

SAMPLE

SAVING FACE

How to Preserve Dignity
and Build Trust

MAYA HU-CHAN

Foreword by Marshall Goldsmith

Praise for *Saving Face*

“In *Saving Face*, Maya shows us what we can learn from other cultures with real and practical examples that will help leaders and teams become even more effective.”

—**Jim Moore, former Chief Learning Officer, Sun Microsystems and Nortel**

“The need to save face is a fundamental part of doing business. It is hard work, but the payoff is immense. A must-read and a must-add to any professional portfolio.”

—**CB Bowman, MBA, CMC, BCC, MCEC, CEO, Association of Corporate Executive Coaches and MEECO Leadership Institute**

“*Saving Face* is a highly enjoyable read that will help us all up our skills in this critical enabler of trusting, meaningful, and successful relationships.”

—**Darlene Solomon, PhD, Chief Technology Officer, Agilent Technologies**

“Maya is truly an expert on global agility. She knows that this topic is like a brilliant crystal, with many different facets to be examined and explored. I highly recommend this book!”

—**Patty McKay, Global Vice President, Talent Development, 3D Systems**

“Great conflicts—even entire wars—have begun due to misunderstandings around saving face. One of the world’s great intercultural communication experts, Maya Hu-Chan, beautifully teaches us how saving face operates in our day-to-day lives and how to better use it to build trusting relationships in business and beyond.”

—**Brian O. Underhill, PhD, PCC, founder and CEO, CoachSource, LLC, and author of *Executive Coaching for Results***

“With candor, humor, and plenty of real-life examples, Maya shows how to leverage the critical competency of saving face to build business relationships. If you want to grow your global leadership and business presence, you need to read this book!”

—**Dr. Ann Bowers-Evangelista, President, Llumos, LLC, and executive consultant and coach based in Japan**

“Read *Saving Face* if you are interested in having a positive impact on all those with whom you interact and making your contribution to a world where polite and caring discourse prevails.”

—**Beth Schumaker, Senior Partner, BrightStar Leadership Consulting**

“Maya has leveraged her experiences in working in dozens of countries across the globe to examine a topic common to all cultures—saving face. I would especially recommend this book to people who deal with others in a multicultural environment.”

—**Bill Hawkins, contributing author of five books, including *What Got You Here Won't Get You There in Sales***

“A must-read for every leader, especially when working with multicultural teams.”

—**Brigitta Wurnig, international coach and author of *Auf dem Weg (On the Way)***

“Maya has put her finger on a very relevant and timely issue in the multicultural world we live and work in. Loaded with practical ideas and examples, derived from her vast national and international experience in executive development, her work offers an important contribution to all those interested in furthering their ability to communicate honestly and directly while preserving dignity and building trust.”

—**Carlos E. Marin, President, C. E. Marin & Associates**

“Finally, a book that addresses an often-ignored aspect of business success. In this well-written work, a plethora of anecdotes perfectly illustrates the challenges and solutions for the multifaceted issue of face. *Saving Face* is an absolute ‘must’ for making this abstract topic an essential part of your business relationship tool kit.”

—**Diana K. Rowland, bestselling author and President, IntXel**

“This is a must-read guide for global leaders who want to create impact through positive relationships.”

—**Eun Y. Kim, PhD, author of *The Yin and Yang of American Culture***

“Maya Hu-Chan is truly a master of helping successful people improve. The wisdom found in this book can help any leader, from the one who is already considered excellent with strong interpersonal skills to the leader who appears to be clueless in interactions with others.”

—**Dr. Frank Wagner, Master Coach and cofounder of Stakeholder-Centered Coaching**

“*Saving Face* engagingly illuminates an extraordinarily important, yet

often misunderstood, concept and lays out a clear path forward for us all.”

—**Gregg Ward, MCES, bestselling, award-winning author of *The Respectful Leader***

“*Saving Face* is a must-read for all those who need to enhance their emotional intelligence, cultural agility, and ability to recognize and recover from communication pitfalls—which, as you might guess, is just about all of us.”

—**Joel Garfinkle, author of *Getting Ahead***

“*Saving Face* describes a globally relevant concept through subtle and nuanced cultural lenses, also providing strategies on how to avoid behaviors that will cause someone to lose face. It is a must-read!”

—**Judith Eberl, Managing Director, JuPantaRhei GmbH, Switzerland; former Head of Training and Development, EFG Bank SA; and former Head of International Education, Assicurazioni Generali S.p.A.**

“*Saving Face* is a powerful book that unpacks the concept of saving face with practical examples of how to develop the deep and authentic interactions necessary for successful business partnerships. A must-read for any leader or team member whether working locally or globally.”

