

The Global Consultant: How to Make Seven Figures Across Borders.

By Alan Weiss and Omar Khan. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2009. Hardback, 225 pages, \$34.95.

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Target Audience

Strictly speaking, this is not a "project management" book, but I thought it might be of interest to those who want to initiate or expand global operations---and make more money in the process. The authors share many of their own experiences to tempt you to join them in the elite group of consultants, trainers, or general gurus who travel first class (or hire their own jet), stay at the best hotels, eat at the best restaurants, and otherwise enjoy the good life. But they also make it clear that you must already be very good at what you do, if you plan to become a sought-after global player who commands munificent fees. So, if you are interested in initiating your own personal "Millionaire Project", the book provides some wide-ranging personal and professional advice.

Point of View

Alan Weiss and Omar Khan argue that we Americans and our "capitalist way" are widely accepted abroad. Consequently, we are seen as sources of practical knowledge on how to innovate in business. We also benefit because English is widely used in business and educational communities around the globe. They suggest that certain characteristics of capitalism are found even in non-capitalistic states like the People's Republic of China. They note: "Capitalism is based on trust. If the trust is routinely violated, the system collapses. More importantly, those who violate the trust find themselves disenfranchised from the system." (Page 16) I assume their book was written before the current corporate meltdown in America.

Overview of the Book

The book is well organized and provides many concrete examples from the writers' business and personal experiences.

Section I. The World View

This section helps you assess some of the factors important in getting started: Where do you wish to operate---in terms of countries or regions? What specific expertise do you expect to bring to your overseas clients? Do you already have the modern communications and media tools needed to project yourself to your clients or potential clients when you are not physically present?

When using local people or groups to help you, it is important to be clear about who does what. The authors make a critical distinction between "subcontractors" and "alliances". Subcontractors are hired to implement specific work that you have already contracted. Generally, you would pay subcontractors on a daily or hourly rate. Alliances are more like partners, who may do more critical tasks and be responsible for bringing in new business for you. They may be paid a percentage of fees collected. You may also work with an alliance group to establish your local office or physical presence.

Section II. The Itinerary

This section provides extensive advice on keeping personally fit, traveling in comfort, and "looking good" during visits. It also stresses your need to continuously study developments in your profession and in the countries where you are operating. While noting the importance of establishing local offices and representatives, your personal presence is also a critical element: The authors warn: "Key Point: Don't ever underestimate the added value of your personal participation. You are the talent; the antithesis of a commodity. While we encourage remote work and diminished labor intensity, the 'power of presence' is priceless." (Page 88).

Section III. The Journey and Section IV. Distinctive Places and Sites

These sections discuss setting fees and then getting paid promptly and in ways that don't create tax or customs problems. They describe how to apply value-based fees in different cultural situations. They also include advice on when to ignore cultural variances in pricing. This last part of the book summarizes some of the important things needed to maintain a proper personal perspective in your global-oriented business.

Three appendices provide more details on "First Class" traveling and vacationing.

Summary Comments

Overall, I think this is a good book for those who want to expand into global consulting or training operations. To initiate and maintain the business momentum required to make the big bucks suggested by the authors, you would probably need to have an actual company or a very sophisticated virtual equivalent to backstop you. It is not clear how much backstopping staff and facilities the authors have.

Overall Rating: Four (out of 5):  **James R. Brady, PhD, MPA, MEd.**

