



nexus

INSIGHT ... FOCUS ... CONNECT

FEBRUARY 2015

SUSTAINABILITY ALSO HAS TO BE ECONOMIC THE URGENCY OF SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS ALL INDUSTRIES



Nexus (meaning connection, tie, link) is the joint newsletter of the three Bachelor student seminars Insight China, Focus India and connectUS. It features news, highlights and information about the Preparatory Seminars and (in the second issue) the On-site Seminars which bring together high calibre organisations, experts and professionals with participating students and lecturers from various FHNW schools. Further news and information can be found on the individual websites.

● **“My money can heal - my money can destroy”.** Daniel Bruderer, Head of Private Clients and Foundations at Globalance bank emphasised, together with other speakers, the urgent need to embed sustainability in every business activity. In construction and supply chains, for instance, both the urgency of sustainability and the need for triple bottom line reporting were accentuated.

SOCIAL BANKING

Many private clients are not aware of the extra-financial risks that come along with an investment, according to Bruderer and neither do they reflect on the consultant's behaviour even though irresponsible behaviour was much discussed especially after the financial crisis in 2008. Bruderer claims banker behaviour does not appear to have changed a lot. Given the existing remuneration model, it goes without saying that the ambition is still to

make as much money as possible within a short time frame without putting the clients' needs first.

The demand for sustainable banking has increased rapidly over the last years, in particular because clients have started to think about the future of their investments and its impact on the world, according to Bruderer. In order to meet the upcoming demand, several successful entrepreneurs in the field of sustainable investments founded a Swiss private bank called Globalance Bank AG in 2011. For Globalance Bank AG, sustainability is not just a product, it represents the very heart of their business philosophy and business model. Their model is based on transparency, independency and measuring the benefit and impact of one's wealth related to the economy, society and ecology. "We help clients to generate a dual return. On the one

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hand we want to generate a yield in line with the market and on the other hand we want our clients to understand the impact they achieve with their investments, which is summarized in the Globalance Portfolio Footprint," Bruderer said. Investments have an effect on the world. They create jobs, make new inventions possible, educate people, heal, or help increase efficiency for a secure energy supply. "Money leaves a footprint in the economy, in society, and in the environment. That footprint can be quantified, and Globalance Bank AG is the first bank in the world to have developed a methodology for doing just that," Bruderer said. An investment can make a contribution to the accessibility of markets and infrastructure, to the simple access of information, to biodiversity, and to the protection of groundwater. Of course, money can also destroy, corrupt, or exploit.

"Our investment approach leads to more stable returns, makes extra-financial risks visible and measures the impact of one's wealth," Bruderer added. In 2013, the Swiss economy magazine Bilanz named Globalance Bank AG as the best Swiss private bank and in 2014 the bank was amongst the top three.

SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

Edward Schwarz, CEO of the Holcim Foundation, emphasised the need for the current generations to be aware of the urgency of sustainability and its impacts on the future. For a company like Holcim, said Schwarz, which on one hand uses a great amount of raw materials and energy but on the other hand also produces a great amount of emission and waste, it is paramount to assume social responsibility. Holcim found an unconventional way to cope with sustainability by running the Holcim Foundation, which was established in 2003. "Our

foundation looks at sustainability from a holistic perspective. By awarding sustainable constructions all over the world, the Holcim Foundation creates awareness within the construction industry and at the same time inspires architects to think outside the box and change the traditional way of constructing," Schwarz said.

"A building that first and foremost is built by local workforces, uses only raw materials from the surrounding area and requires only little or no energy through its peculiar construction, is considered as sustainable," according to Schwarz. Moreover, the Holcim Foundation also has collaborations with several institutions such as technical universities, which impart knowledge to young talents and provide them with access to innovation. "It is Holcim's way of being a good citizen," Edward Schwarz said.

