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## TechPulse: Doing business with China means steep learning curve 10/22/2005

TechPulse, London Free Press, October 22, 2005  
By Marilyn Sinclair

Speaking with Mia Doucet I'm reminded of the lyrics to The 59th Bridge Street by Simon and Garfunkel: "Slow down, you move too fast."

Doucet, author of [China in Motion: 17 Secrets to Slashing the Time to Productive Profits in China, Japan and South Korea](#), says this is just one faux pas North American businesses make when looking to expand into the Pacific Rim.

"One of the most important keys to doing business in China is the willingness to adopt Western behaviours. We need to slow down the communication. We need to slow down the entire business process at the front end because our sense of urgency works against us."

Doucet didn't intentionally set out to write a book. In fact, her business forte is sales. She is founder and CEO of London-based Sales Development Institute ([www.sdinstitute.com](#)). Doucet was approached by one of her clients to write a proposal for a seminar on doing business in China. She declined. But as the saying goes, sometimes things are not what they seem and a few years later Doucet found herself facilitating a session for engineers and managers in the automotive industry. One of the topics was intellectual assets.

"A smart, sophisticated Chinese engineer quietly said: 'How can one person own an idea? For the Chinese feel that more important than ownership is that large numbers of people benefit from living from the idea.'" For Doucet it was an epiphany.

"What we call intellectual piracy has deep, deep roots in our culture...in China, it doesn't belong to just one person. It belongs to the world. It cannot be bought or sold."

Doing business with our Chinese counterparts requires a steep learning curve. To succeed, we must relate to them in a way that respects their culture, says Doucet, "The Chinese are not as adaptable, anxious to do business and willing to overlook minor indiscretions. Even small Western behaviours can cause loss of face."

For the Chinese, rewards come from sharing scarce resources. Not so long ago, the most valuable resource was rice; today it's technology. Our culture values independence, individualism and intellectual property. Westerners are, by nature, more open and, as such, often find that company secrets inadvertently slip out. The Chinese share the ideas. It's in the culture. It's in the share.

"If you want to protect your intellectual assets your long-term strategy has to be based on understanding the culture, on learning to communicate, and on creating cross-cultural relationships."

competence in your company."

To do this, technical representatives from Western businesses who go to China their innate impulses in three key areas.

1. The need to be noticed and feel appreciated. To achieve this we often divulge information. Chinese are quiet by nature but they absorb every detail of information never let on how much they know, and those who know the most, say the least.
2. The need to be seen as smart and to be right. Many Chinese business people behave as naïve. Unlike business people from other countries, like Germany Westerners are more open to sharing their technologies.
3. Loving to be in the know. "That's the power behind 'just between you and me', says Doucet. If you've taken a course in negotiation skills "you know the record." There's no 'just between you and me' in China either."

For more tips on doing business in China visit [www.chinainmotion.com](http://www.chinainmotion.com).

### **TechAlliance News**

October 26<sup>th</sup>: Panel Session – Tech Sales 101: Pricing, marketing and sales strategy in the global technology arena. Featuring panellists from Ivey, IBM and Xaltes Ltd

November 24th: Lunch and Learn Building Better Bridges for Innovation: Linking technology and business featuring guest speaker Dr. Ilse Treurnicht, CEO, MaR District

*Marilyn Sinclair is General Manager of TechAlliance. TechAlliance is a membership organization formed to raise the economic growth, profile and competencies of the region's knowledge-based industry. For information, call 858-5185, visit [www.techalliance.ca](http://www.techalliance.ca) or e-mail [info@techalliance.ca](mailto:info@techalliance.ca).*