



El Dorado calling

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Arriviste United States President Donald Trump's incorrigible nationalism and xenophobia are morphing into trade protection and anti-immigrant policies, which will undermine a wide range of multilateral free trade frameworks in favour of bilateral agreements.

As the US lowers its portcullis, New Zealand's free trade agreements (FTAs) with China and several other Asian nations will stand New Zealand in good stead but there's real danger in having all one's trade eggs in one made-in-China basket.

Over-dependence on one market cost New Zealand dearly when the UK joined the European Economic Community in 1973 and it is again at risk of similar recessionary outcomes, as Trump's policies have the potential to severely disrupt the Chinese economy which is New Zealand's biggest export market.

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New Zealand exporters can capitalise on the legwork done in the Latin America in recent years by former prime ministers Helen Clark and John Key and numerous ministers, who've succeeded in positioning New Zealand in the region's consciousness as a font of high-quality, eco-friendly goods, cutting-edge technology and world-ranking education services.

In addition to New Zealand's existing FTA with Chile, others are in the works with Mercosur, Mexico and Colombia and no doubt the mandarins at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise are beating a path to Peru and Brazil, as bilateral trade becomes, at least for the time being, the only game in town.

Getting boots on the ground is always problematic in any new export market and no more so than in Latin America, where commerce is driven by unique imperatives.

A common mistake New Zealand exporters make is to think of Latin America as a homogeneous region, when each of its 33 countries has differences and challenges which must be taken into consideration.

Logistics and sales strategies that are effective in one country can prove to be wholly ineffective in another if exporters do not have a comprehensive cultural understanding of each country.

Getting to know you

There are few places in the world where personal relationships are more integral to commercial success than in Latin America, as business people invariably want to get to know potential partners, customers and clients personally before they will consider doing business with them.

Accepting social invitations, meeting your contact's friends and

family and sharing both business and personal experiences to build trust is time-consuming but it is an investment that pays handsome long-term dividends.

Latin American business classes are very cosmopolitan with a lot of international experience, but they're still ultra-sensitive to inferences of superiority New Zealand will necessarily work in Colombia, for example. And equally it's arrogant to insist on doing things the "New Zealand Way" anywhere in the region.

Latin Americans abhor giving offence, which leads to the conundrum that a "yes" answer, especially in Brazil, can also mean "no", as they don't wish to offend.

Reading between the lines is a skill that must be developed quickly, as more often than not the "yes" which means "no" can still lead to a "yes" which really does mean "yes" once the speaker knows you better, and this is why patience is a virtue in Latin American business and why it takes around 30 per cent longer to conclude than in the West.

Although business in Latin America is primarily concerned with relationships rather than rules it is necessary to understand local legal requirements and to accurately document all agreements and contracts. Working with reputable lawyers is indispensable.

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Stoush over Sunday text message

Further, the directors of the company had asked Mr Bosman to reconsider his resignation after a cooling down period. The Authority said Mr Kraan did not have the authority to "send away", that is, dismiss, Mr Bosman. Therefore, the words "you're finished" did not amount to dismissal.

Also, by abruptly resigning, Mr Bosman did not give his employer an opportunity to investigate the issues of the Monday morning meeting.

In conclusion the Authority found: "Ultimately, Mr Bosman resigned from Total Access of his own free will. He may have done so in difficult or heightened circumstances - and prematurely, that is, in the absence of an investigation into the events of 19 October 2015 - but the consequences of that decision are for him to bear."

The latest EMA statistics on personal grievances show that constructive dismissal is the hardest type of grievance for an employee to win, and as this case demonstrates, a high threshold needs to be passed before such a finding will be made.

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Health and safety as part of core company strategy

Under a strategic plan this could not continue. What would be in place would be a "hearing conservation"

programme that would identify the noise sources and then over time implement noise reduction measures. This would require high level board involvement for capital expenses, engineering, procurement, etc. It would sit inside the company's vision and goals to be a world leader, putting safety first and genuinely treating staff as the most important asset.

Until safety and health are part of the strategic direction and values of a company, they will remain as overheads and compliance-based.

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Are great salespeople made or born?

Customers are more likely to do business with a salesperson who they perceive as competent and adding value to their organisation.

Salespeople need to know how to develop their expertise, where to get information, how to process data and how to use it effectively. They also need to understand the importance of, and invest in, continuous professional development.

Born or made?

So, back to the original question: are great salespeople born or made? The answer is: both.

Hire for attitude and exceptional interpersonal skills.

Facilitate salesperson capability-development through targeted training and providing tools, templates and processes. This, when supported by proactive, engaged coaching and nurturing your salespeople's desire, can create great salespeople who will deliver exceptional results.

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Another common mistake New Zealand exporters make is to presume their business contacts speak English, when only a small percentage of Latin Americans can.

Learning Spanish (or Portuguese for Brazil) greatly enhances business prospects by serving as a token of respect for local culture, and goes over a treat, promoting deeper understanding of the importance of proposals and agreements and enabling better exposition of products and service to clients.

Sir Walter Raleigh and the Spanish conquistadors never found the fabled riches of "El Dorado", a city reputedly built with gold, no doubt because they ruthlessly supplanted local cultures with their own. But 500 years on, Latin America's 600-plus million, upwardly-mobile consumers will willingly show the way to El Dorado if New Zealand exporters respect the region's cultures and business customs.

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