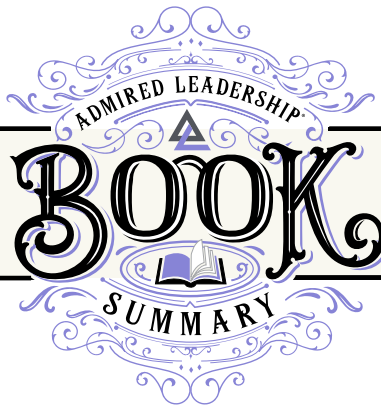




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours

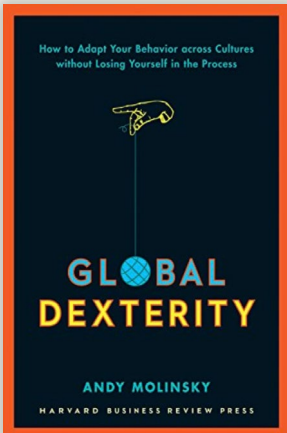


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Global Dexterity

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Professor and writer Andy Molinsky argues that we've been approaching the challenge of cross-cultural communication the wrong way. When traveling to different countries or working in foreign offices, we bear down and cram in our minds as much information as we can about the new culture, eventually becoming overwhelmed and sometimes finding ourselves living at odds with our sense of authenticity or our values. In his book **Global Dexterity**, Molinsky gives us the tools to communicate fluidly across cultures by teaching us how to evaluate a new culture and adjust our behavior in smart and creative ways that are both winning to others and authentic to our own values.

Key Quote

"Adapting behavior is not pure accommodation: it's about creative improvisation. It's about finding a way to creatively adjust how you behave so that you can create a compromise or hybrid version of a behavior that achieves the best of both worlds. It's being personally comfortable while also being professionally effective" (p. 176). — **Andy Molinsky**

Key Points

Introduction to Global Dexterity. In a new culture, you don't need to immediately and wholly mimic new cultural norms. You can reach out in a way that people understand while still holding to our values. If you can understand and embrace the range of behavior you prefer to operate in and also identify the range of behavior deemed appropriate in that culture, you can then begin to "stretch" your own comfort zone of behavior to find a place of common ground with the new norms.

Psychological Challenges of Developing Global Dexterity. Three types of challenges face people seeking to find their way in a new culture: finding the competency to participate in a way that suits the new environment, finding a path to being authentic and loyal to one's values, and avoiding resentment for having to change and adapt. To meet these, first learn to assess which of these challenges you are facing (and to what degree).

Diagnose the New Cultural Code. To get started in a new culture, evaluate each of the following six dimensions of communication within that culture: "directness, enthusiasm, formality, assertiveness, self-promotion, and personal disclosure" (p. 50). In addition to national cultural codes, remember to assess regional, company-wide, and individual codes.

Identify Your Own Challenges with the New Cultural Code. Determine which aspects of these six dimensions in the new culture are going to hold the biggest personal challenge for you.

Overcome Challenges by Customizing Your Cultural Behavior. "Make small but personally meaningful adjustments" to help you begin to "infuse" yourself into a new culture in culturally appropriate ways (p. 86).

Integrate What You Have Learned Through Rehearsal and Evaluation. Familiarize yourself with the new behavior you have learned, practice the new behavior, and then take it out for a spin in the outside world! Seek both external feedback from a cultural mentor and internally ask yourself how you felt about your performance.

Charting Your Progress Over Time. List your new cultural behaviors and assess them in terms of authenticity and competence. Address authenticity issues by fine-tuning the behavior with "customization" techniques that make it more suitable to your values. Address competency by practicing the new behavior in lower-stress domains and then building up to more intense ones.

Getting Others to Forgive Your Cultural Mistakes.

Some locales are more forgiving of foreigners' cultural missteps than others. It can often help others overlook mistakes if you have signaled your foreignness to others, shown a genuine interest in the new culture, and built relationships with people.

Finding a Cultural Mentor. Choose people to model your behavior after carefully, so you don't mistakenly emulate someone who is a poor example. Watch various people in the culture and observe how others in the culture respond to them before emulating a particular person. Finding someone you can trust who will give valuable feedback and empathize will help you adapt.

Choosing Whether or Not to Adapt Your Behavior.

Some cultural behaviors may go against your own deeply held personal beliefs, and you may decide to accept the collateral damage you receive for not adapting to them. And some adaptations may not be morally wrong but may be bad for your business.



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Key Concepts:

THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBAL DEXTERITY

There are three core challenges to communicating effectively in a cross-cultural context:

- “The competence challenge” – Do you have the knowledge and skill to adapt?
- “The authenticity challenge” – Are you personally in conflict with how you are supposed to adapt?
- “The resentment challenge” – Do you feel burdened by having to adapt (p. 13)?

Culture is not as fluid and shapeless as we believe. To more effectively analyze cultures, we can break them down into six dimensions:

- “Directness” – How straightforward are you expected to be?
- “Enthusiasm” – How much enthusiasm can you display?
- “Formality” – To what degree do you defer to others and how visibly do you show them respect?
- “Assertiveness” – How strongly can you voice your opinion?
- “Self-promotion” – Can you be your own advocate?
- “Personal disclosure” – How much personal information can you share?

Too often, people make the mistake of thinking national differences are all that matter when working across cultures. Culture exists at every level, from the widest collective to the individual. Four factors contribute to an individual’s cultural code:

- Country Norms
- Regional Norms
- Company and Industry Norms
- Individual Differences

STRATEGIES

To be effective across cultures requires more than just knowing about the culture. It requires “the capacity to act on what you know” (p. 10).

When adapting to another culture, the fit is not absolute. Within each culture, there is a “zone of appropriateness” that includes a range of acceptable behaviors across each dimension.

The goal is to stretch your comfort zone to at least meet the border of the “zone of appropriateness” for a given culture. To do so, follow this three-step process:

“Diagnosis” – Use the six dimensions described above (Directness, Enthusiasm, Formality, Assertiveness, Self-promotion, Personal Disclosure) to identify the most challenging aspect of the new culture for you.

“Customization” – Develop a personal rationale for why the new behavior makes sense to you and is consistent with your values.

“Integration” – Practice the new behavior so that it becomes your new normal.

Think small. Don’t try to overreach as it will both feel and come across as inauthentic. Look to make small behavioral changes that you feel confident integrating into your everyday life and which will move you into the “zone of appropriateness” (p. 87).



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Link any behavioral change you make to a personal goal so that you have a valid reason to want the change to stick.

Tie new behaviors to personal values. This will give them staying power.

Don't compromise who you are for the sake of cultural adaptation. If a behavior contradicts your core values, don't adopt it.

FORGIVING CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

People usually underestimate the ability of others to forgive cultural differences.

There are “tight” societies (e.g., Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore) that are less likely to forgive your cultural mistakes, and there are “loose” societies (e.g., France, Hong Kong, United States) that are more willing to forgive (p. 142).


Three strategies to increase the odds of being forgiven:

Show genuine interest in the other culture: Connect over something you love. For example, if you're a sports fan visiting India, demonstrate an interest in cricket.

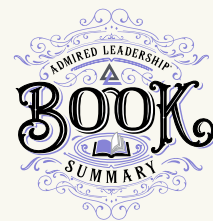

Signal foreignness: Find subtle ways to emphasize your foreignness without being over the top – it will lower expectations for cultural appropriateness.

Build relationships: It's easier to be forgiven when you have a close relationship with the person you've offended.

Molinsky, A. (2013). **Global Dexterity**.
Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press.



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