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# **Cross-Cultural Communication in Ukraine**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Many international companies are actively opening their offices and branches in the territory of Ukraine. Very often the heads of these missions are foreign managers. They apply their knowledge and skills, but do not receive the expected result. All this is explained by the Ukrainian mentality. For Ukrainian nation personal development means almost nothing without recognizing by society; that is why Ukrainian nation greatly differs from Westerners. This fact is one of the main features of motivation of Ukrainian people. All researchers note main peculiarities of the Ukrainian mentality: merging in the form of cross-culture traditions of the eastern and western cultures, gathering aspects of individualism of each Ukrainian and collectivism of Ukrainian society. The specificity of the business with Ukrainian partners has a number of key reasons, and first of all historical, regional peculiarities of the country and polychromic culture of Ukraine. Knowledge of these cultural features of the Ukrainian business will allowed Western managers to avoid problems and conflicts on the territory of this country.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Scientific knowledge and practical skills in cross-cultural communication in the process of the dialogue between different business cultures are main parts of professional level of the specialist in public relations.

Attention to cultural roots and national characteristics of others, both in society and in business, would anticipate the reaction of our interlocutors, avoid possible mistakes, and use cultural differences as the benefit of organizing and planning our business. Practical knowledge of the basic features of different cultures (as well as our own) helps partners understand each other, and appreciate advantages of other cultures, and understand some national features, which seemed previously disabled [1].

Therefore the purpose of the present research is systematization and analyzing the major cross-cultural features of communication with Ukrainian nation to minimize the problems, conflicts and barriers of doing business in Ukraine.

## **2 FEATURES OF UKRAINIAN BUSINESS CULTURE**

In the spectrum of business cultures can be divided two poles: the Western business culture and Eastern business culture. Typical Western cultures include the Euro-American and Western business cultures. The most typical East - Business Culture is Asia and Eastern (Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the countries of Islam). Features of these types of business cultures have historical, religious and general cultural background.

Ukraine is situated geographically between East and West. Business culture of this country has an intermediate position between the Western and Eastern cultures according to the number of parameters (individualism / collectivism, hierarchy / egalitarianism, etc.) [2].

Today Ukraine is the biggest country in Europe, with the population of 47,6 million (that has a grave tendency for declining due to the low birth-rate and massive work immigration to Italy, Spain, Portugal, the U.S. and Russia). To the east and northeast of Ukraine is Russia; to the west are Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Ukraine's strategic geographical position in ancient periods as well as nowadays has made it a cross-road between the East and West of Europe [2].

For centuries Ukraine was dominated and fought over by a succession of powers. Independence was declared in 1991, but many want to revive closer associations with Russia – an issue that will long remain central to Ukrainian politics. When the Communist Party was banned, its leaders metamorphosed into nationalists, but the old state apparatus and bureaucracy was transplanted into the multi-party democratic system. The failure thus far of democratic mechanisms to achieve economic reform has caused many to remember nostalgically the Communist era [3].

Ukraine is poorer than most countries in Europe, but its market economy has been growing fast since 2000 after years of depression following the collapse of the Soviet Union's command economy. During this collapse, industrial production dropped more than during the Great Depression in the United States. This caused millions of Ukrainians to emigrate to western countries in search of work and a better life. Now things are getting better — especially in the big cities — and some Ukrainian emigrants have been moving back.

Today there are quite a few rich people, but most of the country remains poor, and there is a small but growing middle class [2].

In order to grow the level of efficiency of business with Ukrainian partners Western managers should know and understand Ukrainian culture, history and mentality of this nation.

## 2.1 “Ukraine is not Russia”

First, what Western managers must know that: “Ukraine is not Russia.” This is a frequent phrase Ukrainians have to remind foreigners. Most people outside Ukraine erroneously believe that Ukraine is a part of Russia. But Russian and Ukrainian are two different Slavic languages.

The history of these two nations is inextricably interwoven as both trace their roots back to the great state of Kyivan Russ that was emerged in the 9th century. During centuries Ukraine was colonized by other countries: Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Poland, and has been independent since August 24, 1991. Nowadays Ukraine has its own territory, government, national emblem, flag and anthem [3]. But Ukraine and Russian are used roughly equally across Ukraine. While the official state language of Ukraine is Ukrainian, the preferred spoken language in most cities of southern, eastern, and northern Ukraine is Russian.

In Kiev and many other regions use of Ukrainian has been increasing and instruction in most schools is in Ukrainian. The percentage of people speaking Ukrainian “on the street” is about 30% in Kiev, 40-80% in Zhytomyr, Vinnytsya, Khmelnytsky, and Chernivtsi, 5-10% in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odessa, 1-5% in Crimea, Donetsk, and Lugansk, and 80-98% in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil. Rural areas have a significantly higher concentration of Ukrainian speakers and speakers of “Surzhyk” (Ukrainian mixed with Russian), however, the most literary Ukrainian is spoken by educated individuals in the cities.

Ukrainian tends to be spoken at government institutions and is the language of most official events. Russian is often more popular in business, where pragmatism reigns. In certain areas of business — for example, programming — Russian is clearly predominant. In fact 80% of Ukrainian websites are in Russian. Most university and school instruction is in Ukrainian, even in many areas where Russian speakers predominate. [<http://globalpolitician.com/26297-ukraine/>]

### *“Hutoryanstvo”*

The most characteristic feature which can distinguish the Ukrainians from other Slavs is “hutoryanstvo” as a natural state of the Ukrainian nation [3]. Explanation of this feature we can find in historical and geographical characteristics of the country.

Ukraine is a mostly flat or rolling country with fertile plains which are heavily farmed and some forests in the north.

