

A Cultures and culture

Culture is the 'way we do things round here'. 'Here' might mean a country, an area, a social class or an organization such as a company or school. It includes **values** – things that people think are important – and **beliefs** – things that people believe in.

For example, you talk about:

business	culture	the way that companies in general behave, the way business is done, etc. in a particular place
company or corporate		the way a particular company works and the things that its employees believe are important
long-hours		where people are expected to work a long time each day
macho		the values typically associated with men – strength, etc.
sales		when selling is seen as the most important thing in an organization, rather than other activities
learning		when learning and innovation are seen as important

See also **enterprise culture**, Unit 11.

But you must be careful of **stereotypes** – fixed ideas that may not be true.

Look at A opposite. Which word combination with 'culture' relates to each of the following?

- The men really dominate in this company – they don't make life easy for women at all. All they talk about is football.
- They say that if you go home at 5.30, you can't be doing your job properly. But I'm going anyway.
- We're all encouraged to go on courses and to keep up our specialist knowledge.
- There was a time when managers could only wear white shirts in this particular company – things are a bit less formal now. (2 expressions)
- In this country, it's easy to do business and there's very little bureaucracy.
- All the chief executives in the company's history have had a background in selling.

Power and distance

A company's culture depends to a large extent on the country it is based in. Geert Hofstede is a world-famous expert on **cultural differences**. **Power-distance** is one of the important **cultural dimensions** that he identified.

Sweden is a **low power-distance culture**. Managers are **accessible** and **approachable** (see Unit 44) and there is a tradition of employees being involved in **decision-making** as part of a **team of equals** – everyone's opinion is treated equally.

France is a **high power-distance culture**. Managers are usually more **distant** and **remote**. Employees may feel quite distant from their managers and show a lot of **deference** – respect – to them, following decisions but not participating in them.

Now have a look at these organigrams:



This Swedish company is not very **hierarchical**, with only three **management layers** – different levels.

