

# SIETAR-NEWSLETTER

## Editorial

### A shining star is born!

Globalization is rapidly breaking down our vision of a world with well-defined national, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Mass media allow people throughout the world daily glimpses of the events and lives of people in other countries and cultures. The superficiality of this exposure makes it even more important to understand the interdependencies that now link all of us, both as individuals and societies.

The successful interculturists of the twenty-first century will be the culturally informed ones. Whether you are a trainer, a consultant, a mediator or just face-to-face with someone with different traditions, you will gain a competitive advantage by having information as well as the latest news on how to deal with cultural differences. That's why we've created the SIETAR-newsletter — to provide knowledge and ideas that can help you achieve more competence and better skills in the intercultural profession.

#### Impressum

SIETAR Europa, 637 bd de la Tavernière, Residence l'Argentière - Bât E, F - 06210 Mandelieu la Napoule  
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It is in this context that we want to offer you penetrating insights into how different cultures accord status, structure their world, and provide strategies for survival. Additionally, we want to present articles on all aspects of interculturalism, ranging from differences in etiquette and body language to new thinking in the area of international management. Of course, we won't forget to keep you up to date with events, workshops and congresses in the SIETAR world.

And should you wish to submit an article or any sort of news from the field, please do so. Just e-mail your work to the Sietar-Europa office. We can't promise publication, but it will be given serious consideration. Together, we can make this newsletter a powerful and exciting vehicle for a greater understanding of ourselves and others. With your support, involvement and commitment, I am sure this on-line journal will be both rewarding and — why not — exhilarating.

Yours,  
Patrick Schmidt  
Editor-in-chief

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# SIETAR — In Search of Identity

## The challenge of creating a certification for those working in the intercultural field

by Dr. George F. Simons, Conseil d'Administration SIETAR France



During the SIETAR USA Congress in April, a special interest group of SIETAR members from various parts of the world met and formed a consortium to reopen the discussion on how to create a certification for those of us working in the intercultural field. This would be similar to certifications existing in other professional organizations.

It is an excellent challenge for SIETAR because we represent differing professional dimensions of the field, academic, training and consulting, governmental, social and NGOs, media and the arts, etc. Our work is in managing cultural differences and this challenge asks us to apply what we know to ourselves.

The consortium was in agreement that it was important to address this issue for a number of reasons that serve our membership. When institutions and organizations are looking to consult professionals, professional services, or find advice in the field, few if any recognize the name of SIETAR. Putting SIETAR membership on one's resume or business card or correspondence is meaningless to most faculty committees, HR directors or public organizations. As the largest and most experienced group of intercultural professionals in the world our name should be a cachet of intercultural excellence and competence.

We have, of course, indicators of professional competence and means of deepening and expanding our intercultural knowledge and praxis. There are university and institute degrees and certificates, continuing education programs, seminars and certification events for the use of various tools and processes for intercultural research, teaching, training and situational analysis.

So, clearly the competence found in SIETAR is real and the means to it are many. Not to be overlooked is the accumulation of experience over time that distinguishes SIETAR members as they progress and mature in their respective fields.

Given this it would be beneficial to the SIETAR organizations and their members to create a process and a formula of acknowledgement or certification. We need a process that both meets and supports our diversity and makes publically evident what the organization does to serve and place confidence in its members and makes clear in what its members bring to their various professional worlds. Other organizations, some as diverse as our selves, have done this very successfully.

We have recently learned that the Society for Human Re-

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## The challenge of creating a certification — continued

source Management (SHRM) has recognized that there a sore lack of standards in the intercultural field and is itself moving forward on a certification process for intercultural competence. Members of the consortium of SIETARians addressing this issue are in communication with SHRM to both study their progress and explore if or how we might collaborate with them.

Certainly this is an undertaking that is significant in size and scope for SIETAR and other institutions and organizations concerned about the intercultural profession. It involves assembling an overall picture of how cultural issues are dealt with, what learning resources are available, and how interculturalists are formed in the various fields in which they work. It also requires SIETAR to look at the issues surrounding the establishment of standards of knowledge and performance required for attaining professional status.