—**Judith H. Katz, EdD, Executive Vice President, The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc., and coauthor with Fred Miller of *Safe Enough to Soar***

“In *Saving Face*, Maya Hu-Chan guides us to step into our truth in a way that transforms ourselves and others with grace, compassion, and honesty—which brings us closer to a universe that is more connected and able to understand rather than flee or fight.”

—**Louis Carter, CEO, Best Practice Institute, and author of eleven management/leadership books, including the bestselling *In Great Company***

“Drawing on her extraordinary international experience, Maya Hu-Chan transforms the way we think and feel about life’s greatest challenges and opportunities with a book that defines saving face like no other. A must-read!”

—**Mark C. Thompson, *New York Times* bestselling author and “World’s #1 Executive Coach”**

“Maya Hu-Chan has set up an outstanding compendium for global leaders. I love her definition of face as social currency in intercultural interaction. This book should be a standard for intercultural training.”

—**Matthias Brose, Vice President, Schaeffler AG**

“With Maya Hu-Chan’s extensive executive coaching and cross-cultural expertise, she provides valuable and refreshing new insights on how to effectively show respect and build trust with others, which is critical for high performing teams and lasting relationships in the workplace. Everyone needs to read this book!”

—**Nancy E. Parsons, CEO and President, CDR Assessment Group, Inc.**

“I can think of no better person to write a book on saving face than Maya Hu-Chan. Her use of face as a form of social currency is enlightening and practical. This book is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the fundamental cultural values and behaviors that are hidden until exposed in depth here.”

—**Neal R. Goodman, PhD, President, Global Dynamics, and Professor Emeritus, Saint Peter’s University**

“As a Scotsman living in Asia for over thirty years, I find Maya Hu-Chan’s book an essential guide to all those working outside their own culture and a breath of fresh air for avoiding faux pas and ensuring you save face. Every CEO should give each team member a copy of this book.”

—**Robin Speculand, strategy implementation/digital specialist and bestselling author of *Excellence in Execution***

“In *Saving Face*, Maya Hu-Chan brings to light how empathy, trust, and respect are connected to the concepts of saving face and how they are foundational for positive human interactions. A must-read for all.”

—**Rosa Grunhaus Belzer, PhD, PCC, Coaching Talent Leader, Western North America, Center for Creative Leadership**

“Maya Hu-Chan is an engaging and authentic expert in global business. In *Saving Face*, she applies her deep knowledge from coaching and consulting to multinational corporations and executives around the world. You don’t want to miss it!”

—**Susan Diamond, Vice President and Chief Learning Officer, Women Presidents’ Organization**

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MAYA HU-CHAN



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Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

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FOREWORD

In *Saving Face: How to Preserve Dignity and Build Trust*, author, speaker, and executive coach Maya Hu-Chan brings us her unique take on “face.” I’ve known and worked with Maya for more than thirty years and I love this book because it reminds me of a story that one of my great friends and coaching clients, Dr. Jim Yong Kim (former president of the World Bank), has shared with me about what he learned from the great leader Alan Mulally, former CEO of Boeing and Ford.

Dr. Kim said that the greatest thing that he learned from Alan is the idea that as a leader your face is no longer your own. What Alan meant by this, says Dr. Kim, is that, when you show up as a leader, if your face looks angry or upset, people will respond in kind. So, as a leader, you must do your best to be as positive and upbeat, and as sincere and authentic in your facial expressions as you can be.

In her book *Saving Face*, Maya explores this concept of “saving face” more deeply as it relates to cultures around the globe. For instance, have you ever considered saving face as a form of social currency? Beyond monetary currency, it is a form of currency that impacts our status and reputation among all of our many communities, including business, family, and politics.

This is just one of the many interesting ideas that Maya describes in detail while offering suggestions for how we can best manage “face” to connect with people and to create and maintain relationships.

Most critical is Maya's BUILD model, which she offers as the key to saving face when working with people around the globe. BUILD—which stands for benevolence, understanding, interacting, learning, and delivery—represents the five building blocks crucial to the development of great business relationships. It's Maya's gift to us, and in studying and engaging in the use of this essential tool and reading and studying this exceptional book, we can learn to save, honor, and avoid losing face, and thus be the most positive influence in the world that we can be.

Life is good.

