



bugel (byoogl), n., v., 1. a micro-tab newspaper serving a neighbourhood.
2. an instrument to sound the alarm or trumpet the truth.

Crossing the ethnic boundary is just plain good for business... if you're willing to learn

If you're a businessperson here in Abbotsford, chances are you've at least thought about ways to improve sales to the variety of ethnic groups that purchase goods and services locally. Trouble is, figuring out ways to achieve success in this area isn't always easy and many business people give up because they don't know how to develop a successful plan of attack.

David McLauren, an expert in intercultural studies who now runs a business that specializes in helping other companies successfully market themselves to ethnic communities, says crossing those ethnic boundaries is often one of the hardest things for any businessperson to do.

And let's face it, in Abbotsford, where Indo-Canadians are estimated to comprise roughly 25 per cent of the city's population, there's money to be made by reaching across the ethnic divide in both directions.

"It's definitely not always easy to make inroads," David agrees. "How do you build bridges between ethnic communities when you don't really understand each other?"

He notes there are more than 100 languages spoken in the Lower Mainland, and the attitudes of each group obviously reflect how they will interact with other ethnic groups. Each community has its own sets of dos and don'ts when it comes to business, and being sensitive to each other's issues is a critical first step, he adds.

"I have a little 20 question test that I like to give out at the workshops I do," says David. "I ask people what they would do in certain business situations that arise when dealing with different ethnic groups. I do it to show people that even the smallest things can make a difference."

As a for instance, David notes that in some South-East Asian communities, packaging items in threes or fours isn't a good idea because



David McLauren

the Chinese word for death sounds too much like the words for three and four.

Similarly, one should never accept a business card from a Japanese or Chinese businessperson without acknowledging the name on the card. Simply shoving it in your pocket is not considered good manners. And don't offer your own with your left hand.

"These are the types of unwritten rules that nobody ever talks about," says David. "Knowing some of them up front makes dealing with people so much easier."

He points out the obvious fact that the Lower Mainland has changed dramatically in the past 10 years and many of the various ethnic groups, which includes Anglos, are now very large. Ignoring them as an opportunity to build business isn't smart business, he adds.

Asked how he started into advising businesses about cultural divides, he says he had a lot of requests from the Anglo business community asking how to interact with the Indo-Canadian community. He decided to do some research to find out how each community could interact better with the other and put together several workshops, including the "Doing Business with Multi-Cultural Communities" event he'll be leading June 27 at the Community Futures South Fraser office in Abbotsford.

It's for anyone who wants to learn more about doing business with the Anglo, Chinese and East Indian community. It's about creating awareness that an untapped potential exists and about positioning one's company to take advantage of opportunities. It's about building bridges, increasing your business' customer base, penetrating cultural markets, and understanding a target group's cultural values.

Cost for the two-hour workshop is \$40. It runs from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Register by calling Suzanne at 604.864.5770 local 304.