ECO-LABELLING AND SUPPLIER AUDITS

Coop, dealing with numerous suppliers worldwide, relies on both a supplier audit system and labelling standards to establish its pioneering reputation in terms of sustainability. Stefan Mundwiler, head of Purchasing Coop DIY, described how Coop's buying office Eurogroup in Hong Kong ensures sustainability within the worldwide supply chain by having purchasing guidelines that guarantee the quality within the process

"We established a strategy based on a three-pillar system that ensures a common understanding within the supply chain of sustainable product & services, resource efficiency & climate protection and employees & society," Mr Mundwiler explained. "Furthermore, we conduct risk analyses and foster self-monitoring ensuring both the conduct of quality controls and the adherence to agreed terms among our partners." ● AY/KS/JN



Edward Schwarz, CEO Holcim Foundation, outlined the urgency of coping with sustainability in the construction industry. Photo: JH

EMPLOYEE RETENTION AS KEY SUCCESS FACTOR

“If our CEO Marc Blaser takes one of our sales forces ballooning, that employee will never leave”, remarked Markus Liechti, Head of Corporate Development at Blaser Swisslubes. Employee retention is one of the major issues multinationals face when operating in China or India: “especially talented and highly qualified employees decide to leave a company as soon as they are offered a better option,” stated Stephan Anliker, Director Operations at Endress + Hauser Flowtec. So, what can a company do to combat a high employee turnover rate?

Offering employees unique experiences and treating them as an internal customer is a starting point for employee retention. Markus Liechti added: “It is easier for us to invest in the development of our own general manager than hiring one from outside.”

“Endress + Hauser Flowtec in India emphasises achieving a global team spirit, strengthening the company’s culture and communication among employees,” said Anliker. He added that Endress + Hauser strives to improve each employee’s competencies. Indians highly value awards or regular performance measures and see these as a motivator. For this reason, Flowtec created a special award ceremony, in which CEO Matthias Altendorf participates, coupled with a family day and even a sports day.

“The Chinese are very similar to the Swiss: networks, high savings and associations matter to them”, commented Daniel Christen, Chairman & CEO at Assetis Ltd. Hence, the creation of company-internal associations could presumably increase employee retention.

In a nutshell, offering unique experiences, providing education and personal development and acting as a role model when it comes to care for the environment and society might heighten organizational employee commitment. In terms of the scarcity of good managers, the emergence of Universities of Applied Sciences enlarges the supply and subse-



Ian Riley, China Country Head at Holcim, presents The New Normal: a heavy industry case study. Photo: LE

quently the multinational companies’ dependence on them, as concluded in Friday’s joint-panel discussion.

NOT ONLY RETENTION BUT GOVERNANCE

“Multinational companies should set themselves the same standards as elsewhere”. Ian Riley, China Country Head at Holcim, believes this is one of the key success factors for the company’s future in China. In the next couple of years it is highly likely that China will implement environmental regulations, energy targets and penalties, etc. as a consequence of community pressure and expectations, concluded Ian Riley. If multinationals voluntarily already now set themselves high environmental standards, they will not only successfully collaborate with the government, but also with their employees by being a role-model. Or as Beat Müller, formerly CEO at the Swiss Bakery, contributed: „International companies are monitored more precisely than Chinese. It is good because it leverages the quality of the local producers as well.” ● JN/KS

QUALIFICATIONS

In India, it is not uncommon to receive 1000 applications for a job vacancy. Indians are often unaware of the skills and the qualifications needed for a specific position. “Even a taxi driver would apply for a job as CEO” states Carmen Heinrich, Senior Consultant at Dr. Wamser + Batra Ltd. Hence, a detailed job description can downsize the amount of time and energy used in the hiring process.

See the full panel discussion in a short video





"In Switzerland employees acknowledge you when you are an expert, in India employees only respect you when you are a CEO."

Carmen Heinrich, Senior Consultant, Dr Wamser + Batra Ltd. Photo: JH

SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYEE ACTIONS AT LGT

"Instead of squeezing employees like a lemon, LGT offers social projects development to its employees", says Ursula Finsterwald, the Group Sustainability Manager at LGT. LGT, the private banking and asset management group owned by the Princely Family of Liechtenstein, combines sustainability with employee retention practices. For instance, the bank offers personal development courses like drawing, tai chi and nutrition counselling at their Liechtenstein Academy Foundation. Furthermore, LGT employees enjoy engaging in voluntary work. According to Finsterwald, LGT employees have already on three occasions, collected broken bicycles to send them to Africa where these were repaired and reused. "It is easier for us to invest in the development of our own general manager than hiring one from outside." Markus Liechti, Head of Corporate Development at Blaser Swisslube. ● AY

«MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES SHOULD SET THEMSELVES THE SAME STANDARDS AS ELSEWHERE.»

Ian Riley, China Country Head at Holcim

NOTES ON SUCCESS

"Endress + Hauser Flowtec in India emphasises achieving a global team spirit, strengthening the company's culture and communication among employees."