MARSHALL GOLDSMITH

PREFACE

The time is right for *Saving Face*. Beyond its origins in China, “saving face” is a universal concept that enables one to connect with people, break down barriers, and build trust and long-term relationships. The concept of saving face permeates all levels of social and business interactions. When the term “It’s not about the money” is used, the real issue is often about “face.”

On the leadership front, managers, entrepreneurs, and even individual contributors must adapt to increasingly diverse clientele, workforces, and business partners. They need to attract, retain, and motivate teams and employees across distances, time zones, and cultural differences. They must move in many circles, think in many styles, and run their businesses as global citizens.

From a personal standpoint, the concept of saving face is of universal importance. Being able to relate to others, find commonalities, and work toward a common goal are all wrapped up in how each person understands and protects the face of others. No other motivator, including monetary compensation, can truly lead to optimal success in any group setting without considering face, and this book will highlight how that is so.

More than ever, leaders must win the trust and respect of their counterparts. Building authentic and lasting human relations may be the most important calling for leaders in this century.

The ability for people to save and build face is the social currency of our time. It is even more crucially important in today's era of social media, where it is so easy to slight someone without the normal check and balance of having to actually confront them face-to-face with your slight. As the workplace grows in complexity, *Saving Face* will provide priceless guidance and lessons for leaders in the new economic era.

Why is face so important? Face represents one's self-esteem, reputation, status, and dignity. Face is social currency. The more "face" you have, the easier and faster you can get things done. The desire to save face is human nature across cultures, generations, genders, and other human differences.

Why is "losing face" such a bad thing? It provokes shame, fear, guilt, vulnerability, and a wide range of negative emotions. You can cause someone to lose face by giving negative feedback in public, challenging or disagreeing with someone, failing to acknowledge the hierarchy, or engaging in micro-inequity behaviors such as giving subtle insults, ignoring or interrupting someone, making insensitive jokes, and more.

This book explains how we can *honor* face to connect with people and create positive first impressions, how we can inadvertently cause others to *lose* face in business or social situations, and, most important, how we can effectively *save* face to avoid negative consequences.

Saving face means *preserving dignity* for all parties involved in order to reach a positive outcome. It requires that we put ourselves in another person's shoes, understand their frame of reference, take thoughtful actions to navigate potentially harmful situations, and build real trust and long-term relationships in life and business.

Saving face is far more than highlighting the importance of not embarrassing someone. It is also about developing an understanding of the background and motivations of others

to discover the unique facets of face that each of us possesses. Without such an understanding, even the most well-intentioned individuals risk causing others to lose face without even knowing it. *Saving Face* provides the tools for individuals and managers to help head off these risks.

The *authentic* act of saving face requires a positive intention and understanding others' frame of reference without judgment. Without positive intention and acceptance, the act of saving face can be perceived as manipulative, superficial, or phony.

In this book, saving face is explained through both illustrative anecdotes and practical tools, such as the AAA model (Aware → Acquire → Adapt) and the BUILD model (Benevolence/Accountability, Understanding, Interacting, Learning, Delivery).

Saving Face is one of the first business books in a global leadership and cross-cultural context to explore the concept of face, the powerful cultural value that reflects one's status in business, family life, and society. Increasingly, more business leaders will need to adapt new mindsets and behaviors to connect effectively with people and successfully navigate the volatile global business landscape.

But even beyond the business aspect of saving face, my hope is that this book will serve as a catalyst for all forms of communications, from those that occur between multinational corporations down to individual interactions of friends and neighbors. While the primary audiences for this book are business leaders, managers, entrepreneurs, and professionals whose work requires them to interact and engage with people of diverse backgrounds to get things done, I also seek in this book to benefit any individual who wants to improve how they relate to others—how teachers relate to their students, how parents communicate with their children, and

in many other social contexts. Those who take the time to understand the importance of saving face realize that it covers nearly every aspect of social discourse, and its impact is universal.

Saving Face shows leaders how to build “face” and forge stronger, more authentic partnerships with clients and colleagues across cultural, generational, gender, and other human differences. Because business grows more diverse by the day, this book will appeal to corporate leaders seeking a wealth of real-life lessons and valuable advice on putting face into action and guiding global, multicultural teams.

INTRODUCTION

Honoring Face, Losing Face, and Saving Face

WHEN IT CAME to writing this book, I asked myself one question: Of the thousands of executives and senior managers I've coached over the years, what was the one concern they would bring up time and time again?

