I N T R O D U C T I O N
By: Doug Lipp

From *The Changing Face of Today's Customer*

 "Think globally to sell locally" could easily be the title of this book. It is about providing good customer service to individuals from different cultures. It is also about building and maintaining a culturally diverse group of employees that can serve these customers. It does not mean you have to take your business overseas to expose yourself to multiple cultures, overseas has come to you. There continues to be a tremendous influx in the number of immigrants to the North American continent and the people who make up these many cultures are your potential customers and employees. Many have already browsed through your stores, worked for you, visited your websites, contacted your customer service call centers and purchased your products. The question is: are you doing what it takes to both attract and keep them? Some companies are, some companies aren't. This book shares examples of cross-cultural success and failure, and introduces a number of strategies to ensure long-term success in this new era of a shrinking business globe. There is one prerequisite, however. You must be open to re-thinking your notions of what makes a business, product or leader successful.

We are exposed to the following words on a daily basis: *customer service*, *leadership*, *management* and *international business*. They are quite familiar, so most of us have opinions about what they mean. In fact, in the 30-plus years that I have been in business, I have yet to come across a person who doesn't have his or her own strong definition of the meaning of these words and how they can be applied on the job. Of course, having a good understanding of these words or concepts is not a guarantee of effective application in the workplace. As a result, we have a tremendous number of books, university courses, business seminars and other educational materials devoted to these topics. There has been a generous overlapping of the research of academicians with the real-time experiences of thousands of professional managers and industry leaders. As a result, those who have the desire to learn more about these concepts can explore any number of sources, ranging from scholarly tomes brimming with the results of empirical research about how to build and maintain one's business, to anecdotal articles extolling the virtues of certain management styles, written by any number of well known business leaders with years' of experience. In essence, there is an abundance of time-tested models of business excellence for us to examine, learn from and apply, if we so desire.

Now, consider a second set of words: *intercultural communication*, *culture, cross-cultural communication* and *multicultural effectiveness*. In the past decade, these have popped up with increasing frequency in the mass media, business schools, various forms of entertainment, and even elementary schools. Yet, more often than not, people react to these words with a look of puzzlement. Many have a vague idea of the meaning of the words themselves, perhaps they even attended a course or read a book about "something dealing with cross-cultural communication", yet are caught flat footed about how to apply them in the workplace. Unfortunately, relative to the first set of words, there has not been the rich sharing of research, and it's application, between the worlds of academia and business with this second set of words and concepts. The result? A general lack of understanding about what intercultural effectiveness is and how it plays out in the workplace. To be sure, there are vast numbers of wonderful books and articles, written by scholars and life-long students of intercultural communication, that are full of useful information…as long as you can understand what is being said. Rich with research results, data

and scholarly analysis, much of the information in these books and articles is hard to decipher, harder yet to apply on the job.

My goal is to blend the worlds of academic research and business practicality into a book that is accurate in it's message, compelling to read and useful as a tool to help you implement new, culturally appropriate, strategies. Those who accept the global nature of domestic business, then take steps to adjust, will realize tremendous opportunities to expand their businesses beyond traditional customer and employee groups. It means, however, being willing to take a fresh look at one's product, service or leadership approach from a new perspective, a *cultural* perspective. I hope this book helps in that regard.

D OUG L IPP
November, 2006, Sacramento, California