

KIAMOTORS CASE STUDY

2011 Bridging Culture Worldwide

Success Story

As a disclaimer, the viewpoints of this case study are solely the opinions of Don Southerton and Bridging Culture Worldwide.



2011 Bridging Culture Worldwide Case Study Success Story— **Kia Motors America**

Bridging Culture Worldwide supports a number of Korea-based global organizations. Many are in the automotive sector. This is because the top Korean auto maker (Hyundai and Kia Motors) has a huge overseas operation and the auto sector requires extensive infrastructure and staffing to support their network (parts, sales, marketing, logistics, manufacturing, finance, R&D, Design, legal, and compliance with a myriad of local, state and federal regulations).

Moreover, tier 1 vendors and suppliers are now supporting the carmaker. All together there is a need for many to better understand the mindset and corporate culture of Korea based firms like Hyundai and Kia Motors.

This case study looks at Kia Motors America, their Korea-focused cross-cultural training program, and the importance of cross-cultural understanding in global partnerships.

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Background

In 2010, I prepared a case study sharing the great job Kia Motors America (a division of the Hyundai Motor Group) does providing their team with support. This includes Korean culture training for new employees and ongoing Korean cross-cultural workshops for the team. For example, in past workshops we covered topics including skills for working effectively with expat Korean team members (*jujaewon*) and an update on the KORUS FTA.

Kia also provides ongoing support and coaching to key management and leadership. This includes Korea culture coaching to new non-Korean executives. Here we share Korea's heritage, Kia history and corporate culture, workplace expectations, and etiquette, while providing answers to questions that surface day-to-day. We also prepare executives for their first visit to Korea and the norms for meeting with senior Korean leadership and high-level meetings at Kia Motors HQ, R&D Center, etc.

Workshops Coaching and Consulting

Over the years we have supported KMA Marketing teams, PR, Service, Parts, HR, and Strategic development teams. Our support has been diverse. For example, we have worked with Kia technicians competing in Kia Motors Company's Global Automotive Technical Skills Competition in Seoul. We have also shared insights into Korean culture and workplace with local university students working as interns at KMA. Also, one of our important roles is supporting key vendors. They, too, need a deep understanding of Korea and its culture.

For 2011, in cooperation with KMA's human resource development team, we offered 12 weeks of Korea 101 and 201 cross-cultural training. The first six weeks focused on history, heritage, and popular culture. A second six week program looked at the Korean workplace and its norms, practices, and expectations.



Caption: Kia Motors America Korea 201, Summer 2011.



Success

In closing, the key to the success of Kia Motors America’s Korean cross cultural training has been the strong endorsement of the firms CEOs, senior American and Korean management, and the HR team. As an organization they realize that their teams need resources. Expecting employees to “get it” without training and coaching rarely works. We’re proud to work with Kia and their team.

If you have questions on implementing a program to support your team, please feel to contact us at dsoutherton@bridgingculture.com or call 1-310-866-3777