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# Anthropology for Businesses

**How Hiring an Anthropologist Will  
Make Your Firm More Competitive in  
the New Economy**

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# Who Employs Anthropologists?

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- Intel
- Citicorp
- AT&T
- Kodak
- Sapient
- Hauser Design
- Boeing
- Motorola
- Walt Disney
- Microsoft
- General Mills
- Hallmark
- Travel One
- Hanseatic Group
- Manchester Memorial
- Palisades Pharmaceuticals
- Celanese Corporation
- ...and the list goes on



# ...But, Why Are They Hiring Anthropologists?

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***Anthropologists are trained with a number of useful skills:***

- Communicating in a globalized world
- Avoiding preconceptions and recognizing varied perspectives
- Seeing the “big picture”
- Gathering, integrating, synthesizing and analyzing data
- Working within and obtaining funding for structured budgets



# Communicating in a Globalized World

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- **Written Communication**

- Anthropologists explain the subtleties of daily life in diverse cultures. They make complex research findings comprehensible to a wide audience.
- Many anthropologists have become successful authors of both fiction and non-fiction for the general public.
  - Michael Crichton, Ursula LeGuin, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

- **Verbal Communication**

- Anthropologists learn to communicate effectively with people from a variety of backgrounds, cultures and places, studying an incredible range of populations, from displaced immigrants to CEOs of international corporations.



# Communicating in a Globalized World

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## ■ **Multicultural Communication**

- An education in anthropology cultivates an understanding of multicultural perspectives.
- For anthropologists, it's important to understand and respect diversity, not just tolerate it.
- Anthropologists use cross-cultural perspectives, whether analyzing diversity in domestic institutions or studying how products will be received abroad.
- The World Bank has hired anthropologists before implementing key policies in areas from cultural heritage preservation to forestry and irrigation, throughout Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America.



# Communicating in a Globalized World

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- **Example: Multicultural and multinational products**
  - Anthropologists in Intel's People and Practices Research division immerse themselves in potential markets in order to understand local wants and needs.
  - A number of Intel's innovative and successful technological models have been developed for China's emerging markets based on ethnographic research by Intel anthropologists.



# Communicating in a Globalized World

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- **Example: Anthropology and the Environment**
  - What does air quality have to do with anthropology?  
Actually, a lot!
  - One anthropologist is an air quality control director in his state. By using skills taught in anthropology, like effective communication and project management, he works with state agencies, businesses and community leaders to develop air quality awareness and policy.



# Avoiding Preconceptions and Recognizing Varied Perspectives

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- Anthropologists reject a Euro-centric mindset and avoid making cultural assumptions.
- With a knack for understanding diverse perspectives and an objective eye, they are often excellent at conflict management, negotiation and dispute resolution.
- Ralph Salier-Hellendag, a business anthropologist, has been employed by multi-national corporations and has worked in Asia, Europe and South America. His anthropological training has helped him to negotiate cross-cultural contracts, joint ventures and business relationships.





# Avoiding Preconceptions and Recognizing Varied Perspectives

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- **Example: Stock options are not savings**
  - The Sapiient consulting firm found that stock options and traditional financial savings options are viewed differently.
  - Stock options are often seen as “play money,” or money for luxuries, not necessities.
  - The result? Sapiient’s client incorporated these findings into their business plan and website design.



# Seeing the “Big Picture”

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- **Anthropologists use a holistic approach**
  - They take into account all variables at all levels—a perspective that is not always emphasized in other disciplines.
- **For instance**
  - In product development, seeing the big picture might mean figuring out all the ways a product fits into the environment and lives of various consumer groups.
- **Anthropological holism is essential in the new economy**
  - Rapid fluctuations in the current economy mean it is important to understand how global changes can affect local communities and how best to adapt to these changes.



# Seeing the “Big Picture”

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- **Example: Engineering with people in mind**
  - Engineers are trained to look at technology, while anthropologists are trained to look at all the ways that different people use technology.
  - Motorola anthropologists studied pager use among teenagers and discovered that, while teens used pagers to keep in touch, they also used them as fashion accessories.
  - The result? By combining engineering expertise with anthropological data, Motorola developed trendy, colorful pagers.



# Seeing the “Big Picture”

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- **Example: Holistic insights into finance**
  - Dr. Gillian Tett is a journalist for the Financial Times, but she started off with a doctorate in anthropology.
  - She predicted the current economic crisis several years before it occurred and has since written extensively about how the crisis happened in the first place.
  - Tett was named the Journalist of the Year at the 2009 British Press Awards and the British Business Journalist of the Year in 2008.



# Gathering, Integrating, Synthesizing and Analyzing Data

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- **Anthropologists learn to employ a number of techniques to gather, understand and integrate data**
  - Qualitative and quantitative research methods
  - Analytical reasoning and critical thinking
  - Ethnographic research and analysis
  - Statistical analysis
  - Survey techniques and interviewing skills
  - Focus group management
  - Systematic observation
  - Detailed record-keeping



# Gathering, Integrating, Synthesizing and Analyzing Data

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- **Example: Ethnographic observations and surveys**
  - A General Mills focus group led the company to believe that whole-grain breakfasts were a top priority for parents to serve their kids.
  - When anthropologists actually observed family breakfast routines, they found that snacks on the run and “multicolored cereal” were preferred in reality.
  - The result? Go-Gurt, the nationally successful yogurt snack that can be eaten on the go.



# Gathering, Integrating, Synthesizing and Analyzing Data

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- **Example: Disney increases viewership**

- Disney hired a team of anthropologists to help it rejuvenate its appeal to a stagnating audience: 6-14 year old boys.
- Boys tend to be less open than girls in regular surveys, making anthropological methods better for understanding their interests.
- The result? Disney created a new television channel, Disney XD, tailored toward the interests of boys. Disney has also seen a 10% increase in male viewership.



# Gathering, Integrating, Synthesizing and Analyzing Data

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- **Example: Anthropology in government**
  - Currently an epidemiologist at the CDC and a member of the NIH Senior Biomedical Research Service, Dr. Robert Hahn has found his anthropological training and research skills useful in a number of ways.
  - He has conducted anthropological and public health research all over the world and has published numerous studies and written two books on medical anthropology.
  - He was also a Capitol Hill fellow in the House VA Committee during 1998 and 1999.





# Working within and Obtaining Funding for Structured Budgets

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- Anthropological research is funded primarily by grants.
- Anthropologists are proficient at grant and proposal writing to obtain funding for research projects.
- In anthropology, competition is fierce for limited funding, making anthropologists very adept at working within the confines of a limited or structured budget.
- Anthropologists excel at financial prioritization and creating and adhering to detailed budgets.



# Working within and Obtaining Funding for Structured Budgets

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- **Example: \$1 million grant, anyone?**
  - Anthropologists often learn grant writing during graduate school in order to obtain money for research.
  - One anthropologist at United Housing, Inc., for example, regularly obtains grants for non-profit work.
  - Funding he has helped obtain includes a more than \$1 million grant for the revitalization and restoration of neighborhoods and public housing.



# What Can Anthropologists Do for My Business or Non-Profit?

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- Assess and adapt workgroup practices, product designs, environments or project strategies in a rapidly changing and risky market
- Analyze product usage, consumer mindset, brand appeal, research data and donor motivation
- Mediate workplace relationships to increase efficiency
- Communicate effectively with diverse audiences such as consumers, donors, clients, shareholders, internal staff and members
- Organize and manage large, complex projects with stakeholders representing a wide range of interests
- Perform objective, goal-oriented evaluations and risk assessments
- Write proposals and obtain grants or other sources of funding