

Frank Rekers, founder of the Talking Stick Institute as part of the 4Human Group, specialises in effective communication through dialogue. Stephen R. Covey (author of 'The 8th Habit') names it.

"the most powerful communication technique"

The Talking Stick has been used as a way of communication. The person that has the talking stick gets to speak, the others listen!

In this dialogue Frank gave the Talking Stick to Jaco Erasmus, founder of Erasmus van Wees, Executive Search & Interim Management (EvW). They discussed doing business between South Africa and the Netherlands.

'De mens is de maat van alle dingen'. That is what you read before you enter the elegant offices of Erasmus van Wees. This has a humanistic undertone, is that also your main point of departure?

Absolutely, I was raised in a family where mutual respect was part of our DNA. My mother always says, it's all about PEOPLE, process and then profit ... that is the right order.

What is a big difference between doing business in South Africa and The Netherlands?

Dutch business culture is pretty formal, contractual and neatly governed by rules and regulations. In South Africa it tends to be less formal, most agreements are made verbally with more flexibility to act according to the intention of the rule or regulation.

When you came to The Netherlands 17 years ago, what struck you as the main differences?

Dutch people are direct, open and transparent. I like that. South Africans are more British than you might think. They sometimes tend to beat around the bush. I had to learn to be less polite, more direct and stand my ground. In general, South Africans are quite spontaneous and hospitable. Half a reason is good enough to invite someone for a glass of wine or a BBQ. In the Netherlands we organise spontaneous and hospitable moments around our tight agendas.

What can we learn from South Africa?

My father always said: "Don't judge people on their face value". South Africans recently rediscovered that, and we in the Netherlands should learn not to forget that.

What are the do's for doing business in South Africa?

Being able to tell or appreciate a joke is top sport in South Africa. That will surely earn you a lot of brownie points. Wining and dining is also part of the business culture. Be respectful and not condescending. Take care not to judge South Africans purely from a European perspective. Many South Africans inherited the VOC mentality. When you have a good idea your business could take off and grow rapidly.



What are the do's for South Africans doing business in the Netherlands? Make sure you have a business plan, check that the financials all add up and leave the casual clothes at home.

Where will you be in 5 years time?

From a business perspective I would like our customers to view us as the Apple of Executive Search, bringing smart and innovative solutions to our clients.

