

Competing in a One World Market

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I recently attended an LPGA golf tournament held near my home in a Chicago suburb. The professional ladies golf tournament was called the *UL International Crown*, a global event that featured golf team competition between the top eight qualifying countries.



With Chicago being a cosmopolitan mix of cultures and nationalities, the event was well attended by viewers and fans from around the world.



You had the feeling you were attending the olympic games with male and female spectators roaring with national pride and spirit, cheering loudly for their country favorite. All spectators respected the opposing cheers from each country favorites, and no one booed, after all golf is a gentlemen's (gentlewoman's) game, based on honor and honesty. Their equipment, their dress, and their mannerisms were all the same. The sport has evolved with each competitor cloning the best way to act and play the game. Throughout the event each country freely expressed their emotions with other country fans. At this event, cheers were heard in several languages, but all players understood English and were coached to adapt internationally with their golf tools and skills. As team Thailand tee'd off, the cheering group sitting next to me shouted out *sūai!* (สวย — meaning *Beautiful!*) and extended a fist shake in recognition of a good drive. Although I did not understand, no words needed to be said to understand the meaning of a fist shake as eight countries stood together to cheer on their teams. This was world competition and cooperation at its best. In the end, the final

winners and losers were cheered by all-after all, they were the best female golfers in the world!

Like in the world of international trade show marketing, you must quickly adapt to the ways of the world when competing abroad. In a single world marketplace you think global, but must act local. To compete on the world stage for sports like tennis, baseball, hockey, volleyball, and golf, English is a common language, and the dress, equipment, and mannerisms of the players have evolved and have been copied to be somewhat the same from country to country. On the flip side, sports like soccer, cricket, and rodeo riding remain unique to their regional audiences, they think local, and act local.

Many American companies are now very good at recalculating their marketing strategies when exhibiting abroad, but many have not and continue to think and act local. These country exhibitors risk being misunderstood and appear out of synch.

As the world of trade continues to evolve, the rules of engagement and honor between countries are melding to have a common flavor at trade shows. Those who elect to violate the common rules and ways of the world will pay the price, being stained as dishonorable and not liked. Those who are skilled, well behaved, and respected in business and in sports, are usually cheered by all when they win. The positive image achieved when playing by the rules and winning, is especially true in individual sports like tennis, golf, and trade show marketing where honor and player personalities play a role in your decision to select who to cheer for (or buy from), regardless of their sex, race, nationality, or religion. Positioning your brand of play effectively creates a sense of good will toward a company, or a golfer, when they perform well and win.

My golf day experience made me feel like I was in another country, when I was actually 2 miles from my home. Funny to see how everyone attending the event recognized this international environment and quickly adapted and behaved with 'one world' thinking, if just for a few hours.