

QUICKSTART®

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Bringing the World to Georgia

Quick Start's work with international companies aids Georgia's economy

In the mid-1980s, Jan Nunnery, then a Quick Start field training consultant, found herself working with an increasing number of projects for Japan-based companies. She quickly realized that working with international companies posed challenges that were quite different from working with domestic ones.

"Most importantly, because of significant differences in business styles, we saw a need to conduct cross-cultural training," said Nunnery, who currently serves as vice president of economic development at DeKalb Technical College.

To address this pressing need, Quick Start developed a workshop dedicated to enhancing the cultural sensitivity of prospective employees of Japanese client companies. The workshop also helped Quick Start employees who would be interacting with Japanese business people. Topics included Japanese communication styles, greetings, dining tips, business protocol, even proper business-card etiquette.



"In Japanese culture, the business card is a representation of that individual," Nunnery explained, pointing out one of the unexpected areas where a faux pas could easily occur. "So you must treat it with respect, looking at it carefully when it's given to you."

And that's just one example from one country. Since that first workshop, the number of international companies Quick Start has worked with has increased dramatically. International firms now make up nearly one-fourth of Quick Start projects and hail from 31 different countries.

In addition to challenges of language and cultural behavior, cross-cultural understanding is critical in matters of logistics and technology transfer. "Manufacturing quality, productivity and technology transfer depend on strong employee working relationships and effective communication," said Sandra Morris, Quick Start director of performance technology, who oversees cultural training.

"Companies cannot afford to have cross-cultural

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Global gaffes

International travelers have long recognized the embarrassment that can result from committing a faux pas in another country. Increased global business dealings have only highlighted the need to know how not to make a cultural mistake. Here are a few common ones to avoid:

In Asian cultures:

- Offering a gift wrapped in white, a color that signifies death
- Showing the sole of your shoe

In many Asian and South American cultures:

- Jumping into business too rapidly, without first engaging in small talk, inquiring about family and developing a relationship

In France:

- Making an "OK" sign by forming a circle with thumb and index finger, which means "zero" or "useless"

In Germany:

- Arriving late to an appointment, making a last-minute appointment, or casually changing the time or place of an appointment

In Brazil:

- Referring to the United States as "America," since Brazilians also consider themselves American

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issues interfering with a smooth startup," she said.

Economic impact

From the beginning, Quick Start has continued to enhance and expand its base of cross-cultural training programs. Today it provides highly sophisticated training to assist Georgia workers in understanding the Japanese, German, Korean, French and Hispanic cultures. Additionally, each program has its counterpart to acclimate expatriates to our culture.

The importance of working proficiently with international firms is evidenced by their economic impact. The U.S. Commerce Department reports that last year international companies contributed \$29.7 billion of investment to Georgia. And according to the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, as of September 2002 there were nearly 125,000 employees working in international facilities in Georgia.

Given these statistics, it's clear that cross-cultural workforce training must be developed using authoritative, knowledgeable sources of information. To keep training programs current and relevant, Quick Start has drawn upon the expertise of international consulate personnel; the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism; independent cultural training consultants; and professionals in a variety of cultural organizations such as the Goethe Institute of Atlanta and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce.

Quick Start's cross-cultural training ensures good communication and understanding between Georgia workers and their international employers from the outset. Even before the company ramps up, employees assisting with the startup — both locals and expatriates — receive cross-cultural training here in

Georgia. After startup, new workers are trained as they are hired.

Comparing and contrasting U.S. culture with that of the other country, the training addresses communication styles, traditional business interactions, realities about stereotypes, and cultural values and customs.

Quick Start clients quickly grasp the benefit of multicultural insight. For example, when polyester-film manufacturer SKC was looking in the 1990s to open a plant in the Southeast, the Korea-based firm whittled its choices to sites in Georgia and South Carolina.

What tipped the scales in Georgia's favor was in part the cross-cultural training. South Carolina offered grant monies to pay for such training, but the incentive package didn't include

Employees assisting with the startup — both locals and expatriates — receive cross-cultural training here in Georgia.

an implementation plan. Quick Start, however, was able to develop specific training modules for just this purpose, and today, Covington, Ga., still boasts SKC as one of its large manufacturers.

Capturing the process

Ensuring good cross-cultural understanding is just the beginning. Quick Start also helps attract international companies to Georgia by offering proven training solutions for every critical aspect of the operation.

As with all Quick Start ventures, international projects begin with a comprehensive study of the company's tasks. For an international firm, the project study often takes place overseas at a plant that mirrors the proposed site in Georgia, one with a similar operation so that job details can be assessed.

“We perform a project study at the appropriate location,” said Jeff Lynn, Quick Start director of northern operations, who has overseen numerous projects with international firms. “During the project study, we map out the entire manufacturing process, from receiving raw materials and manufacturing operations to the shipping of the completed product.”

“A task analysis is also performed to review technical and core skills needed for trainees to become efficient and safe,” he continued. “The task analysis assists us in developing the training materials required for classes. Each course is customized for the company.”

After capturing the process, Quick Start designs a curriculum and teaches the program to the company’s workers.

“We couldn’t have trained our people without Quick Start,” said Mathieu Heintz, president of Aircraft Manufacturing and Development, when the airplane manufacturer launched operations in Eastman. “Quick Start went to Canada, discussed the details with our people there, and created a fabulous training



Jan Nunnery, now VP of economic development at DeKalb Technical College, helped Quick Start develop cross-cultural training for Georgia companies.

manual along with computer-based training to use at this facility.”

‘Good places to work’

In addition to Quick Start’s training expertise, international companies are attracted to Georgia as a way to gain a foothold into the U.S. marketplace, sharply reduce shipping costs, and minimize the actual cost of manufacturing because of a business-friendly environment.


“Another big draw for Georgia,” said Mike Grundmann, Quick Start director of marketing, “is nonstop international flights to and from the

Atlanta airport, which saves executives a lot of time. They would have to fly through here anyway.”

For their part, local communities warmly welcome international firms, as the investment means a higher tax base and new jobs for citizens. “People realize that international companies are good places to work,” Grundmann said.

While Quick Start clients represent more than two dozen different countries, the training programs particularly appeal to Japanese firms. Part of the reason is that several Japanese automakers have set up operations in close proximity to Georgia locales. Thus, the automakers’ suppliers are eager to locate near their customers.

For example, the city of Rome and surrounding Floyd County have a cluster of Japanese companies. “Several Japanese auto parts firms supply the Honda plant in Alabama,” Lynn said, citing F&P, JSC and Neaton Rome as three examples.

“These companies are exemplary in their contributions to the local community,” he said. “They’re a fine testament to economic development in Georgia.” 

All over the map

Here are several countries represented by Quick Start’s international projects, along with a sample company, its Georgia locale and business type.

BRAZIL – Gerdau (parent of AmeriSteel), Cartersville, steel mill



SWITZERLAND – Universal Alloy, Canton, aluminum alloy extrusion



AUSTRALIA – Southcorp Packaging, Toccoa, plastic products



CANADA – Quebecor, Augusta, printing



ITALY – Pirelli Tire, Rome, tire manufacturer



JAPAN – TDK, Peachtree City, videocassette assembly



GREAT BRITAIN – JCB, Pooler, construction and materials-handling equipment



INDIA – Mahindra Tractors, Calhoun, agricultural tractors



SOUTH KOREA – Kia Motors, Lawrenceville, automaker

