Working with India

The Softer Aspects of a Successful Collaboration with the Indian IT & BPO Industry

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Preface

Most wealthy countries in the Western hemisphere are moving away from mass manufacturing and specialize in the services and knowledge industry while leaving the low-skill industries to the poorer countries in the developing world. However, India does not fall into this plan.

Today, the country is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and a leading force in the global services revolution. Its importance in the world of information technology (IT) and business process outsourcing (BPO) is growing; few people can afford to ignore the contribution of Indian software engineers, researchers, and service center agents in their projects and companies.

To be able to comprehend the scale of opportunities, it is necessary to experience India, understand the dramatic transformation of its IT and BPO industry in recent years, and get a hold of the current situation in order to shape the future. However, there is also a revolution taking place at other levels, namely in terms of attitudes and understanding. Here, we are still at a very early stage. From an intercultural perspective, we need to understand how things really work in India to benefit from the numerous business advantages the country has to offer.

Target Audience

This book is designed for managers, project leaders, and offshore coordinators who work together with Indians, either while in an office somewhere in the Western world, on a business trip to India, or on a long-term expatriate delegation to India. It is also a resource for business mangers and company strategists seeking to understand what is behind the headlines that the India IT & BPO business so frequently creates.

Content and Structure of this Book

The book opens with a description of cultural dimensions that help to break down culturally driven matters. It provides background information about India as a country and a social system. Examining the development and current status of India's IT and BPO industry, it moves on to describe the dynamics of its work-force. The book then provides practical information on how to communicate, negotiate, and interact with Indian employees and intelligently utilize expatriates. It closes by formulating recommendations for a more effective collaboration.

The chapters of this book build on each other but do not demand reading in a linear fashion. The book allows you to browse, jump, or hunt for the chapters that are most relevant to you. It is academically well researched, yet also represents an account of my personal India experience.

- *Chapter 1, Why Intercultural Competency?* reasons that in the flat world of globalization, culture plays a particularly prominent role. It breaks down the

matters that are primarily driven by culture into cultural dimensions and thereby sensitizes readers for working and communicating outside their comfort zones, i.e. outside their own familiar and trusted cultures. It shows how individuals and organizations can master the path to a better understanding of their Indian IT and BPO partners.

- *Chapter 2, India – the Country* is about the Indian subcontinent, its geography, history, government, and economy.
- *Chapter 3, The Society and Culture in India* highlights the multiple influences that form the Indian society and the cultural framework of India's IT engineers and service center agents.
- *Chapter 4, India's IT & BPO Industry* provides an overview of the development and current state of India's IT and BPO industry, scrutinizes the phenomena of overheating, examines country risk factors, and looks at the implications for managing the business continuity of companies in India.
- *Chapter 5, Human Resources* describes the dynamics of human resource management in India and concentrates on combating attrition. The chapter further focuses on the aspects of organizational hierarchy, leadership, management, and provides a three-dimensional typology of employees.
- *Chapter 6, Interactions with India* highlights the peculiarities of Indian English and illustrates the culture shock Westerners experience when they work together with Indians or travel to India for the first time. This is followed by practical advice on intercultural interaction and communication in meetings, negotiations, via emails, and on the telephone; a short overview on business and social etiquette rounds off the chapter.
- *Chapter 7, Conducting Offshore Projects* is about managing from a distance, initiating offshore projects, monitoring work progress, and transitioning from IT development to maintenance.
- *Chapter 8, Use of Expatriates* is a note on intelligent ways of utilizing expatriates, both from the Western world in India and vice versa.
- *Chapter 9, Recommendations for Effective Collaboration* closes the book by proposing five behavior changes that facilitate a more effective collaboration with the Indian IT & BPO industry.

Many intercultural challenges and hurdles lie in the way of a successful partnership with India. However, the opportunities for effectively utilizing global delivery models are great. I sincerely hope this book and my experience narrated herein will help you in your collaboration with the Indian IT and BPO industries.

Enjoy the book!

Wolfgang Messner