

**BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN THE ARABIC-SPEAKING WORLD.
CASE STUDY – THE SULTANATE OF OMAN**

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***Abstract:** The business world is more and more interested in developing new methods and techniques that could facilitate a more productive communication between business partners of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Contextualizing this new general trend with the rapid development of successful entrepreneurship in many Arabic-speaking countries, it can be stated that the way in which business communication is thought and applied has never had a more powerful impact on the overall productivity of commercial relations between Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic speaking parties. This paper aims at identifying the main obstacles that are encountered in the communication process in multi-linguistic and multicultural business environments. It brings in to discussing the possibility of building a common ground between business associates from the Sultanate of Oman and Western Europe. The specific aspects of intercultural business communication listed and analyzed. The paper also deals with the growth in importance of efficient business communication in the development of small and medium sized enterprises in Oman. The need for the popularization of a more formal approach to communicating in business comes from the need of higher balance of gender distribution in entrepreneurship, as a result, efficient business communication should become a priority for all the states that want to build a stable and competitive business environment.*

***Keywords:** Arab-speaking, business, communication, relation, multi-linguistic, gender, entrepreneurship, development*

Business communication found its motivations for being an independent scientific field of study in the techniques, methodologies and policies that it can offer in the neutralization or total eradication of the numerous blockages, distortions and intoxications that communication in the business world can become the subject of if it is applied with the rules that govern colloquial communication. Even more, as a result of the high degree of internationalization of business today, intercultural communication has become a

field which is of a great importance to understanding the specific aspects of communication between partners that are of a different cultural background, the specific obstacles and contradiction of values can inhibit, delay or even make impossible the penetration of a business in cultural environments that are radically different from the ones it already has a solid understanding of.

The presence of stereotyping, prejudice and hostility are still present to a certain extent in

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business environments even today, even if we would like to consider that business environments and business relationships are permanently governed by a high degree of *cultural neutrality*, many times, that is not exactly the case. Business relationships have the core purpose of building communication channels between business partners that will facilitate the rapid flow and circulations of information. Even if many outsiders consider that that type of relationships is “highly filtered” by ethical and deontological norms which are meant to prevent the potential burst of any conflict, on a practical level, the business environments still retain a lot of cultural sensitivities which often are well masked, but even so, still present.

Cultural sensitivities refer to certain subjects that are regarded as controversial or taboo in certain cultures. Even if business relationships should be the platform on which entrepreneurs and company representatives exchange the needed information for the further economical growth of the parties that they represent, many times, sensible issues can interfere and can potentially lead to dead points.

A new notion is used more and more in the field of intercultural communication and it became of a great interest to business communication experts, that being cultural sensitivity. It basically describes one's capability of being conscious of the presence of cultural relativity in many aspects that govern everyday life and which can often be projected in to the way in which people socialize with work and business partners. Some are lucky enough to already have a deeply rooted cultural sensitivity, this is often the case of people who grow up in mixed families, multicultural, multi-linguistic communities or states. Others may have a lower degree of cultural sensitivity as a result of growing up in ethnically homogeneous environments, isolated communities or

environments that are generally closed to outside influences. Taking in to consideration all of what was stated above, the business ties between the Arab World and Western Europe are dependent on the acknowledgement of the cultural differences in both commercial, trade and business practices and traditions, and also on the differences that are present in human interaction.

“The Arab World” is an umbrella term, it creates a common outline between all of the nations where Arabic is the most widely spoken language, it excludes some nations as Mauritania where even thou Arabic is one of the most widely spoken languages it doesn't constitute the dominant majority. A very important aspect that should be taken in to account when discussion about the specific aspects of business communication between the Arab and Western world, is that of the big cultural variations both within the Arabic-speaking nations and the ones of Western Europe.

The business relationships between and Omani and a French partner will be quite different from those between a Tunisian and a French one, as a result of the internal variations from the two cultural environments that they belong to.

The Sultanate of Oman, Arabic-speaking nation located in the Arab Peninsula, has greatly internationalized its business environment in the last year, as result, more and more Westerners come there especially take part in business from the oil and gas sector.

An interesting discussing can be made around the cultural shock that many Westerners have once they enter the business environment of the Arab World, the shock is the result of a combination of factors which describe certain differences between business communication and relationships between the parties mentioned above. The first major difference

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that Westerners need to adapt to is the form in which business communication is done for most of the time.

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