

Governing Energy



Gaming Culture

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One of the great challenges global sectors serving critical infrastructures is the multi-faceted nature of the individuals involved. For example, one project in the Middle East was composed of individuals from Russia, China, several Middle East countries, India and was managed by an American.

According to that manager, it was important not only that a common “project language” be developed so the job could get finished in a timely manner but that communication at a deeper level was also facilitated. This second concern was largely about safety.

We have discussed cross cultural behaviors and gaming from time to time in this blog series. However, given the current nature of global energy projects with their cost and time pressures, it may be worth restating the Cross-Cultural training requirement in economic terms.

No one wants a project to fail or greatly exceed costs and delivery comments. However, there is a large body of evidence regarding Mega-project (\$1 billion +) failures and much of the comments revolve around complexity, planning, change management and unforeseen events.¹

We would like to add to his mix, *poor communications*. We humans are particularly good at miscommunication amongst ourselves. Apparently, since we have been doing it for eons it is part of the human condition.

Part of this confusion arises in our belief we understand Relationships well. In fact, we do not. Some of this error stems from our understanding that we can determine (measure) a relationship directly.

Against a measurable Condition, we can observe Behaviors. For example, if one sees two people in a meeting (condition), assumptions can be made. Are they two coworkers, a buyer and seller or others? A determination of their relationship will be made by one's background and biases.

It is only when we understand their behavior can better assumptions about their Relationship be made. Even then, they may and often are incorrect. The 'jump to conclusions' matter.

When a group of individuals interacting on a project (large or small) this RBC model maybe on 'steroids' so to speak. The multi-cultural biases and this miscommunications contribution to the 'reasons' for project failure may make them *fate accompli*.

There is also a significant body of work regarding cross cultural interactions. Some are as simple as how not to be the so-called ugly American abroad (lot of myth) and some are thoughtful assessments of the issue.

These interactions are complex and often not logical. How then can one address this issue in a commercial setting?

There are many consultants who can provide any number of workshops, training and tools to assist organizations. However, how often do individuals quickly forget the lessons learned.

Educators have recognized the value of Serious Games and Gamification to the learning process. As such, most learning models incorporate these tools as part of instruction.

Effectively, the cross-cultural interactions discussed herein are actually Cross-Cultural Negotiations.ⁱⁱ For every interaction is a function of one individual/team putting forward his or her position or perspective on an issue in the project.

The result of any discussion of this nature can have two outcomes. One side either capitulates or takes offense and the other thinks they 'won.' In reality, both lose and the project is negatively impacted.

The other perspective is the "Win-Win" where both arrive at a go forward plan in agreement. This does not mean that adjusts will not have to be made, but it is a good starting point.

When the organization's personnel and supply chain ecosystem parties are well trained in Cross Cultural Negotiations, success is more likely.ⁱⁱⁱ In today's environment of Operational Excellence it makes sense to incorporate this type of program into the organization and all its projects.^{iv} After all, all participants in an operation or project are rewarded for success!

People learn best when they are wholly immersed in the training program. Experience has shown that in a cross-cultural negotiation Serious Game, the learning sticks and is immediately applicable.

How Does Your Organization Get Its Bang for Its Training Buck?

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Additional details are available from the author.

About the Author

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End Notes

ⁱ <https://ipolitics.ca/2014/09/16/why-do-oil-and-gas-projects-keep-blowing-their-budgets/>

ⁱⁱ Shemwell, Scott M. (1996). Cross Cultural Negotiations between Japanese and American Businessmen: A Systems Analysis, (Exploratory Study). Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://therrinstitute.com/serious-gaming/>

^{iv} <http://insights.btoes.com/achieving-sustaining-operational-excellence-from-contractors-and-their-subcontractors-2>