

## INDIA / US CULTURAL DIFFERENCES In High-Technology Strategic Alliances

28 April 2017  
[http://www.spibr.org/India-US\\_cultural\\_differences.pdf](http://www.spibr.org/India-US_cultural_differences.pdf)

The purpose of this document is to enable greater value-creation in an alliance. It does this by initiating meaningful and thought-provoking dialogue. Some of the statements may seem blunt and harsh; this approach helps “clear the air”. This process focuses collective attention, first on the challenges, and then on practical recommendations.<sup>1</sup> Over time, value-impediments are transcended, greater trust enters the relationship and value-creating opportunities naturally surface.

The table below summarizes cultural and strategic differences that exist in working relationships between Indian and US high-tech companies. This is one person’s perspective based on input from alliance managers in the US and India. Perspectives differ from person to person and they evolve over time.

This is a living document. It will be reviewed, discussed and adjusted as needed.

<b>Perspectives</b>	
<b>India’s View of US</b> (view of other)	<b>US’s View of India</b> (view of other)
Paradoxical sense of fearful superiority.	Lack of transparency; hard to trust.
Oriented toward the individual (personal gain).	Oriented toward the collective (greater good).
Negotiates for win/win outcomes.	Negotiates with zero-sum mindset.
Technical requirements are too open-ended.	Some lack of innovation; risk-averse.
Religious: divisive, fearful and impatient.	Spiritual: inclusive, peaceful, timeless.
Focused on innovation as the route to value.	Focused on price reduction as the route to value.
<b>US’s View of US</b> (view of self)	<b>India’s View of India</b> (view of self)
Greedy and impatient (both sides).	Greedy and impatient (both sides).
Higher levels of ethics and honesty.	Corruption, bureaucracy, low levels of trust.
Openly discusses difficult issues.	Reluctant to discuss difficult issues.
Independence is prized; results-oriented.	Interdependence is prized; people-oriented.
Willing to openly challenge hierarchy.	Hierarchy and titles are very important.
Family values are debated and discussed.	Both a love for and erosion of family values.
The love of power.	The love of knowledge.
Celebrates diversity.	Celebrates conformity.
<b>Recommendations</b>	
Patience and a long-term perspective ...	
Establish and <i>develop</i> strong relationships amongst alliance managers and executives.	
Establish and maintain high levels of <i>trust</i> ; appropriately open and transparent communications.	
Leverage off differences; <i>transform</i> them into <i>assets</i> ; do not just <i>manage</i> differences, <i>use</i> them.	
Create a path of success-indicating <i>metrics</i> , illustrating clear progress toward tangible <i>results</i> .	

Note: The phrase “cultural differences” is being used here in a very *broad* as well as in a very *narrow* way. It is broad in that it encompasses *all* of the major challenges or value-impediments in a strategic alliance (a long-term value-creating relationship); this can also include strategic differences. These differences surface in the working relationship of an alliance as divergent perspectives. These differences are most evident when we cannot make sense of the behavior of the other side; when they seem to be signs of deviousness, incompetency or lunacy.

The phrase “cultural differences” is also being used in a very narrow sense. It is focused on the differences in a strategic alliance, in the working relationship. It admittedly does not encompass *all* of the attributes of a corporate culture. In other words, if it does not affect the working relationship, it is not included.

<sup>1</sup> To read more about this methodology go to [http://www.spibr.org/2-slide\\_methodology.pdf](http://www.spibr.org/2-slide_methodology.pdf).