Stephan Anliker, Director Operations at Endress + Hauser Flowtec

"The Chinese are very similar to the Swiss: networks, high savings and associations matter to them."

Daniel Christen, Chairman & CEO at Assetis Ltd

"Success is highly dependent on good management supply."

Ian Riley, China Country Head at Holcim

"If our CEO Marc Blaser takes one of our sales forces ballooning, that employee will never leave."

Markus Liechti, Head of Corporate Development at Blaser Swisslubes

NON-STATE-ENTERPRISES - CHINA'S UNFOLDING CATALYST FOR SUCCESS



www.insightchina.ch



Swiss ICT companies can be successful in China, according to Philipp Emmenegger, CEO at coresystems
Photo: LE

"If you are not copied in China, there is something wrong with the product". Kurt Härrri, Head Global Marketing & Sales at Schindler Group. Photo: LE

Only 3% of Swiss companies settled in China make it over 10 years, according to Beat Müller, citing information from the Consulate General of Switzerland in Hong Kong. Not only foreign companies have difficulties to establish themselves in China, most Chinese non state owned enterprises (NSOE's) have even more obstacles to overcome (see box on p.6). Despite those challenges, the private economy has averaged 18 percent growth in output since 2008. This is twice the pace of expansion of state owned enterprises. With strong willingness for efficiency and innovation, the flexibility and dynamics of the non-state enterprises have prompted the opening of certain sectors as opportunities for private enterprises. Schindler and coresystems are two prospering examples of Sino-Swiss collaborations.

Schindler's establishment of the first western industrial joint-venture with the People's Republic of China 1980 was a trailblazer for the Chinese internationalisation. "Today, China is not an option for us; it is to be or not to be" stated Kurt Härrri, Head Global Marketing & Sales at Schindler Group. With numerous references including the upcoming

Shenzhen Ping An Finance Center, with 660 meters China's tallest building, Schindler continues to be successful.

Härrri addressed two risk factors. The high growth and size of the market needs to be kept pace with. Härrri referred to the Shanghai Metro lines as an illustration of how "foreign companies did not manage the Chinese growth in the last 10 years; you can not cope with the size of this market."

Another aspect often cited as reasons for failure is the problem with copy cats. Härrri, however, is pragmatic: "If you are not copied in China, there is something wrong with the product. Schindler buys the copiers or we ask the copy cats to supply for us. Innovation is the best protection from being copied."

coresystems is another Sino-Swiss success story with links to Schindler. CEO Philipp Emmenegger remarked: "Schindler only talks to us because we have a presence in China." He is convinced: "If you do not invest in China, you cannot call yourself an

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international company.” coresystems provides mobile field service solutions and international ERP rollouts.

According to Emmenegger, coresystems’ success in China is built on three pillars: right timing, right reputation and right knowhow. As for the timing, Philipp Emmenegger stated “With the ban of the big brands (like Google, Cisco, Facebook, etc.) , it was time for a Swiss brand to enter the market”. He added: “When entering into the Chinese market as an ICT company, you need to have one part done in China. We had to provide a local cloud infrastructure in order to meet the government’s IT regulations. People in China are often forced to buy from locally compliant suppliers, knowing that European standards would already be technically sufficient.”

coresystems sees no danger with copy cats, either. According to Emmenegger, the front-end might be copied easily, the technology behind it not. With a local general manager, who studied in Europe, and therefore knows the local market as well as the European way of doing business, coresystems is prepared for the future. ● JN

CHALLENGES FOR CHINESE NON STATE OWNED ENTERPRISES

1. Systemic lower status in comparison to their state owned or foreign invested competitors
2. Characteristic weakness in leadership
3. Negative images like “the rich second generation”
4. Conflicts with work force as consequence of tense labour relations
5. Lack of advanced management qualification and progressive corporate culture
6. Heavy burden of taxation
7. Different problems to acquire financing
8. Lack of development upgrading strategy and sophisticated cluster structure

[Based on presentation Yufan Jiang, lecturer for Sustainable Energy Technologies & Project Manager for China Programmes, FHNW]



Stephanie Bürgers is in her last semester of her BSc International Business Management. Photo: LE

“From the InsightChina seminar 2015 I expect to build up a network, among Swiss companies active in China, Chinese companies and among students with an international flair. I am looking forward to getting a deeper understanding of the issues discussed in the preparatory seminar and find the real-world examples.”