I didn't have to mull over my answer very long. It was all about face. To be sure, very few of them would actually say the words, "I feel like I've lost face at work." Much more likely they would say,

- I don't feel as if my boss appreciates my work.
- My colleagues don't really treat my ideas seriously.
- Some of my team members don't speak up at meetings. I don't really know what they are thinking.
- I've been passed over for promotion even though I've been recognized as one of the company's top performers.

Make no mistake—all of these comments, as well as the majority of concerns I hear, have to do with face. As an executive coach, when I hear about problems with relationships,

conflicts, resistance to change, burnout, or lack of motivation, the first questions I ask often have to do with face. Interestingly enough, people's main concerns rarely have to do with not making enough money.

So let's just start right here—what is face?

Face represents one's self-esteem, self-worth, identity, reputation, status, pride, and dignity. "Face" is a universal concept that extends far beyond its origins in China. It speaks to a deeper need for dignity and acceptance, and the ways we grant dignity to one another. Understanding this universal human concept can help us make the most of our interpersonal relationships.

Think of face as a type of social currency. From that perspective, you can start to imagine how we build a supply of face with someone by continuously making deposits. You can think of it as building trust or credibility.

How do you express gratitude and appreciation to someone? How do you help them succeed? Do you compliment them and recognize them for their contributions? Do you practice empathy and put yourself in their position? Do you have their back? That is how you make a deposit.

When we need to make a withdrawal, we're careful to not "tear the face apart." We provide feedback in a way that saves face and preserves dignity. If we mistakenly cause someone to lose face, the relationship can still be saved if there are enough deposits to cover the withdrawal.

Remember three things when applying the concept of face to build deep, authentic interpersonal relationships.

1. Face is like social currency. The more you have, the easier and faster you can get things done.
2. You can build a supply of face by making deposits in the relationship, such as building trust,

keeping your promises, expressing gratitude and appreciation, and showing empathy.

3. If you accidentally cause someone to lose face, the relationship can still be saved if there are enough deposits, or trust, to cover the withdrawal.

We will be working on three aspects of face; each is a critical component to understanding how face works. The three components are: honoring face, losing face, and saving face.

Honoring face is making actual deposits of face. These are actions taken to show respect, admiration, and dignity to one or more people. Honoring face can and should be an integral part of building relationships and motivating your team or colleagues.

You can honor face for coworkers by giving their voice equal time and weight, listening to them, giving positive recognition, showing appreciation, soliciting their input, acknowledging their contributions, and showing respect for hierarchy, age, and status. The act of honoring face lifts people up, builds their confidence, and strengthens your relationships.

Losing face describes conditions where people ultimately feel devalued, humiliated, or unappreciated. Losing face occurs when something (or someone) provokes shame, fear, vulnerability, and a wide range of negative emotions in an individual or group.

Executives or managers who aren't accustomed to issues of face can inadvertently create situations where one or more parties lose face. Most of the time, the loss of face is unintentional. Here's a perfect example.

Recently I was working with a global technology company headquartered in the United States. The client asked me to

speak to five engineers who were visiting from China for a week-long technical training. During the training, they sat quietly and never asked any questions. The company wanted to find out how the training was going for them.

Over lunch in the cafeteria, the engineers said little in English, but when I spoke to them in Mandarin, they immediately opened up. One complained that the American instructor had given them a 200-page technical manual as soon as they walked in the door, after a fifteen-hour flight. They had no time to review it, and it was written in English.

“How much of the training did you understand?” I asked. “About 20 percent,” they replied reluctantly.

Unbeknownst to the Americans, the Chinese engineers were afraid to lose face. They needed to project an appearance of confidence and credibility. They did not want to admit that they were lost and confused. The U.S. contingent wasn't deliberately trying to cause the Chinese members to lose face, but that is exactly what happened.

Saving face is the authentic and intentional act of turning around a situation to prevent the loss of respect or dignity. To explain what it is to save face, let's go back to the meeting between the U.S. company and the Chinese engineers.

To get the U.S. and Chinese teams working more smoothly together, I recommended a few simple solutions for the American instructor: speak slowly and clearly; use diagrams and hands-on demonstrations while going over technical materials; and give the Chinese engineers time to process information and come up with questions as a group, not as individuals. In the end, the U.S. company extended the training one more week for the Chinese engineers. Both parties saved face and the training was a success.



I've written this book as a roadmap for executives and professionals to recognize and understand the importance of face in the workplace. We'll walk through a number of exercises on how to approach professional relationships in a way that builds up your "face savings." But on a broader level, my objective is to highlight how face is the "X factor" in all relationships, be it professional or personal.

