

STRANGER > GUEST > INSIDER

I. The Importance of Roles

Developmental roles: defines stages in life
Professional roles: defines us professionally
Situational roles: defines us situationally
“Stranger/Guest” role
“Learner” role

II. Must Work through Conflicting Expectations

1. Expectations of the Insiders:

You are rich and powerful
VIP and influential
Supervisor, not a worker
Provider: Schools, Churches, money
Patron: charity, loans, help

2. Expectations of the Strangers:

“Poor volunteer” or missionary
Powerless “field worker”
Not very influential
Skilled worker
Conscientizer, not a provider

III. Newcomer’s Situational Role

Westerners are conditioned to hold power
NGOs & churches money, power, resources
Organizations insist on controls
Insist on a position of strength
Use skills, knowledge, talents to control
Efficient, cost-effective
Always right, aim at success
Signs of success = money, control, power
Cannot get beyond the role of stranger

IV. Constraints on being a “Guest” Posed by the Newcomer’s Professional Role

Expert, knowledgeable, superior, clever,
Able to do “big things”
Too busy & important for the people
Don’t get involved; here “to do a job.”
Short-termer syndrome: never unpacks
Brings too much: job, role, house, car,
Too insulated: hobbies, safety net
Too isolated: language, culture, friends
Cannot get beyond the role of stranger

V. The Role of “Guest”

Dependent on the people; must show it
Responsible to the people; must do it
Emphasize their skill, importance; not yours
Emphasize their production; not yours
Waste time with the people; be inefficient
Needy Receiver; not an independent giver
Need to be served; not serve
Need local knowledge; not an expert
Need to be led; not lead
Recognize you are weak; not strong

VI. Overcoming Cross-Cultural Barriers

1. Naming the barriers:

Newcomers can’t see what is really there
Westerners are poor guests; good strangers.
What are your weaknesses? (they are your real strengths)
What are your strengths? (they are your weaknesses)

2. Deal with them: assume the role of a guest

Don’t be critical
Show that you care
Show weakness; not strength
Show you want to learn; not teach
Take the initiative as a “learner”
Take on a new name; new personality
Take initiative to make friends
Waste time with the people
Accept their service, support, guidance

VII. The Role of a “Learner”

1. Taking up the *Learner* role:

Develop credibility as a learner
Ask for help; to be shown how to do it
Demonstrate dependance
Show your need to learn
Interact and make friends

2. Combine a *Professional* role with *Guest* role:

Demonstrate weakness and need
Deliver empowerment and enablement
-Empower local leaders by being led
-Enable the people by being enabled
-By discovering show how to discover

The Virtues of Strangers

1. *We need what is outside* our worlds:

- We need what is new: new viewpoints, technology, medicines, hearty genes
- The stranger brings what is new from the outside in:
 - Insiders have no other way to discover what is outside their world
 - Insiders have no other source of blessing; no fresh ideas
 - Without the stranger: stagnation, boredom, lack of life
- The potential for blessing increases when the stranger becomes an “insider”
 - he/she sees exactly what is missing
 - he/she is the more qualified to “enliven” where it is needed

2. We need to *see inwardly*: new solutions to old problems

- Cultures are essentially problem-solving approaches to realities
- New cultures avail us of new solutions via their other worldviews
- Other worldviews offer us new solutions to specific problems
 - St. Christopher medal functions as a mobile Earth Shrine

3. We need to *see outwardly*: with wider perspectives and viewpoints

- Not to sit in our mono-cultural myopia, but
- to become aware of the richness of God’s creation
- to become aware of our own unique contribution
- to become aware of new questions (leading to new solutions)
 - Elias Howe’s sewing machine needle (hole at wrong end)
 - Henry Ford’s “auto” mobile (no longer horse-less carriage)
 - Christian problem-solving ministries

4. All cultures *need to be renewed* from within or perish:

- Strangers are a vital source of energy for renewal
- Moral and spiritual regeneration come through credible affirmation
- Credibility is based on loving others as “greater” (the work of strangers)
- Strangers must also be “insiders” for deep translation

5. All *cultures need to grow* or perish:

- Strangers are a source of growth: new ideas, strengths, values
- Therefore strangers must never lose their “strange” ness
- Too much assimilation blocks growth potential: no longer offers anything new

6. Strangers are like a *blood transfusion* for cultures

- Are sources of new life and vitality but also pose extreme dangers (AIDS)
- Strangers are guides; they see the dangers insiders can’t see and warn us
- We depend on trustworthy strangers (those whose love is greater)

7. Strangers who become “insiders” make the best *peace-builders*

- They are not aligned or biased
- They have the overview and the “under-view”
- They are trustworthy because they love others as more than selves

8. Strangers are a blessing *because they are “strange”*

- A “stranger” that is not “strange” is a contradiction in terms
- To the extent that they are “strange” they offer a counter position
- They must never be totally assimilated (though fully aware of insider’s vpt)
- They remind us we are all strangers on the journey to the Kingdom