

Dear Colleagues:

Theorem #2 of global brand building is that everyone else in the world has more public holidays than you do, wherever you are. It often seems as though others are always off on some sort of holiday you have never heard of while you are in the middle of working on something together with them. For example, did you try to contact your colleagues in Singapore Friday, 5 November? You say you did not know it was "Deepavali," a public holiday? Then you must not be in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Malaysia or Fiji. Yes, a long weekend, Thursday and Friday off. Banks closed. Businesses closed. Nada.

Get ready for another slowdown; this Wednesday, 17 November, is a public holiday in Singapore called "Hari Raya Haji." You will likely have phone calls go unanswered or experience a slow response to emails in Singapore and in Muslim countries in South East Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Many global brand builders outside the US get a little peeved when the US closes down each year for the fourth Thursday in November, while the rest of the world is still moving full speed ahead. It's called Thanksgiving. This year most Americans will have off from Wednesday afternoon, 24 November, through Sunday, 28 November. Thanksgiving Day is actually the 25th, a public holiday in the US. The day after Thanksgiving is called "Black Friday," arguably because it is when retailers go from being in the red to being in the black. Black Friday is the single biggest retail shopping day of the year in the US. It is when pre-Christmas gift-buying season begins with sale promotions.

I think Thanksgiving is not as uniquely North American as we may have imagined. As the world becomes smaller, more borderless and more transparent with communications technologies linking us together, we are able to discover and indirectly experience other people's holidays and celebrations positively and unproductively. In a more interdependent global economy, our customs and traditions, even our holidays, encounter greater scrutiny. Advances in communication access enable people to observe and interact with each other without compromising their cultural identity. That's a beautiful thing.

For example, Deepavali is a festival of lights and a critically important Hindu family celebration. About 16 percent of the world's population is Hindu. Singapore, being one of the most diverse places on the planet, celebrates Deepavali. Wednesday's Hari Raya Haji is celebrated by the 23 percent of the world's population who are Muslim. Families gather together to share special meals and goodwill on this day of forgiveness and gratitude. When you think about it, these holidays are not unlike Thanksgiving, though minus the turkey, pilgrims and tackle football. They are similar also to Sukkot, a Hebrew word referring to the Jewish festival of giving thanks for the fall harvest, as well as a commemoration of the forty years of Jewish wandering in the desert after Sinai. Sukkot is celebrated five days after Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

There are a lot of reasons for people to misunderstand each other in this transparent world of many different languages, customs and races crashing into each other digitally on the web. History teaches us that fear usually follows change, or increased exposure to different ideas and customs, the experiencing of that which is unfamiliar. It is only natural. There is a direct correlation between fear and misunderstanding. The age-old Japanese Samurai motto offers sublime insight: "Difficulty is here, I give thanks." Maybe the samurai were trying to conclude some business during a public holiday somewhere.

I decided to spend some of my Deepavali and Hari Raya Haji working to understand these holidays better and to look for the differences in holiday schedules between some of the nations in APIMA and elsewhere: see attached. What is really interesting to consider, once the differences are clear, are the potential similarities. Finding our similarities makes our differences less fearful.

Wishing you a Happy Deepavali, Hari Raja Haji, Sukkot (belatedly), Thanksgiving or whatever holiday you and your family celebrate together to give thanks. I am thankful to be working with you.

Best regards,



**COMPARISON OF PUBLIC HOLIDAYS FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES**

	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>U.S.</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>France</b>
<b>Population</b>	5mm	311mm	1,341mm	128mm	1,190mm	238mm	62mm	65mm
<b>JAN</b>	New Year's 1-3/1	New Year's 1-3/1 MLK Birthday 17/1	New Year's 1-3/1	New Year 1/1 Coming of Age 10/1	New Year 1/1 Pongal 14/1 Republic Day 26/1	Intl. New Year 1/1	New Year's 1-3/1	New Year's 1-3/1
<b>FEB</b>	Chinese New Year 3-4/2	President's Day 21/2	Chinese New Year 3-8/2	Beginning of Spring 3/2 Natl. Foundation 11/2	Milad Unnabi 15/2	Tahun Baru Imlek 3/4/2 Birth of Mohammed 15/2		
<b>MAR</b>				Spring Equinox 21/3	Holi 19-20/3	Bali New Year 5/3	St. Patrick's Day 17/3	
<b>APR</b>	Good Friday 22/4		Quing Ming 3-5/4	Showa Day 29/4	Mahavir Jayanthi 16/4 Good Friday 22/4 Easter Monday 25/4	Good Friday 22/4 Easter Monday 25/4	Good Friday 22/4 Easter Monday 25/4	Good Friday 22/4 Easter Monday 25/4
<b>MAY</b>	Labor Day 1/5 Vesak Day 17/5	Memorial Day 30/5	Labor Day 1-3/5	Constitution Day 3/5 Greenery Day 4/5 Children's Day 5/5	Budha Purnima 17/5	Vesak Day 17/5	Early May Day 2/5 Victoria Day 4/5 Spring Bank Day 30/5	Labor Day 1/5 VE Day 8/5
<b>JUNE</b>			Dragon Boat Festival 4-6/6			Ascension Day 2/6 Ascension of Prophet 29/6		Ascension 2/6 Whit Monday 13/6
<b>JULY</b>		Independence Day 4/7		Marine Day 18/7				Bastille Day 14/7
<b>AUG</b>	National Day 9/8 Hari Raya Puasa 30/8			Obon Festival 13-15/8	Independence Day 15/8 Krishna Birthday 22/8 Idu'l Fitr 30/8	National Day 17/8 Hari Raya Idul Fitri 30-31/8	Summer Bank Holiday 1/8 Summer Bank Holiday 29/8	Assumption Day 15/8
<b>SEPT</b>		Labor Day 5/9	Mid-Autumn Festival 10-12/9	Respect for Aged 19/9 Autumn Equinox 23/9	Ganesh Chaturthi 1-12/9 Dussehra 28/9			
<b>OCT</b>	Deepavali 26/10	Columbus Day 10/10	National Day 1-7/10	Sports Day 10/10	Gandhi's Birthday 2/10 Diwali 26/10			
<b>NOV</b>	Hari Raja Haji 6/11	Veteran's Day 11/11 Thanksgiving 24/11		Culture Day 3/11 Labor/Thanksgiving 23/11	Idul Zuhra Bakrid 6/11 Guru Nanak's Birthday 10/11 Muharram (New Year) 26/11	Hari Raja Haji 6-7/11 Al-Hijra 27-28/11		All Saints Day 1/11 Armistice Day 11/11
<b>DEC</b>	Christmas 25/12	Christmas 25/12		Emperor's Birthday 23/12	Christmas/boxing 25-26/12	Christmas/Boxing Day 25/12	Christmas/Boxing Day 25-26/12	Christmas/Boxing 25-26/12