

UMUC Business and Executive Programs Podcasts
Executive MBA Education in the Global World

Interviewer: Dr. Nancy Gentry Glenn

Interviewee: Professor Robert Goodwin

Podcast Title: Building Effective Multicultural Alliances

Broadcast Date: March 6, 2009

Glenn: Welcome to Executive MBA Education in the Global World, a weekly podcast that features an overview and highlights of the Executive MBA Program and discussion of how the program prepares executives for today's global business environment. I'm Nancy Gentry Glenn, Director of Administration, Business and Executive Programs, your host for the day.

Our guest today is Professor Robert Goodwin, International Business Faculty and China Specialist with the Executive MBA Program. The topic for today's show is Building Effective Multicultural Alliances. Our discussion addresses Residency 3 of the Executive MBA Program, focusing on how country experts act as CEOs of foreign companies to help students identify the effects of cultural differences on global negotiations.

Professor Goodwin, what is the main goal of the Residency focus on global negotiations?

Goodwin: Well, the focus on global negotiations is to help prepare the students for the real world of business negotiations in a global context. In other words, we want to give our students the skills to negotiate globally, since such a significant portion of business activity that managers will face in the future will be global activity. This then involves a true understanding of cultures of other countries and how your culture interacts with those of others.

Glenn: And can you describe the kinds of exercises or activities that are used in this Residency to accomplish that goal?

Goodwin: Sure. We have a hypothetical case and this situation involving the pharmaceutical industry that was written by one of our professors, and we use this case as the basic framework for a simulated negotiation. What we do is we have teams of students representing companies from different cultures, such as the United States and China, or the United States and India. Each of these teams is given a set of negotiating instructions from a hypothetical CEO of their organization. The differences in the instructions from the leaders of the companies in the negotiations constitute the heart of the exercise. Let me give you a brief example. The negotiating instructions for the Chinese team might say that it's important that the son of the CEO occupy an important role in a joint venture under discussion. This reflects Chinese cultural values on family and relationships. The negotiating instructions for the US team might say that the goal should be to adopt a hiring and promotion plan that recognizes merit and avoids nepotism. Then it is the clash between these two points of view that constitute the essence of the negotiation on that issue and which the students then have to work out and find an acceptable compromise.

Glenn: And tell us a little bit about the role of the country mentor.

Goodwin: Well, the country mentor has two roles. First, he or she advises the team as it prepares for the negotiation, with the focus principally on cultural issues. For example, the country mentor for a Chinese team might advise the team how a Chinese negotiating team would likely be organized, who would take the lead in speaking, what types of greetings they would give visitors, and how

UMUC Business and Executive Programs Podcasts
Executive MBA Education in the Global World

they would likely manage the negotiating process. Second, the country mentor critiques the team performance and points out to the class of students as a whole, after the fact, just how well the team dealt with the cultural issues that arose during the negotiation process.

Glenn: How is leadership enhanced by understanding cultural differences at the negotiation table?

Goodwin: Leadership in a global context is getting people who think differently than you do to follow you. So understanding cultural differences is essential to this. You still need basic leadership skills and good ideas to be an effective leader in any context, but you can't be one in a global environment without understanding how the people that you want to influence think, what makes them think in a different way than you do, and therefore, how can you influence them to follow you in your leadership role.

Glenn: What will students take away from the Residency session that they can use in their organizations?

Goodwin: Students will learn important skills that they can apply both in global situations and in domestic ones. The Residency provides them with the knowledge and understanding of the critical role that culture can play in a basic business setting. One common shortcoming among U.S. business people is that they often approach an international discussion or negotiation by applying their intuitive understanding of how Americans think to the situation that they encounter abroad. If nothing else, our Residency should help our students to break this habit and to truly understand where the other side is coming from.

Glenn: This is Nancy Gentry Glenn and I'd like to thank Professor Robert Goodwin for helping us understand how country mentors work with students to understand cultural differences in global negotiations, and I'd like to thank you, listeners, for joining Executive MBA Education in the Global World.

UMUC Podcasting Disclaimer

University of Maryland University College Podcasts contain recorded lectures, speeches, commentary, interviews, and recordings of events of interest to the university community.

Statements expressed by non-UMUC faculty, staff, students or alumni, do not necessarily reflect the views or official policies of UMUC. Discussion of content, goods, or services provided by outside entities does not imply UMUC endorsement.

END