

Communicating and Cooperating with German Business People: A Guide for the British

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Communication Style
Socialising, Small Talk and Humour
Non-verbal Communication
Meetings
Negotiating
Dealing with Work and Time
Power and Hierarchy
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Who should read this e-book?

This e-book has been written for British business people communicating and cooperating with German colleagues, clients and other business associates.

What is its objective?

It aims to familiarise its British readers with styles of communication, behaviour, practices, norms, attitudes and values they may encounter in their cooperation with Germans and which they as Britons may experience as anything from unfamiliar or interesting through merely different or striking, puzzling or strange to confusing, annoying, incomprehensible or even unacceptable.

I emphasise 'for British readers'. What is salient and noticeable to members of one culture and the cause of a critical incident in interaction may be irrelevant to members of another culture.

Why should you read it?

I believe that raising awareness of what actually may be encountered in German business and management is a first step to being able to manage differences more effectively. I also

believe that the possible danger of creating self-fulfilling prophecies or fostering harmful stereotypes is smaller than the benefit of reading the careful, well-supported generalisations about communication and cooperation in German business I describe and document.

What does the book contain?

As well as describing features of German communication and cooperation in business contexts, the book also gives brief possible explanations of the behaviour, practices and norms described in order to make clear that they are not the chance result of individual or group perversity or bloody-mindedness but are motivated by attitudes and values which have as much legitimacy and deserve as much respect as many others, including those of the British. These explanations are often missing in other guides to German business behaviour.

How else is the book different from other similar guides?

Another difference is that I have used the very little sound empirical research

generated by management scientists to support my picture of German business and management.

I have added to this picture the results of a questionnaire survey and interviews we conducted in Britain with British managers working with German colleagues and clients. Although the survey was limited in size and thus not representative, the results and the extracts from the interviews bring authenticity to the picture that emerges.

Audio clips from an interview with a British sales manager with the fictitious name of Bob, who worked for a number of years in Germany, sometimes provide confirmation of the picture and sometimes throw a different light on it.

The e-book is also different from other similar guides in that it does not rely on hearsay, anecdote and the untested 'folklore' of previous such 'classic' guides, repeated sometimes almost word for word by their lesser imitators. Where I was sceptical about its applicability, we actually questioned British managers about these aspects of German business and management. We received some interesting answers!

Where I found confirmation for this received wisdom, which was sometimes the case, I have of course included it.

These various sources provide a richness of texture and a certain diffuseness, which correspond to the reality of experience in an unfamiliar culture. The picture which emerges is not black and white but more carefully differentiated in the shades of colour it uses.

Finally, I have also tried to avoid the patronising or mocking tone which similar guides written by Anglo-Saxons occasionally display.

What is not in the book?

Although I have included a number of tips on how to behave appropriately in German business, most of them given by the managers we interviewed, I have not described the particular competencies required for managing successfully at the intercultural interface. That would be the subject of another book.

Using the book

This is an e-book and is different in several ways from a conventional book.

For example, it has a number of interactive features that are described in the User Guide to be found at the beginning of every chapter.

It is also important to note that the book has been written on the assumption that it would not be read from page one to the end but that it would be dipped into by clicking on the list of headings on the first page of every chapter. This means that there is a certain degree of deliberate repetition, particularly towards the end of a topic, when a particular feature of communication or cooperation is explained.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people by name who contributed to the creation of this e-book - Sven Schmohl, who conducted the survey and the interviews with British managers and managed the project; Markus Haag, who constructed the e-book; Stephanie Frei, who helped prepare the text; and Marc Blatt, Torben Brandau, Monica Moser, Frieder Munk and Ellen Wappler, who transcribed the interviews.

The British managers we questioned

and interviewed and the companies which cooperated with us in this enterprise remain nameless at their request but receive our special thanks as do the countless other British and German managers who have taken part in my seminars since 1989 and contributed unwittingly to my knowledge of British and German management.

My thanks also go to colleagues at universities and to trainers and consultants whose contributions to the e-book are obvious and acknowledged in the text itself.

Acknowledgement is also made of a grant by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research which financed the project.



I would be happy to receive your reactions to this book. Click my name on the cover page to send me an email and click the logo to read about the kind of work we do.

Peter Franklin

USER GUIDE

This e-book not only contains text, but also offers the following modes of interactivity:

Q&As — Questions & Answers
Quotes
Glossary entries
Tips and
Audio recordings.

If any of the interactive features do not work properly, please download the latest version of Acrobat Reader by clicking [here](#).

Q&As

The Q&A sections contain a question about a particular aspect of Anglo-German communication and cooperation and offer two or more possible answers. Each of these answers contains a short explanation of whether that option is appropriate or not. You can read these explanations by moving your mouse over the various answers.

Quotes

Certain paragraphs in the text are enriched by quotes from other sources – experts, British managers, researchers and others.

You can read these quotes by moving your mouse over the word **Quote** in purple. If the quote is quite long, click on it in order to open a new window containing the quote in full. **Quote**

The source of the quote is also indicated. All the published sources are to be found in a reference list which can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Glossary Entries

Certain terms and concepts are explained in glossary entries. You can access these glossary entries by moving your mouse over the word marked in orange. These words are then explained in more detail, e.g. **directness**. If the glossary entry is quite long, click on the glossary term marked in orange in order to open a new window containing the quote in full.

Tips

There are also tips on how to improve your communication and cooperation with German business people. You can read these tips by moving your mouse over the word **Tip** in green. **Tip**

Audio

Certain topics in this guide are enriched by short extracts from an interview with a British sales and marketing manager with extensive experience of working with Germans.

These audio recordings are embedded in a pdf file. In order to start the recordings, just click on the orange boxes showing a loudspeaker symbol.

Listen to Bob
answering the question

