



# **Cultural Differences & Business Etiquette**

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# Different cultures

In **Germany** everything is forbidden unless it is allowed

In the **United Kingdom** everything is allowed unless it is forbidden

In **France** everything is allowed even if it is forbidden



## Cultural diversity has a great impact on

- products
  - chocolate in Belgium and UK
  - different varieties for different countries
  - different packing
  - different sizes
- trade partners
- business morale (payment, credit terms)



## Different cultural clusters in the EU

1. **Anglo / American**
2. **Scandinavian**
3. **Pyramid / paternalistic (family)**
4. **German**



# 1. Anglo/American

task oriented

competitive

direct in communication

individual

decentralised

tough

UK (USA, Australia, New Zealand)



## **Business implications**

### **Anglo / American style**

come straight to the point

take initiative

sell yourself and your product

be decisive and assertive



## 2. Scandinavian

autonomy

decentralized

direct in communication

consensus building

informal

little/no hierarchy

The Netherlands, Denmark,  
Sweden, Finland



## **Business implications Scandinavian style**

be nice

build consensus

work-life balance

delegated authority





### 3. Pyramid/paternalistic (family)

strong hierarchy

centralized (top down)

formal

procedures

follow orders

relationship important

France, Belgium, Spain, Italy,  
Portugal, Greece



## **Business implications paternalistic style**

follow hierarchy

formal (written & unwritten)

relationship oriented

no delegated authority



## 4. German

autonomy

need for structures

formal

focus on processes and details

expertise important

Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic



## **Business implications German style**

facts and figures

proven expert

precision and detail

reliability

punctuality



## Dutch importer

- informal; quick to use first names
- direct in approach
- expects exporter to take initiative
- empowered to make decisions
- task oriented; no extensive social talk
- quick to ask price
- dislikes display of wealth
- adheres to strict deadlines
- no lunches or dinners



## French importer

- formal; not too direct
- likes shaking hands
- buyer often not empowered to take decisions
- chauvinistic; requires French to be spoken
- rather arrogant; treats seller as lower in status
- building of relationship essential
- patience is important virtue
- dress correctly and conservatively
- first names are not used



## British importer

- rather formal; direct approach
- beware of understated use of language
- treats sellers as equal
- gives opportunity to impress and sell yourself
- interested in track record of exporter
- irritated by small talk and formalities
- appreciates own opinion, initiatives and
- assertive communication



## Italian importer

- polite, formal; no first name basis
- address with title and last name
- likes formal dress and etiquette
- expects you to sell yourself;
- exaggerates a bit
- loves style, quality and design
- foreign languages sometimes weak point
- often not empowered to make decisions
- relationship very important in Italian business
- lunch and dinner important





## German importer

- very formal, never uses first names
- addressed by title, Herr/Frau and last name
- quick to come to the point; little time
- offer German counterpart certainties:  
assurances, references, expertise, track record
- dress correctly and formally; no bracelets
- be strictly on time
- requires detailed planning + preparation



# Where do I come from?





# Where do I come from?





CBI  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

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# What have we learned from this presentation?

- 1) There are 4 stereotypical business styles: anglo-american, paternalistic, scandinavian and German.
- 2) Each business style needs a specific approach in the booth.
- 3) One cannot judge a book by its cover.