

Unit 9: Work and Training Guidelines

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

Be aware of the following

- Guidelines in use of criticism with Middle East friends
- Arab planning process
- Arab tendency to value idealism over a realistic appraisal
 - Perspectives of many Arabs toward competition, comparisons, and the decision making process.

Identify

- Bakhshish
- Rules of Saudi Arabian hospitality
 - Practical vs. aesthetic differences in Arabic/American thought patterns

Realize

- Importance of getting to know Arab counterparts
- Differing American/Saudi Arabian perceptions to work
- Tendency to exaggeration in Middle East discourse
- Differing American/Arab perspectives on gifts, bonuses and business transactions
 - Importance of establishing friendship and using cultural etiquette when engaging in planning with Arab associates

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To many Arabs, the person they are dealing with is more important in essence than the mission or task. Impress the Arab through quiet strength and politeness. Be patient and never tackle the job at hand without adequate greetings and seeing to the other person's comfort.

In any situation in which an individual Arab is not meeting the standards set by an instructor, the following must be remembered:

- No criticism should occur in front of others.
- Loss of temper will have the opposite effect from whatever is wanted.
- The substandard performance should be discussed rather than the student's personality. Individual dignity is of prime importance and must always be respected.
- Turn any serious problem over to another Arab to handle.
 - If you have the option, train officers and enlisted men separately. An enlisted man scoring ahead of the officers in class standing means a loss of face and status for the officers concerned. Use competition to motivate trainees.

Most Arabs must know your social, professional, and academic background and age before he talks to you. He would like to know, because it matters in his world, how much influence and to what people you and your family are connected to--personal references. Do you know people in the Department of State? Officials in his country? Only after he has this information and has some time to judge you personally, will he settle down to direct business and then conduct it at times more quickly than we would for he feels he knows the important things.

This means that on arrival you **MUST** take time to let the Arabs you will be working with get to know you. This IS business, not just chit-chat as in the States.



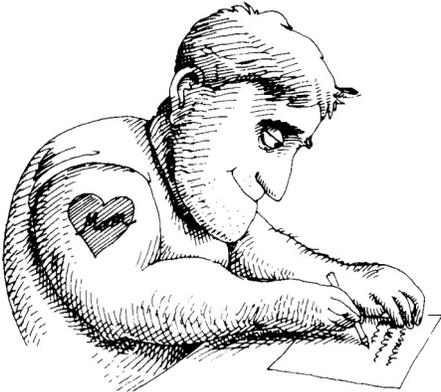
The following is an example of the differences in conducting business:

American: "I dropped by to discuss an idea with you."

Arab: "Your presence (unqualified) is welcome. Please join me in having tea."

American: "Thank you, more tea would be fine. As I was saying, this project..."

Arab: "You're enjoying your tea? We have plenty more, please..."



Many Arabs cannot afford to misjudge you. If you leak confidences when you drink, if you make "remarks" to other Americans about him or Arabs...any traits like this, you could hurt his career, his family, and his trust in you. If he misjudges you, his whole family could suffer and his position. So, naturally he will apply his learned rules to you before he settles down to sharp business bargaining.

Time and Scheduling

a. Meetings Saudi military officers and defense officials consider themselves to be professionals, although their conduct of business differs greatly from American practice. The Arab notion of time is subjective, and thus

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there is little regard for punctuality at officer calls and other such assemblies. Meetings are often delayed a half hour or more, pending the arrival of key participants. The official who convenes the meeting may have refreshments brought to the attendees as they arrive, or he may wait until shortly after the meeting starts.

In any case, there is strict adherence to the rule of hospitality. Saudis usually serve hot sweetened tea, although they sometimes offer coffee, soft drinks, or camel's milk. Any American present is expected to drink whatever refreshment is offered as he is likewise expected to endure whatever delay results from the tardiness of others. For the sake of rapport, it is best to accustom oneself to such practice.

Even once refreshments are served, there are still likely to be interruptions--again largely because of the subjective mind-set of the Arabs. For them, the meeting cannot impose its agenda over theirs.



It is not uncommon for one of the participants to stop discussions while he takes routine phone calls, releases messages, or signs orders, vouchers, or correspondence brought by orderlies. With time, the attaché may come to expect such behavior. Even so, he will still have to cope with other nuances of conducting business in Saudi Arabia. Patience is mandatory.

b. Planning In most of the Arab world the planning process is done differently. Projects are shaped in the actual situation where they will be, not shaped months and years ahead of time on paper. Commitments beyond a week or so are not as firm as we would consider them. The Muslim religion prohibits tampering with the future and also does not bind its followers to any contract which circumstances force them to agree to and which is unfavorable. As soon as possible they are obligated to break unfavorable agreements. Thus, a 99-year contract does not have the firmness it would in our own system.