Due to favorable climatic conditions, Ukraine is traditionally an agricultural area. It grows wheat, maize, buckwheat and other corn, red and green vegetables, all kinds of fruit, melons and berries.

The mentality of the national farmer is described in this way:

Farmer finds himself quite smart, and even if he is not very clever, he is really "wise". His intelligence and wisdom are manifested in the ability to avoid real or imaginary risk and unnecessary work. Farmer hates authority at home, but at a meeting with the object of hate (official) is welcoming and wishing him good health. This farmer is eliminated from participation in solving social problems, lives on the principle: "none of my business" [3].

He often shunned by brave and enterprising people, seeing in them a hidden danger to their well-being, and that is why he is trying to keep away from them. He does not understand the action and courageous people. His conclusions are [3]:

"If I am afraid, why did not he afraid of?"

"If I can not decide why he is solved?"

"It is better to be wise and cautious than courageous and broken."

Consequences of this natural state of the Ukrainian nation are:

- (1) Individualism which is the mental factor of individuality of Ukrainian nation gather with collectivism as feeling of self in the society, which is a result of history of colonialism of Ukraine.

All researchers note the peculiarity of the mentality of Ukrainians: pragmatism, individualism, emotional disinclination to massive contamination and actions, and the stability of the electoral reactions [3]. But at the same moment, all researchers note that the most important for this nation is recognizing and respecting by others. Actually in majority of situations only when somebody tells Ukrainian that he or she did well, they start feeling they really did well [4]. Social nature of Ukrainians shows itself also in the way they determine the status of the person. Even nowadays when material success means quite a lot for each person, high position in the social rank appreciated often much higher than other factors [2,3].

The other index of collectivist nature of Ukrainians is that they work mainly in teams. Majority of decisions, from the routine to the vitally important ones, are made after numerous consultations and meetings, in which great number of people in organization participate. In most of Ukrainian organizations it is rather hard to find people who dare to handle the entire process of decision-making on their own.

Opposite to Western culture in Ukraine self – actualization needs, as A. Maslow named them, are not the top of hierarchy of the person's needs. The most important for this nation are esteem needs, which mean not even feeling of self – respect, they are feeling of being recognized and respected by others.

- (2) And finally we can state that Ukrainians, as well as other representatives of collectivist nations, are very hospitable. Their hearts and their doors are always opened for friends or just people who attract them. Their need to be liked and appreciated by somebody else has its addition – when Ukrainians have a choice they deal only with people whom they like personally [2, 4].
- (3) Love for freedom, but agreement on subordination because of profit, "economic", hard working (for self interests). Historically the Ukrainian ethnos was formed in specific conditions, and till now exists with poetic elements of mythology. Ukrainian forest-steppe landscapes, distant horizons, which raise the waves of dreams, sensuality, passivity and carelessness and at the same time, grow the tendency to receive freedom and anarchy.
- (4) Tolerance, Ukrainians prefer to follow by the call of their hearts, to be very emotional people with domination of feelings and emotions.

## 2.2 Time

Cross-cultural differences between East and West can be seen in their relation to the time [5, 6]. There are there different groups of cultures (Tab. 1):

- (1) Monochromic – linear quantitative time; time is divided quite naturally into segments; it is scheduled and compartmentalized, making it possible for a person to concentrate on one thing at a time (USA, UK, Germany, and North Europe)
- (2) Polychromic – cyclical time unraveling and unlimited continuity; time is perceived as being almost tangible: people talk about it as though it were money, as something that can be "spent," "saved," "wasted," and "lost" (Latin America, the countries of Islam, Ukraine, Russia).
- (3) Reactive – combination of two previous styles; activity is organized not by a strict and invariable plan, depending on the changing context as a reaction to these changes (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore).

**Table 1** Specifics of the time-management

Monochromic	Polychromic	Reactive
Systematic planning future	Planning only in general terms	Adapts schedule partners
One thing does at one time	Makes several things do at once	Reacts to situations
Works in a fixed time Doing in time	Works at any time Can be late	Considers all possibilities
Subordinating schedules and schedule	Schedule unpredictable	It does not take quick decisions - he must think
Breaks down projects into phases	Gives projects overlap	
Strictly follows by the plans	Changes plans	Introduces light adjustment

Ukraine and Russia are the most polychromic countries in the world.

Polychromic time is characterized by the simultaneous occurrence of many things and by a great involvement with people. There is more emphasis on completing human transactions than on holding to schedules. For example, two polychromic Latins or Ukrainians conversing on a street corner would likely opt to be late for their next appointment rather than abruptly terminate the conversation before its natural conclusion. Polychromic time is experienced as much less tangible as monochromic time and can better be compared to a single point than to a road [5].

Polychromic people feel that private space disrupts the flow of information by shutting people off from one another. In polychromic systems, appointments mean very little and may be shifted around even at the last minute to accommodate someone more important in an individual's hierarchy of family, friends, or associates. Some polychromic people (such as Ukrainians) give precedence to their large circle of family members over any business obligation. Polychromic people also have many close friends and good clients with whom they spend a great deal of time. The close links to clients or customers creates a reciprocal feeling of obligation and a mutual desire to be helpful [5].

## 3 CONCLUSION

Thus, the prospect of developing international business interaction lies in the way of a clash of cultures in the formation, but rather to identify and strengthen their universal moral foundation based on common international business culture. In other words, pay attention should not only that differentiates people, but also on what unites them.

This research highlights the main features of Ukrainian nation, such as the synthesis of individualism and collectivism, the prosecution only self interests, extroverted and emotional nation and polychromic according to the way of organizing time.

The main directions of future researches will be identification of the main advantages of the Ukrainian mentality for use in business as comparative pros of this nation.

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