

# Cultural Differences Training

## Overview

Today, more and more companies in former communist countries provide services and products to Western Europe, like outsourcing, shared services centers or exporters of goods. A major challenge which they face is to deal with cultural differences.

APT's Westernization Training has helped several hundred East European employees at the basis and in lower management positions to facilitate contacts with Western partners and to increase dramatically their acceptance among Western customers. The course addresses issues which are considered essential by Western business people with working experience with East Europeans.

The first major problem area addressed concerns the handling of cultural disharmonies. People of different cultures have sometimes behaviors which are in conflict with each other. Usually each side is convinced to be right, gets confused about the other side and tries to convince it. But this is useless; because thinking, perception, judgment and behavior of both sides base on fundamentally different values, beliefs and attitudes and cannot be changed. Nobody can avoid that such disharmonies arise, but participants learn to identify them, to react appropriately and thus to minimize damage.

The second problem area in the focus is business behavior. East and West European business modes show some fundamental differences which are mostly due to pasts in different free-market respectively planned economy environments. If these differences cannot be surmounted they result in mutual distrust, exaggerated precautions, clumsy procedures and practices, obstructive control activities, and eventually they lead to inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Participants learn simple recipes which make them act in a way which is understandable and foreseeable for Western business partners, gain their trust rapidly and become more efficient and effective.

## Course Contents

### Introduction to Culture

Prior to the course participants receive APT's summary of theories of culture, which has been conceived as preliminary reading. It helps them to better understand why and how people in other regions have sometimes different behaviors. They are sensitized to cultural traps and the

benefits which they gain when making an effort to deal with such differences. Alternatively this introduction can also be taught in class in an additional day.

### **Perception of East Europeans in the West**

Participants learn how Western business people who are used to working with East Europeans perceive them. Awareness of these perceptions will help participants to identify the behaviors which must be addressed in order to disprove negative attitudes. The topic is based on extensive interviews which APT has conducted with various business representatives.

### **Western Business Behavior**

Participants learn about behavioral aspects in business which are different in most or all Western companies. Covered topics include “authoritarian behavior”, “decision taking and evidence”, “way of attacking tasks”, “working with others”, “dealing with unfavorable circumstances”, “responsibility, proactivity and initiative”, “sense of time”, “communication style”, “assertiveness and modesty”, “dealing with mistakes and excuses”, as well as aspects of normal business courtesy such as “addressing people” and “small talk”.

### **Recipes for Better Acceptance**

All along the course the participants obtain specific recipes which will help them to be better appreciated by their Western customers. These recipes address the most important aspects which are frequently criticized by Western business people. They cover questions like “What can I do that I’m not considered being slow?”, “When and how can I elegantly communicate disagreement?”, “What kind of feedback should I give my customers?”, or “How do I admit mistakes?”. Participants consolidate the recipes in various exercises and role plays.

### **Commitment**

To assure that the learning items are implemented in the daily work, the course terminates with a commitment ceremony where all participants commit to applying the recipes which they consider most helpful in their individual case.

### **Follow Up**

To make sure that the actions to which participants have committed are really put into practice, and to help participants further develop, the trainers may conduct follow up workshops after a few months.



## Summary

Type of participants::	Bottom line employees and first management levels
Number of participants:	Minimum 10, maximum 16
Duration:	One day without “Introduction to Culture” Two days with “Introduction to Culture”
Location:	To be determined (own training center available in Bucharest)
Trainer:	Experienced manager from Western Europe
Documentation:	Summary “Introduction to Culture” Copies of the presentations Various handouts

**APT International**  
**Avenue du Midi 37**  
**CH - 1700 Fribourg**

Tel : +41 26 465 12 74  
Fax : +41 26 465 12 73  
info@aptservices.biz  
www.aptservices.biz