

## Building a bridge from U.S. to India

Do you prefer to greet people with a handshake or a small bow? If someone stands six inches from your face when speaking to you, does it feel too close or just right?

Recognizing these behavior preferences is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding interactions between Americans and Indians. When people from these two countries work together it's critical that both sides explore more than just the iceberg's tip and make the effort to respect and accommodate one another's similarities and differences.

In May, people from CH2M HILL's U.S. Design and Construction Operations (DCO) met with eight people from the Indian design firm, Desein Private Ltd., to kick-off their working relationship with a basic understanding of one another's cultures.

"It's absolutely necessary to have an appreciation and understanding of your own

### New Delhi center dedicated to CH2M HILL projects

Last fall, Desein and CH2M HILL began discussing the development of a design resource center in New Delhi, India, that would consist of Desein employees dedicated to the delivery of CH2M HILL projects.

While details of the teaming arrangement are still being established, the design center's first priority will be Water Business Group projects in the Asia Pacific Region.

culture and the things you take for granted as 'normal'," said Bill Misslin, regional design and construction manager for the Asia Pacific Region. "It's equally important to understand the perspective of those who have a different cultural orientation than you do, because 'normal' may be something entirely different for them."

During three days of inter-cultural training in

Corvallis, Ore., and Gainesville, Fla., the Indians and Americans held both separate and joint sessions to explore their own and the other group's values and perspectives. Their discussions uncovered stereotypes and expectations held by both sides, as well as social norms that dictate appropriate and inappropriate actions in everyday life.

The discussion was facilitated by David Sanford, an American intercultural consultant from Prudential Relocation Services International, who spent several years in

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## Cultural exchange enhances communication

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India. Conversely, Sara Raman, an Indian national who now lives in Portland, Ore., helped the Americans understand some of the challenges she experienced in adjusting to life in the United States.

So do they have it all figured out after only three days together?

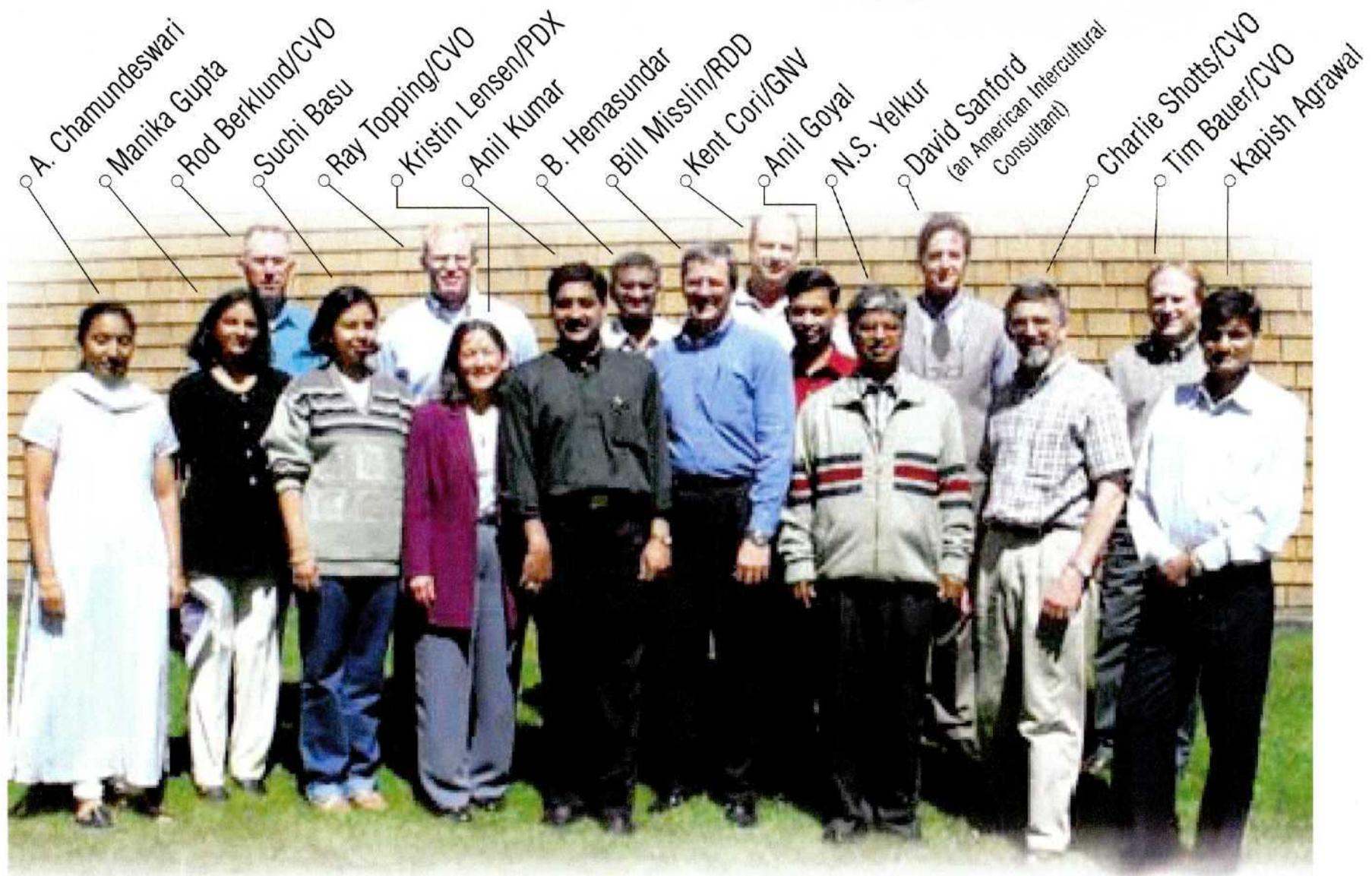
"It's a great start to the relationship," said Misslin. "We learned that we will continue to make mistakes, and may unintentionally confuse or even offend others. But you can't be afraid to be yourself. The key is to act with sincerity and good intent, and with a desire to recognize and respond to the impact

your words and actions may have on others."

*The workshops were the brainchild of a partnership between DCO, Human Resources, and Kristin Lensen, a CH2M HILL diversity consultant.*

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# Cultural exchange participants



**These CH2M HILL and Desein staff members participated in intercultural awareness training.**