A process of this kind will not only benefit the members as they seek to develop their work and their careers, but should contribute significantly to the self understanding and public acceptance of the field itself. It will make clear to those desiring to enter the field what developmental goals and efforts they need to undertake and give them a

resource of guidance and assistance to reach these goals. It involves not just a onetime establishment of working procedures but initiates a process of ongoing sharing, leading to a refinement of how we go about doing what we do in our everyday work and how that is supported by our professional organization

It would help enormously to hear from you the members, your thoughts, and creative ideas and even caveats about how to best pursue a process that supports and enhances our members professionalism, mentors those seeking to advance, and tells the world who we are. Please enter the discussion either by sending posting your opinions on the blog at <http://iccertification.blogspot.com/> or sending them directly to me at [gfsimons@orange.fr](mailto:gfsimons@orange.fr).

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# Christine Longé

## A short portrait

The office manager of SIETAR Europa



Running the SIETAR-Europa office involves much more than meets the eye. Of course, things are bound to be interesting when you're juggling a dozen cultures at the same time.

Christine Longé says it's both challenging and demanding. Every day is different—the job is never boring—but doing it right takes real French *persévérance*. And, above all else, Christine is a product of her own native culture — *une française pure laine*.

Her need to do things *comme il faut* reflects the austerity of the Normandy shore. But then you notice there's something else, a certain cosmopolitan style to her work.

Born in 1972, she grew up in, a small town near Le Havre. But, even as a child, she always felt she was different. She had a “passionate desire” to discover the world: it was as if destiny wasn't going to let her remain immersed in French thinking.

Her first venture abroad was at the age of 14, when she went on a ten-day school trip to Leicester, England. A year later, it was ten days in Boston. But contact with the U.K. and the U.S. didn't stop her from looking toward Germany.

Montivillier was a “twin city” with Nordhorn in Lower Saxony so she took up German at school. This led to a summer job at the General Electric *Glühlampenfabrik* and a real appreciation for yet another culture.

Three years later, after completing her baccalaureat and two years of secretarial school, Christine got a call from her former boss in Nordhorn. Would she be like to be in charge of the company's correspondence with businesses in francophone countries?

She saw an opportunity to discover more of the world and immediately accepted. But this was no summer job; she soon learned that the German workplace could be difficult to navigate. Even worse, her “school German” simply didn't meet the rigorous demands of business correspondence.

She turned to her Norman roots end...persevered! With the help of both German and French friends, she improved her language skills and adapted to *Ordnung und Organization*.

After two years in Nordhorn, Christine felt it was time to return to France. She found work in her hometown, organizing public events. There she met the man of her life, who is now the father of her two children.

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# Christine Longé

## A short portrait - continued

A few years later, a job transfer brought her young family to Mandelieu la Napoule, next to Cannes. And one day, while at the swimming pool, her life took a turn that would bring her into the SIETAR world...

"I was talking to an older man, who could have been German with his Birkenstock shoes. At the same time, his white beard reminded me of Hemmingway, so maybe he was American. It was George Simons. He was looking for an office manager for SIETAR-Europa and, before I knew it, I'd plunged into the world of interculturalists."

### Has work at SIETAR-Europa changed your outlook on life?

Definitely. Between George's *pragmatism à l'américaine* and the demands of the different organizations in Europe you learn to cope with all kinds of values and mentalities. Each day seems to bring another cultural surprise.

### How would you describe the way you work?

Believe it or not, I like to work alone. It's a side in me that I've developed. Normally I'm a social person who likes to be around people and enjoy life *à la française*. That means sitting in a seaside café and talking with friends. But with the workload at the SIETAR, you need to be disciplined.

Friends ask how I manage to get it all done. I tell them it's a question of organization. My tools are the combination of a strict French education and the habits I picked up working in Germany.

### What do you like most about the job?

*Eh bien*, I like meeting the people I "talk" with via e-mail. I always imagine how a person looks — young or old, blonde or brunette, naturally smiling or scowling...Sometimes I even mix up gender!

Goffredo Diana of SIETAR Italia? A man or a woman? Then I met him at a conference: definitely a man and a very Italian one, like you see in the movies.

### And your private life — do you mind sharing it?

No, no, not at all. I love to have friends over and prepare a good meal for them. It's what makes life worthwhile! And my husband and I love to go on trips with the children. We adore Asia and the U.S.

But it's the simple things I appreciate most, like receiving flowers unexpectedly. A few months ago I was in hospital for a small operation and SIETAR-Europa sent me a beautiful bouquet. The small moments are the ones I never forget.

**Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt**

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# Intercultural vignettes

## Thought-provoking facts on how culture impacts behavior

### The interlocking nature of language and thought

In one famous experiment in Hong Kong, 153 undergraduate students, bilingual in English and Chinese, were divided into two groups. One group was given a class assignment written in English; the other was given the same assignment written in Chinese. The professor in charge of the experiment took every precaution to ensure that the translations were perfect, yet the answers given by the two groups differed significantly, indicating that the language itself altered the nature of the information being conveyed.

*International Business, 4th edition*

### The origins of the saying "time is money"

Most Americans are unaware that the proverb "time is money" originally came from the religious thinking of the Puritan settlers. Their intellectual baggage was the system of Calvin, where individuals were "predestined" to be chosen for either salvation or damnation. One consequence of this mindset was to perceive *time* as a gift from God. If they used it wisely, they'd be far more likely to go to Heaven.

As the U.S. colonies gradually became secular, the belief was taken up by Ben Franklin in his popular publication *Poor Richard's Almanac*. He coined the phrase "time is money" as a tenet for achieving wealth and, perhaps, happiness.

*P.S.*

### The influence of uncertainty avoidance in a plane crash

The second-guessing that followed the 1998 crash of Swissair 111 off the coast of Nova Scotia provides a dramatic example of how uncertainty orientation influences decisions. Smoke suddenly filled the cabin of the plane as it was en route from New York to Geneva. The Swissair pilot swung the troubled aircraft out to sea in order to dump excess fuel before landing. Unfortunately, the plane plunged into the sea before it could reach safety.

A controversy broke out over whether the pilot's decision to circle and dump fuel before landing was correct. Some U.S. airplane pilots interviewed by the media suggested that the pilot should have landed the plane as soon as possible once smoke was detected. Swissair officials defended their pilot, noting that the captain followed Swissair's emergency procedures published in the carrier's operating manual. The U. S. pilots retorted that in such emergencies, pilots should exercise their independent judgment, regardless of what is contained in the company manual. Swissair officials countered that the procedures detailed in the manual reflected the state-of-the-art understanding of what to do in an emergency. The "rule are there to be obeyed" viewpoint of Swissair's officials reflects their country's uncertainty-avoiding culture, while "rules are made to be broken" attitude of U.S. pilots reflects America's uncertainty-accepting norms.

*International Business, 4th edition*

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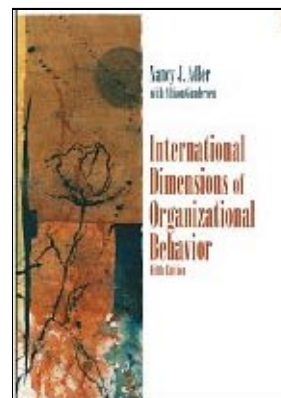
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# Book Review

## International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior (fifth edition)

by Nancy J. Adler,  
Eur 45.99, 398 pages



Why would we want to review a book that was first published well over 23 years ago?

For one simple reason: *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior* is such a well-written and well-researched work that it has become a standard reference for the majority of intercultural management classes and MBA programs, with over 1,000,000 copies sold. No textbook yet approaches Adler's high standards in explaining how the various dimensions of culture impact global business.

A cursory look shows the extent to which Professor Adler is thorough in her handling of the international give-and-take. National culture, workplace behavior and communication differences across cultures, multicultural teamwork and negotiation, synergy and global leadership, the expat experience: all are observed and discussed.

Another reason it's become a classic is Adler's extensive use of vignettes, whether small stories or case studies to explain conceptual and theoretical points. They're lively, direct and above all, perceptive. And the summary and questions-for-reflection at the end of each chapter reinforce and deepen the whole.

In the newly-updated 5th edition, she cites new sources and better case studies, and the writing is even more fluid and concise. The book itself, however, hardly needed to be modified — a testimony to the solid research she put into it back in 1986.

I've used this in my classes for several years and all my students enjoy it. Also when sophisticated business-types ask me what I recommend to avoid intercultural mishaps, I refer them to Nancy Adler. If you familiarize yourself with all the points she makes, you won't need anything else. She's put everything you need to know about living and working across cultures into one compact volume.