Her dream job: Chief Executive Officer



Thomas Kaufmann finishes his Bachelor degree in Business Administration this summer. Photo: LE

“Almost one out of six people worldwide are born and raised in China. In Switzerland, more and more Chinese will work in Swiss companies. Therefore, I hope to get some first insights in how Chinese people work, how they live like and how Swiss and Chinese employees can work together in an optimum way, despite the cultural differences.”

His dream job: HR-Manager

More Participant Profiles can be found under

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ECONOMY OF LOCATIONS DRIVES MARKET ENTRY



Dr. Sigu Muringaseril, Founder and Chairman of India Symposium explained the reason why Swiss companies seek market entry in India. Photo: JH

● Economy of scale plays only a minor role in the decision of whether or not to enter the Indian market, according to Dr. Sigu Muringaseril, Founder and Chairman of India Symposium. It is principally the economy of locations driving Swiss companies to achieve higher efficiency in India.

As internationalisation is a strategic imperative for many companies, particularly in highly saturated markets, Dr Muringaseril said Swiss companies are increasingly considering India as an alternative target market in the scope of their international business development strategy.

Key drivers for Swiss companies, as Dr Muringaseril discovered in the course of his research for a Master thesis, were the sophisticated and physical infrastructure in India, the access to academic institutions and tax advantages provided by particular states. Most Swiss companies settled in the south, west and north of India and over 60 % operate in the manufacturing and engineering sector, Dr Muringaseril found.

The number of companies that expanded to India increased tremendously after 1991 when India was facing an economic downturn and almost feared bankruptcy. "Hence, international political institu-

tions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund forced India to open its capital market", he explained the development.

Dr. Muringaseril defined entry modes as the institutional framework in which a company seeks to operate. There is a significant difference between multinational corporations and small and medium enterprises, he further highlighted. "Whereas multinational corporations prefer entirely owned subsidiaries to enforce their own strategies, ensure the control of operations and safeguard sensitive knowledge, SME's favour joint venture due to research constraints and the reliance on partners because of the lack of knowledge of the local market and distribution channels," Dr. Sigu Muringaseril concluded. He emphasised that in both cases equity owned modes are favoured against non-equity modes.

Another reason for entering the Indian market is the economy of markets, as Dr. Muringaseril outlined, where companies advocate the high market potential of India in terms of the three parameters market growth, market volume and first mover advantage. "It is not the actual market volume, but rather the future, potential market volume that were key drivers for companies to locate their business in India," he said. ● KS



www.focusindia.ch



Andreas Kurer is graduating as an Environmental Engineer this summer. Photo: MB

"I think the seminar can help to evolve cultural awareness, a skill highly important in a more and more globalised world."

His dream job:
Energy Consultant



Anna Katharina Rieder is in her last semester of her studies in International Management. Photo: MB

"Focus India 2015 will give me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge about a new business environment in a very fast and efficient way. Furthermore, my cross-cultural competences will be improved when meeting Indian people in their business environment."

Her dream job: CFO

CULTURAL BIAS AWARENESS

○ A diverse workforce is key in every international business, according to Andreas Volz, Senior Manager at Accenture. Therefore, not only CEO's but also line managers should be aware of the impact that culture has on the daily behaviour of their workforce and the underlying sub-conscious biases.

Volz explained that such biases are mental processes, which happen spontaneously and are influenced by friends, family, up-bringing, social value standards, religion and the work environment.

"We are surrounded by 11 million pieces of information, 40 of them we recognize and on seven we can focus", emphasized Andreas Volz. The filter technique of the brain is an automatic mechanism that simplifies processes.

Nevertheless, the filter system is influenced by individual perception and culture and it is not flawless and merely biased, Volz outlined. He concluded that it is paramount that people are aware of cultural biases, examine their own behaviour, and eventually take responsibility for what they are doing.

Zohaib Burney, Software Analyst at Accenture, explained some interesting biases. One is called the illusion of control, where people believe that they play an active role in the outcome even though the probability of the outcome remains continually the same. Burney gave an example: when throwing a dice, people tend to shake their hands more fiercely when they aim to throw a high number in comparison to when they hope for a low number.