While we all wear many hats personally and professionally, whether as a parent, friend, executive, or employee, what motivates us to move forward is usually the same set of factors: appreciation, respect, authenticity, and consideration.

And that's all about face.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A globally recognized speaker, author, and Master Certified Executive Coach, Maya Hu-Chan specializes in global leadership, diversity, inclusion, and cross-cultural management.



Maya partners with organizations to build leadership capabilities to enable profound growth and change, aligned with business and personal goals. Maya's ability to significantly advance the leadership effectiveness of executives has led to more than 70 percent of her coaching clients being promoted during or soon after the coaching engagement. She is also a popular keynote speaker and workshop facilitator.

Maya has been honored by the following organizations:

Ranked Top 8 Global Solutions Thinkers by Thinkers50

World's Top 30 Leadership Gurus by Leadership Guru International

Top 100 Thought Leaders in Management & Leadership by Leadership Excellence

President's Leadership Advisory Council for the World Bank

Achieved "Master Certified Coach" level by the International Coach Federation

Nominee for "Woman of the Year" Award by *San Diego Magazine*

About the Author

“Leading the Global Workforce Best Practice Award”
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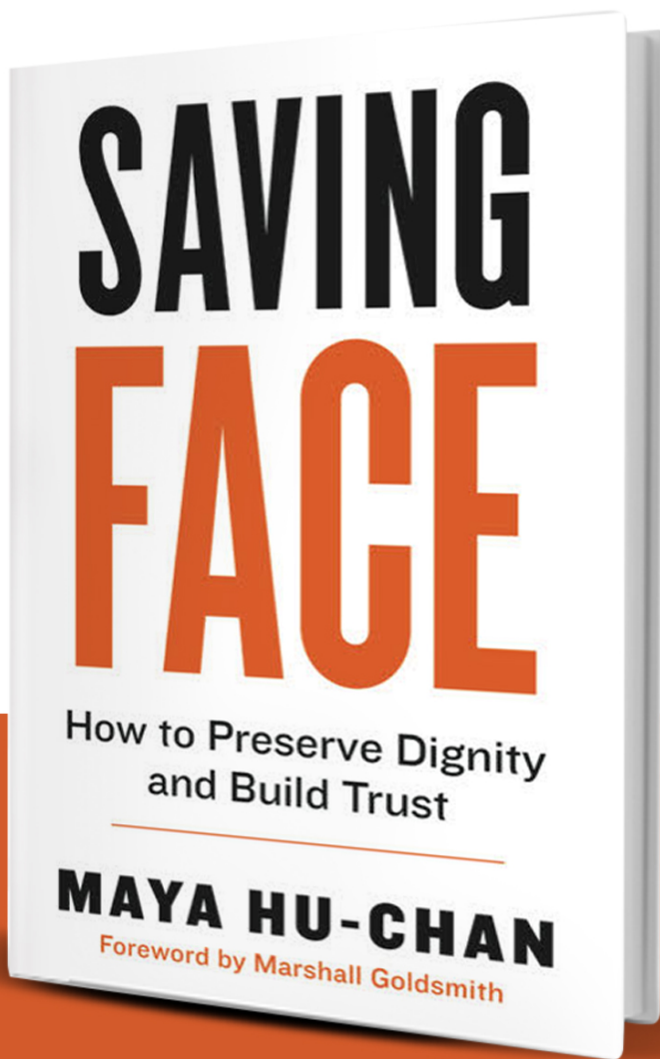
Maya has worked with thousands of leaders from major corporations throughout the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Europe. She co-authored the book *Global Leadership: The Next Generation*, which was chosen by Harvard Business School as part of their Working Knowledge book series. She has lectured at the Brookings Institution, the University of California, San Diego, the University of Chicago, the University of Southern California, and the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College.

A frequent contributor to business publications and media, she is a columnist for *INC.com*. Her work has appeared in *BusinessWeek*, *Harvard Business Online*, *Bloomberg*, *OD Practitioner*, *Leadership Excellence*, *Thinkers50*, *American Management Association (AMA)*, *Business Coaching Worldwide*, *SmartBrief on Leadership*, *Voice America*, *Asia Media*, *The Human Factor Magazine (India)*, *AthenaOnline*, and *ATD Management Blog*.

Maya lives in San Diego, California, with her husband, Wayne, their triplets, Tyler, Savannah, and Ethan, and their golden retriever, Molly.

Maya is available as a keynote speaker or as an executive coach. For more information, go to www.mayahuchan.com or email her at mayahuchan@TheGlobalLead.com.

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