In short — a classic that may soon find itself alongside with other great academic works, such as Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* or *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville. P.S.

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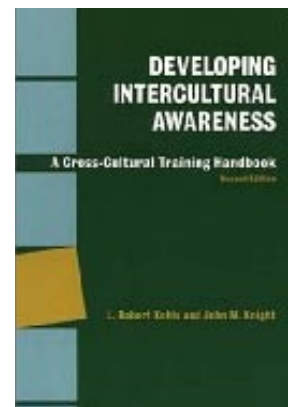
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## Book Review

# Developing Intercultural Awareness (second edition)

by Robert Kohls and John Knight,  
Eur 18.99, 143 pages



A lot of people who “might like to become an intercultural facilitator” ask me how I design my workshops and develop the exercises that go along with them. I always come back to the beginning of my career, when I read a *how-to* book which explains — in clear, step-by-step fashion — the way to put together a solid intercultural course. Even better, it costs less than 20 Euros, maybe the best bargain in our business.

*Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook* is drawn from the authors' experience, and contains simulation games, case studies, icebreakers and other training activities for developing cross-cultural awareness in virtually any setting. Robert Kohls and John Knight have mapped out one- and two-day workshops for those looking for pre-planned programs, and their appendices include guides to simulation games, films and further reading.

In their second edition, the authors add new and dynamic activities to the array of material already present, ensuring that exercises remain relevant. This easy-to-use guide is both an excellent companion to *The Survival Kit for Overseas Living* and an extremely valuable resource for those looking to train others — or themselves — to

become more culturally aware.

*A little about Robert Kohls.* During the '50s, he and his wife worked to develop orphanages and schools in Korea. Later, they moved to Washington, where he trained Peace Corps volunteers. He was popular and well-respected, known for his message that intercultural competence is all about compassion and empathy.

Later he became director of training for the U.S. Information Agency and for the Meridian International Center, dedicated to strengthening socio-political understanding. He also helped found *SIETAR*, which gave him its *Primus Inter pares Award* in 1986. With all those credentials, it's no surprise he's the principle author of a timeless gem.

As one intercultural trainer summed it up: “A superb basic guide to cross-cultural training. Kohls and Knight provide an excellent resource to the international trainer seeking general tools or looking toward an expanded repertoire.”

P.S.

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## Events, workshops, congresses

### Vienna, Austria

June 24-26, 2009

#### Knowledge Migration, Communication and Value Change

IACCM Congress (International Association of Cross-Cultural Competence and Management) The first day will be devoted to a doctoral seminar on cross-cultural competence. The following two days on 25 and 26 June, 2009 will see the annual conference of IACCM dealing with this year's conference topic Knowledge Migration, Communication and Value Change.

[http://iaccm.wu-wien.ac.at/conference\\_en.html](http://iaccm.wu-wien.ac.at/conference_en.html)

### York, Great Britain

September 17-19, 2009

#### High performing international teams

SIETAR UK is co-hosting with York Associates and dialogin The Delta Intercultural Academy a two-day

conference featuring key-note speaker Dr. Dick McCann and Dr. Fons Trompenaars, along with many other presentations and workshops.

[http://www.york-associates.co.uk/dial\\_login2009.html](http://www.york-associates.co.uk/dial_login2009.html)

### Cairo, Egypt

November 12-15, 2009

#### Young Sietar Congress

Young SIETAR is taking its 10th Annual Congress Edition to Umm el Dunya [the Mother of Cities], commonly known as Cairo, Egypt. Besides a new (continent) location, there are other innovations at store - one of them being the fact that we dropped the Pre-congress Day and turned it into the first day of the congress, so you can look forward to full four days of meeting fellow interculturalists and together revisiting the field we all hold so dear.

<http://www.youngsietar.org/>

### Bonn, Germany

February 25-27, 2010

#### SIETAR Forum 2010

SIETAR-Deutschland is again organizing a forum that will emulate its highly acclaimed and successful forum from 2008. The conference language will be German.

<http://www.sietar-deutschland.de/>

### Paris, France

Sometime in October, 2010

#### 30th Anniversary of SIETAR France

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, SIETAR-France is planning a congress in conjunction with SIETAR-Europa. The themes of the event will be human rights and diversity. Languages will be French and English.

[www.sietar-france.org/sietar/](http://www.sietar-france.org/sietar/)

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