Burney also mentioned the confirmation bias where people confirm their opinion with non-credible sources and the halo effect, where people pigeonhole other persons on the basis of one specific feature. The value attribution bias, Zohaib Burney concluded, happens when people only pay attention to their surroundings if they perceive attributes such as location, persons or atmosphere as valuable. ● KS



Andreas Volz, Senior Manager at Accenture and Zohaib Burney, Software Analyst at Accenture, discussed a variety of biases and emphasised the need for cultural bias awareness. Photo: JH

SEGMENTATION IS EVERYTHING...



Satschin Bansal, Director Hospital & Solutions EMEA at Zimmer. Photo: JH

○ Entering a market which has 1.2 billion people speaking almost 2000 dialects within 22 different languages requires that products are as diverse as the Indian subcultures themselves, according Satschin Bansal, Director Hospital Services & Solutions EMEA at Zimmer.

If a company seeks to enter the Indian market, segmentation appears to be a crucial factor for a successful market entrance. Bansal stated that many foreign companies fail to successfully enter the Indian market, as they do not pay enough attention towards cultural peculiarities.

During a workshop conducted by Satschin Bansal, students were given the opportunity to gain an understanding of the key characteristics of Indian consumers. "For instance in terms of pricing, a company has to take the significantly lower purchasing power into account", Bansal emphasised. Therefore, to price a product for Indian middle class consumers on the exact same basis as for European middle class consumers is not recommended, according to Bansal.

By analysing and comparing an American with an Indian advertisement for artificial knee joints, the cultural differences became very explicit. An interesting aspect was the targeted public. Satschin Bansal explained that in the USA advertisers emphasise individualism and how people can pursue the freedom of life; the Indian advertisement mainly focuses on the entire family of the targeted customer and accentuate how the usage of the promoted product would improve the lives of the entire family. ● KS



CREATING SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE THROUGH SHARED COMMITMENT

● **6+4=1** is the successful formula for sustainability at Swagelok, which is a major US developer and provider of fluid system solutions worldwide. **6** values guide its employees, **4** strategies guide its B2B business with the common - **1** - goal of creating sustainable performance through shared commitment within the global organisation. To understand Swagelok's values, we interviewed Thomas Freund, the Managing Director.

Mr Freund, does Swagelok act in the same sustainable way like 60 years ago?

Yes, the company's values and mission statement remained constant since 1947. And the focus for environmental protection and global action has developed even further. For example, we bound our suppliers to respect and act according to the UNO Conventions and labor laws. Furthermore, we avoid doing business in countries with conflict restrictions.

To what extent does sustainability contribute to your business success?

Our core value is to continuously strive for improvement and security. Especially our customers from chemical, nuclear and oil and gas industries depend on the quality and safety of our products. Other core values are respect for the environment and employees, the integrity of our behavior, the high quality standard and innovation, and last but not least, the customer focus.

How do you differentiate from your competitors?

We not only produce premium products but also support our B2B customers all-round. We provide support for their product selection, configuration, purchase decisions, supply chain management, employee training and maintenance.

How do you help your customers to act sustainable in their industry?

We supply them with high safety standard products, which they can use for a long-term period. Our customers also know that we work with suppliers who fulfill the rules and high standards. Moreover, we provide training and counseling for high risk applications.

How do you ensure a uniform work culture despite the cultural diversity of your 7000 employees?

Our values, our mission and vision are universally and internationally adaptable. It is also vital for us to be integrated in the respective local population. Furthermore, we respect the local laws, cultures and practices, which are a part of our integration.

● AY



Thomas Freund, Managing Director at Swagelok Switzerland interviewed on creating sustainable performance through shared commitment at the ConnectUS 2015 Preparatory Seminar. Photo: AY

IMPACT HUB ZURICH: PROTOTYPING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

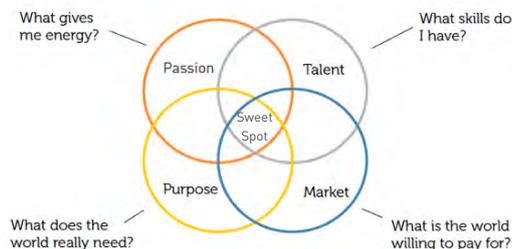
● **What does the future of business look like? For Impact Hub Zurich the future business world should work for all people, be built upon the idea of positive impact on the society and the environment and should create meaningful employment opportunities.**

Rahel Aschwanden, Program Manager at Impact Hub Zurich, told the seminar participants about current trends which are influencing business models such as circular economy, crowdfunding, sharing economy, impact investment or new organizational forms such as holacracy. These trends are mirrored by the start-ups which are currently hosted and incubated at Impact Hub Zürich as well as its growing local and global member community.

