

Jeremy Williams OBE was the Defence, Naval, Military and Air Attaché in the British Embassies of Abu Dhabi and Bahrain at the times of both the Iran/Iraq (Tanker) War and the Gulf War. In an army career of 35 years he spent over 12 years in five Gulf locations including Riyadh.

His company, Handshaikh, is based near Winchester in England and he returns frequently to the Middle East to conduct seminars and training courses focusing on cross-cultural relations.

The following paragraphs have been extracted (with Jeremy's permission) from his recent book - Don't they know it's Friday?

### *Major effort and cost; company regional base*

*Time, money and effort are needed to establish representation in the Gulf market place. This is best done by being resident in the Gulf country concerned, or, but not as effective by visiting so frequently (perhaps from a company regional base in, say, Bahrain or Dubai) that one's face becomes familiar. It is not sufficient simply to arrive in-country with an excellent product or service and expect the Arab customer to react quickly and favourably, unless the item in question fills an instant and urgent need; such opportunities are rare indeed in the Gulf.*

### *Access and bargaining; legal authority to conclude deals*

*It follows therefore, that where an individual, such as a resident company representative, or a frequent and trusted visitor, has developed excellent local personal relationships, this person has a vital role to play on terms of introducing a total stranger, such as a visiting Chief Executive. The latter, in Arab eyes, will initially have less standing than that of the resident representative whom they know on a personal basis. But the importance of the Chief Executive in terms of legal capacity to negotiate formally on behalf of the company will not go unnoticed. However, the best possible status for a resident representative is to have personal legal capacity to conclude deals, and be known locally to have such a delegated authority. Given that negotiations reach a point of conclusion, probably the most unhelpful and damaging remark a representative can make is: "Well, of course I can't personally agree to that price, that's a matter for my manager. I'll ask him to come and see you." Most Gulf Arabs will regard anyone who has to make such a remark as merely a minor company official, and not really worth bothering with again.*

Observant readers will note that the foreword to JW's book has been written by Sir James Craig GCMG, President of the Middle East Association and former British Ambassador to the Kingdom.

# DON'T THEY KNOW IT'S FRIDAY?

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