of NECEL be more productive when they took business trips to Japan to work with their Japanese counterparts. Since BRWJ was developed, however, a total of 155 American employees of NECEL, including production operators, engineers, technicians and managers have participated

in the program. Many of these participants never travel to Japan, but still learn a lot about how to effectively interact with their Japanese counterparts, managers and vendor companies. The objectives of BRWJ are: 1) to understand the consequences of combining a culturally diverse workforce, 2) develop skills to bridge culture gaps and, 3) how to more effectively work with their Japanese counterparts. The BRWJ course is a 16-hour program and has been conducted in various formats to meet the needs of the trainees.

Material covered in the program includes: 1) intercultural communication skills, 2) cultural relativity, 3) Japanese decision making, conflict resolution and motivation styles, and 4) survival skills such as: language, health & safety tips, transportation and lodging information. Particular care regarding survival skills and how to deal with the phenomenon of culture shock is given to employees scheduled to go to Japan on business trips. The program is led by a bi-cultural team of two NECEL employees. A combination of experiential training techniques, critical incidents and role-plays, followed by debriefing sessions were used extensively to increase participants' self-awareness, their awareness of other cultures and their openness to accept unfamiliar management styles.

The chart shows the results of a study conducted to check the effectiveness of BRWJ. Pre-program and post-program tests were given to two groups to check their knowledge of key intercultural communication strategies and how to use them on the job. The ex-

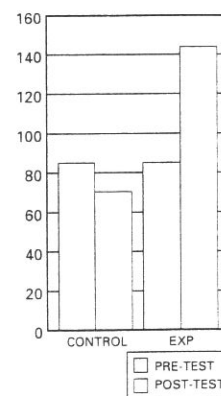
perimental group took the pre-test immediately before participating in BRWJ and the post-test after completing the program. The control group was given the same pre and post-tests but never participated in the BRWJ program.

On a scale of 35 (low) to 175 (high), participants in the control group scored a mean of 69.6 on the post-test. This was significantly different from participants in the experimental group. They scored a mean of 143.6.

Recent research has demonstrated that for expatriate managers in companies in Europe, Japan and the United States, the use of intercultural training programs significantly increased the expatriates' ability to function effectively in a foreign environment. But, based upon the results of the BRWJ program, it can also be argued that employees in foreign subsidiaries also stand to benefit from intercultural training even if they don't travel overseas, since they might be working in an environment which is essentially "foreign." Intercultural training can be a valuable tool to help people become more effective when working in an environment where many cultures are combined.

If you have any questions about these programs, please contact the Human Resources Dept. at NEC Electronics, Inc., U.S.A. Tel. 916-786-3900 ext. 4654.

PRE-TEST VS.
POST-TEST



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