

Reading Class

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____ Section: _____ Value 5% Score: _____

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Item 1. Skimming

Skim *Cultural behavior in business* and check (✓) the main idea of the article.

- ☐ Areas of business in college.
- ☐ Areas of differences in the business according to each culture.
- ☐ How business is different in every country.

Global Reading

Instructions: Read carefully the story and answer the questions below.

Cultural behavior in business

Much of today's business is conducted across international borders, and while the majority of the global business community might share the use of English as a common language, the nuances and expectations of business communication might differ greatly from culture to culture. A lack of understanding of the cultural norms and practices of our business acquaintances can result in unfair judgements, misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication. Here are three basic areas of differences in the business etiquette around the world that could help stand you in good stead when you next find yourself working with someone from a different culture.

Addressing someone

When discussing this topic in a training course, a German trainee and a British trainee got into a hot debate about whether it was appropriate for someone with a doctorate to use the corresponding title on their business card. The British trainee maintained that anyone who wasn't a medical doctor expecting to be addressed as 'Dr' was disgustingly pompous and full of themselves. The German trainee, however, argued that the hard work and years of education put into earning that PhD should give them full rights to expect to be addressed as 'Dr'.

This stark difference in opinion over something that could be conceived as minor and thus easily overlooked goes to show that we often attach meaning to even the most mundane practices. When things that we are used to are done differently, it could spark the strongest reactions in us. While many Continental Europeans and Latin Americans prefer to be addressed with a title, for example Mr or Ms and their surname when

meeting someone in a business context for the first time, Americans, and increasingly the British, now tend to prefer using their first names. The best thing to do is to listen and observe how your conversation partner addresses you and, if you are still unsure, do not be afraid to ask them how they would like to be addressed.

Smiling

A famous Russian proverb states that 'a smile without reason is a sign of idiocy' and a so-called 'smile of respect' is seen as insincere and often regarded with suspicion in Russia. Yet in countries like the United States, Australia and Britain, smiling is often interpreted as a sign of openness, friendship and respect, and is frequently used to break the ice.

In a piece of research done on smiles across cultures, the researchers found that smiling individuals were considered more intelligent than non-smiling people in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, China and Malaysia. However, in countries like Russia, Japan, South Korea and Iran, pictures of smiling faces were rated as less intelligent than the non-smiling ones. Meanwhile, in countries like India, Argentina and the Maldives, smiling was associated with dishonesty.

Eye contact

An American or British person might be looking their client in the eye to show that they are paying full attention to what is being said, but if that client is from Japan or Korea, they might find the direct eye contact awkward or even disrespectful. In parts of South America and Africa, prolonged eye contact could also be seen as challenging authority. In the Middle East, eye contact across genders is considered inappropriate, although eye contact within a gender could signify honesty and truthfulness.

Having an increased awareness of the possible differences in expectations and behavior can help us avoid cases of miscommunication, but it is vital that we also remember that cultural stereotypes can be detrimental to building good business relationships.

Although national cultures could play a part in shaping the way we behave and think, we are also largely influenced by the region we come from, the communities we associate with, our age and gender, our corporate culture and our individual experiences of the world. The knowledge of the potential differences should therefore be something we keep at the back of our minds, rather than something that we use to pigeonhole the individuals of an entire nation.

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Item 2. True or false

Instructions: Read the following statements and decide if they are true or false. Write letter T for True and F if it is False.

- a. Americans now tend to prefer using their first names to address people.....()
- b. If you are not sure how to address someone, you should ask them what they would like you to call them.....()

- c. In countries like the United States, Australia and Britain, smiling is often interpreted as a sign of dishonesty.....()
- d. Americans and British people sometimes use eye contact to show that they are really listening to what is being said.....()

Item 3. Short answer

Instructions:

Why do you think it is important to analyze cultural behavior in business?

Which of the three practices seemed strange or even inappropriate to you? Why?

Which would be another cultural behavior in business?