Impact Hub Zürich wants to foster a collaborative business environment in Zurich where start-ups work closely together with corporates, NGOs and the public sector building together valuable entrepreneurial solutions for our societies' challenges. Through its incubation services, its coworking space

as well as events and community hosting, Impact Hub Zürich brings together changemakers from diverse backgrounds such as health, education, energy, finance, farming or food. Besides pointing out the opportunity for each and everyone to become impact-driven entrepreneurs, Rahel Aschwanden's goal for the Preparatory Seminar was also to make participants aware of their personal Sweet Spot. ● AY

DISCOVER YOUR SWEET SPOT



Source: Impact Hub Zurich



Laura Seifert is in her last year of her degree in International Management (Business Administration).
Photo: DM

"I wish to get an insight into U.S. companies and their work environment from a different angle which will help me to develop new skills."

Her dream job: in Retail Industry



Simon Werz is finishing his Bachelor in Energy and Environmental Technology with a focus on Energy in Buildings.
Photo: DM

"When it comes to an application for employment, it is a benefit if one has participated in extracurricular activities. ConnectUS gives me the opportunity to get to know the US work culture and how the visited companies deal with sustainability. This could be an advantage towards competitors."

His dream job: in Sustainable Building

More Participant Profiles can be found under

WWW.CONNECTUS.CH

ZWEIFEL: HOW TO DECODE A CULTURE IN A FEW HOURS

● Imagine you have a business trip to China next week and you have never been there before. How much do you know about the Chinese culture to work successfully in a team or as a leader? How can you be sure that your knowledge is not based on prejudices? And most importantly, how can you learn the Chinese culture effectively so you do not lose too much time in your already busy schedule?

Thomas D. Zweifel developed a smart practical and quick way of how to decode a culture in a few hours and authored *Culture Clash 2: Managing the Global High-Performance Team*. Zweifel emphasized that leadership requires the willingness to learn continuously and to be curious. These are also attributes needed to decode a culture.

Culture is “the unexamined assumptions that you never question”, in Zweifel’s definition. “Culture is that which you are blind to, so you do not know that you do not know, because it is just the way it is done”.

For example, Swiss people are used to being punctual, so no Swiss person questions this value, whereas punctuality has a different value order in India. Consequently, an indirect effect of attempting to understand another culture is the awakening to one’s own cultural values.

Language skills are vital aspects in understanding a culture and Zweifel quotes the German philosopher Martin Heidegger who once said, “Language is the house of being”. This means that mastering the other culture’s language opens the door to their humanity, their values and beliefs. However, visitors need to be aware of diversity at various levels. There is for instance no one Chinese culture – when doing business in China, for instance, the “local way” has to be researched and applied (see box).

● AY



Thomas D. Zweifel, Principal of ThomasZweifel.com (New York & Zurich), talked about decoding a culture in a few hours at the ConnectUS 2015 Preparatory Seminar. Photo: DM

Zweifel’s steps to Decoding a Culture

- Learn about the country’s founders.
- Learn about the country’s heroes.
- Learn about the country’s villains and taboos.
- Learn about the country’s defining moments from history.

