



The Key to Business Success

Despite the economic woes of the past few years, Indonesia remains a gold mine of potential opportunities for foreign investors. But for expatriates arriving on these shores for the first time, adjusting to the particular cultural and social conditions in Indonesia can be a challenging learning experience. Thomas Brandt, author of *“Kunci Budaya” Business in Indonesia The cultural key to success*, offers some invaluable insight and advice for foreign business people hoping to succeed in Indonesia’s complex business environment.

Foreigners doing business in Indonesia today are acting in a fast-changing environment. Barriers arising from the different social/cultural setting of the host country and the requirements of cross-cultural management for foreign business people still remain. It is well-known that the technical preconditions governing a collaboration with local counterparts, such as the terms and conditions of investment and the legal framework, are all very important, but knowing only these aspects simply does not suffice. In Indonesia, competition is not confined to the product. The challenge lies in equalling the appeal of a product with in-depth knowledge of the local market and of local business practices. An interest in long-term success in Indonesia demands a willingness to learn and understand the Indonesian business mentality. These issues form the focus of the book *“Kunci Budaya”*, and due to the ongoing changes that are affecting Indonesia, cross-cultural issues have become even more important.

In the book, considerable emphasis is given to the relationship that local managers have with their headquarters in the home country. Foreigners posted in Indonesia often complain that they spend more time explaining things to their head office back home, than they do actually selling the product in the market - the latter of course being the original purpose of the posting. Headquarters expect that the expatriate manager they sent out will start working efficiently within minutes of stepping off the plane at his destination, i.e. to do his job exactly as he did at the home office.

“As soon as I arrived here, I was forced to reach my target figures, there was no time for me to become acquainted with the economically relevant local conditions and culture. For a long time, learning by trial and error was driving me to despair.”

