

“CAN WE TOUCH BASE TOMORROW?”

LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH AMERICANS IN LAW AND BUSINESS

Anyone who works abroad knows that learning a language is not the same thing as understanding how to communicate effectively. Lawyers and business professionals who have studied English as a second language may speak and write with near-perfect grammar and an advanced vocabulary. Yet in business and legal settings with American clients, customers, and colleagues, they may often find, through no fault of their formal education, that they still lack the ability to connect successfully with their audiences. This is a series of writing and speaking courses that offer a new cultural approach to communication to bridge the gap.

Americans can be notoriously hard people with whom to communicate. Part of the problem is that part of the non English-speaking world is still taught “the Queen’s English” or some antiquated version of British or American English concocted by local academics or government officials rather than more natural contemporary English. Yet the larger problem is that effective communication with Americans is about a lot more than simply words. It entails understanding the unique way Americans think and approach the legal, political, and business world. To Japanese and Chinese, learning to be as direct as an American can involve nothing less than a kind of personal transformation, at odds with the essence of their own native cultures. Danes or Swedes can be surprised to learn that in the US, it’s often considered quick rather than rude to interrupt a speaker in an informal conversation. Even reminding Italians that hand gestures will be less useful in getting their message across to Americans (let’s face it – gestures are not of much use in telephone conferencing) entails an understanding of why Americans think Ronald Reagan communicated far more effectively than Winston Churchill ever did, why Oprah Winfrey annually wins the national survey of the “most admired American,” or why Bill Gates is as recognized as he is. In an ideal world, Americans would incorporate some of the civility and eloquence of other cultures. But in reality, most American business people assume without realizing it that everyone understands their unique way of communicating.

Yes, the United States is a huge diverse place and you don’t have to drive a big car, love baseball, become addicted to your “Blackberry,” revere

the military, or watch “Desperate Housewives” to communicate effectively with Americans. But you’ll be a lot better speaker and writer if you learn *why* so many Americans embrace these traits – no matter how trivial it may seem. Americans speak and write the way they do because of who they are -- a garrulous group which in many cases is friendly and accepting, though ill-informed, and who assume without thinking that the world revolves around them

In this unique series of courses you will learn:

Writing

- How to get to the point quickly
- How to write better research memos, letters, and email in an American style
- How computers have changed the American way of writing
- How to convey complex ideas in a simpler manner
- How to use storytelling the way Americans do
- How to format to make your point more clearly
- How style differs in the US from region to region
- How to make your point directly without making enemies
- Contract drafting and review in English
- How to present written arguments that will resonate in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles as well as they did in their native language in Paris, Tokyo, or Sao Paulo

Speaking

- How to improve your voice, presentation style, and delivery so it fits with the informal American approach
- How television defines for Americans the essence of good communication
- How to get to the point quickly
- How American humor differs from that of the rest of the world
- How to use an interpreter
- How American women present themselves differently from their counterparts around the world
- How use the telephone effectively and in teleconferencing

- Why Americans are hooked on visual aids and PowerPoint
- How to use your accent to your advantage
- Why grammatical accuracy is sometimes less important than smooth delivery

The Instructor

Steven Stark, the instructor, has a vast background in the field of communication and inter-cultural studies and has taught writing and speaking to thousands of lawyers, government officials and those working in business. A former Lecturer on Law at Harvard Law School where he gave several upper-level courses on writing and speaking (including a workshop to international LLM students), he is the author of three books, including the highly-acclaimed “Writing to Win: The Legal Writer” (Doubleday). He has been a radio commentator for CNN, National Public Radio, the BBC, and the Voice of America, where his role was to try to interpret American culture to the rest of the world. A former speechwriter and issues aide to Jimmy Carter, he has been a columnist for the Boston Globe and Montreal Star and has written extensively on American culture in such publications as the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, and the Atlantic Monthly. He has taught hundreds of speaking and writing courses all over the world.

Who Should Take These Courses?

These courses are intended for two types of audiences. They are designed in the U.S. for those international lawyers and professionals who have been transferred to the United States. They are geared in the rest of the world to professionals and lawyers who are proficient in English and work in U.S. businesses or firms, or deal frequently with Americans or Canadians.

One-day courses can be taught separately on writing or speaking, or can combine the two. In-house courses for law firms, consulting firms, or in corporations that work in specific areas such as pharmaceuticals or information technology are tailored to the particular needs and expectations of the participants in those fields. In corporate workshops or in-house settings, the usual arrangement is to solicit samples in advance from as many participants as possible so the course can be geared to the specific needs of the firm. After the group session, personal meetings are scheduled

individually with as many lawyers as possible to go over their writing.
Follow-up by phone and email is provided as necessary.

Contact information

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