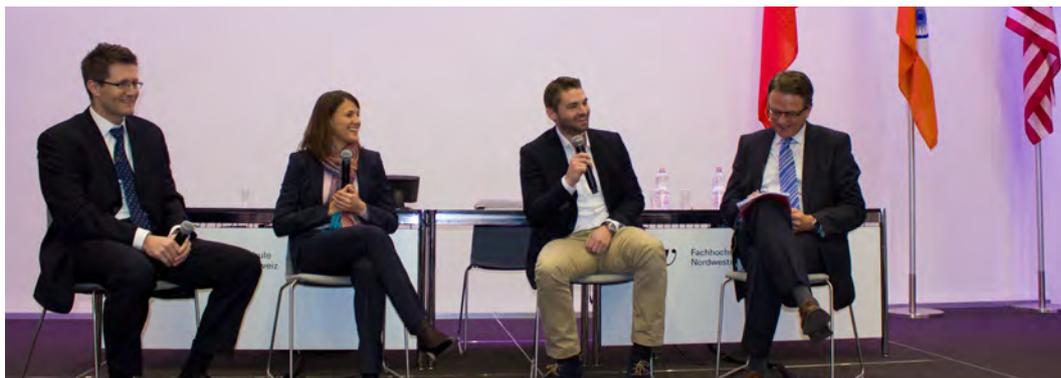
HINDI LESSON

हिन्दी

Hindi is one of the most spoken language of the world. In order to gain first insights into Hindi, Sanghamitra Pujari from RHZ Sprachen in Zürich visited the preparatory seminar of Focus India and taught the diligent students first steps and words in Hindi. Gratified by the curiosity and motivation of the delegation, she was happy to answer questions about pronunciation and spelling. Students have started practising in the hope of mastering a few sentences and words from the Hindi lesson by the time they travel to India for the on-site Seminar.

● KS

SUPPORTING EXPATS IS VITAL FOR RETENTION AND COSTS



The expat talk - from left to right: Bas Visschedijk, Corinne Raez, Nicolas Baer, Dr. Erhard Lüthi. Photo: JH

● An international assignment costs companies more than a local employee. Moreover, many expats leave the company shortly after repatriation. What can companies do to support their expat employees before, during and after their assignments abroad? Dr. Erhard Lüthi, professor of Human Resource Management at the FHNW discussed this issue with expatriates Corinne Raez (India), Bas Visschedijk (China) and Nicolas Baer (Singapore).

Although all expats experienced personal and professional growth during their assignments abroad and while the compensations and benefits were attractive, they faced many bureaucratic, organizational and local challenges, mainly because their employers did not support them enough. The expat panelists wished their company's HR department had provided more service support and preparation beforehand, maintained continuous and close contact during the stay and provided reintegration support in the new position whilst repatriation.

Expatriating is challenging and preparation is therefore a key factor for success. Raez, for example, took Hindi classes, dealt with governmental authorities and experienced a culture clash. "In India you can't plan ahead because of the fast moving daily lifestyle, so as a Swiss person it was very difficult for me to adapt to the local norms", Raez said. Visschedijk, on the other hand, faced reentry cultural shock back home. In addition, Baer had to improve his language skills to survive. As a very young employee in Singapore, he also experienced the importance of seniority in the Asian culture and the thereby linked prejudice that he was inexperienced.

In a nutshell, they recommend employees who are interested in international assignments to be open to other cultures, take risks to cope with, go without expectations, and learn the language. "This is especially important for Asian languages, because people are afraid to lose face in the attempt to speak English", said Visschedijk. Moreover, it goes without saying that employers should support their employees abroad closely to avoid high costs and high employee turnover rates after repatriation. ● AY

THE WORLD IS NOT FLAT



Dr. Franco Gandolfi, Dean at the School of Business California Baptist University, raised awareness of global competence and its ingredients, which are strongly related to globalization. These ingredients are process, integration and culture. Therefore, in his view "globalization aims to bring unity in a world of diversity". Photo: LV

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Without them, this newsletter would not have been possible.
Thank you!

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Insight China



Focus India



connectUS



IMPRESSUM

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PREVIEW: ON-SITE SEMINARS



Photo: JH



INSIGHT CHINA

The Insight China delegation will experience Chinese non-state enterprises – China's unfolding catalyst for success with company visits at **Raisecom**, **Lenovo**, the **High Fashion Group** and **Bash**. In addition to that, speakers will talk about major Swiss-Sino success stories. Alongside visits to the major cities **Beijing** and **Shanghai** the delegation will stop in **Lanzhou**, the capital of the Gansu province as well as in the major economic centers **Suzhou** and **Hangzhou**.

FOCUS INDIA

During the trip to India, Focus India will be visiting local and international companies and discover Indian culture in cities such as: Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Pune. Among the companies that will be visited are sponsors such as **Accenture** and **Blaser**. The delegation will be hosted by the well-known Swiss company **Novartis**. Delegation participants will also visit local non-profit and profit oriented organizations - among many others are **Saahans** and **Somalyah**.

CONNECTUS

connectUS is going to look into networking strategies, innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit in the US. They will visit companies, official bodies, and educational institutions in Boston, New York City and Chicago.

PREVIEW ITINERARIES

The on-site seminars will take place from 26 March to 12 April 2015. The next newsletter will document the unique learning experiences made on the trips to China, India and the United States of America and will be out early in May.

Keep in touch with us! Visit the relevant websites for daily updates and news or follow the groups on Twitter and Facebook.

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