

## **NOW, MORE THAN EVER.**

### **In tough global times, only those organizations with fully developed global mindsets, and individuals with fully functioning intercultural competencies will survive.**

New Years and the inauguration have come and gone, and it's time for all the ostriches to pull their heads out of the sand, take a deep breath and face what all the holiday celebrations were helping us ignore: the miserable state of the global economy, the uncertainty of tomorrow, and how it all affects our work, jobs, and our futureS. Yes, we must now come face-to-face with the necessary and uncomfortable task of reassessing our budgets, expenses, life-styles, and perhaps more, and the first step in that process requires prioritization: what needs to stay, what must go.

Prioritization, however, can only be done successfully when we fully understand what is essential and what is not. For those of us involved in working across cultures, managing virtual global teams, selling or sourcing around the world, or responsible for moving individuals and operations to and between other countries, the global economic downturn puts the development of intercultural skills and competencies front and center as the number one priority to advance. In a world where we see the economies of traditionally stable and advanced nations of the "first world" shake and tumble, while capital flows to newly emergent economies of the former "developing world", where your organization's greatest arena of growth, opportunity and profit is not in its domestic operations, but in its emerging international markets, where the ability to manage people, projects and resources virtually in foreign lands is a far more important skill than the ability to get along with the folks at the water cooler down the hall, then priorities have indeed shifted. And maintaining and developing the skills required to manage in this new world become the most pressing task for any organization that is planning to thrive over the next five, ten or a hundred years. In short, in this current global economic environment, an organization that does not put resources into developing a fully functioning global mindset, and individuals with a fully functioning set of intercultural competencies, will fail. Those organizations who do make the development of these skills and this mindset a number one priority will prevail over those that don't.

But you already know this, right? You already have programs to develop intercultural competencies, your group already provides for and manages intercultural training programs for global teams, international assignees and their families. Your leadership is already aware of the staggering risks and costs associated with any international venture, whether it is starting up a project abroad, or sending a family on an international assignment, you and your team are well aware of the costs involved. So what makes today so different?

The difference lies in the prioritization that will be required of us from this point forward. There will be pressure to identify areas where costs can be cut and where the long perspective can be replaced with the short-sighted one. Resist. Mightily. If the new reality is one where profits and growth most assuredly and more than ever emanate from and in foreign markets, then knowing how to better succeed in those markets becomes the priority. If the new reality is one where the cost of an international assignment must be justified, where the assignee simply cannot fail and must succeed, where the risks are simply that much higher today than they were

then the only way to minimize such risks and to insure the success of the mission, and the return on the enormous investment being made, is to arm those involved with the ammunition of cultural understanding and competency.

Now, more than ever. Growth, profit and opportunity is in the global playspace. The economic crisis has made this playspace even more expensive and risky. Now, more than ever, organizations need to insure their presence in the one area which will determine their future existence, and this requires, pure and simple, intercultural knowledge and skills. Or what we prefer to call, global intercultural competencies. Now, more than ever.