

## GOING NATIVE IN MEXICO

*A management report for the HR department*

**T**HE EXPRESSION “GOING NATIVE” refers to the behavior of foreigners who imitate—and may stridently defend—the customs and beliefs of their adopted culture. In Japan, there is an expression *henna gaijin*, which refers to a foreigner who is strange, not for being a foreigner, but for being one who conspicuously follows Japanese customs and imitates Japanese mannerisms.

Chancelleries around the world recognize the risk represented by the “going native” by diplomats stationed abroad, and, principally for this reason, embassy staff are rotated every few years to another post. It is a measure that is intended to protect against the risk of diplomats going native. The risk is that political, economic and military intelligence would be unconsciously distorted to favor the official version of events, institutions and policies of the foreign government in which diplomats are stationed.

If you accept the idea that the oil industry is a global conversation, one that takes place principally in English, about resource plays, technology, economics and regulation, then it follows that government agencies and commercial organizations that focus on a particular national conversation about these topics are encouraging their employees to go native. Oil professionals for whom English is not their native language and who believe that English skills are an optional luxury in a career in petroleum engineering and the earth sciences may be said to have gone native.

*Going native is not listening to the global oil conversation*

In relation to Pemex, there is a long history of outsourcing to the oilfield service companies and management consultancies the responsibility for listening to the global oil conversation in English. Going native may also be seen in government agencies, industry associations, chambers of commerce and oil and gas companies whose professional staffs attend to, or who are stationed in, Mexico.

Based on the results of recent conversations in Mexico and Houston, we have anecdotal evidence to report on the state of global listening at the beginning of the Peña Nieto administration. The results are not encouraging.

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