

# Understanding British and German Business Cultures

— *Seminar Design* —

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## Understanding British and German Business Cultures

*British-German communication and co-operation might not be as simple it appears – especially for the Germans. To overcome these challenges, the acquisition of intercultural competence is necessary. Through the use of case studies, role-plays and discussions, the seminar participant learns to understand actions of the British or German counterpart as well as one's own culture and how to behave culturally correct in critical encounter situations. The language of instruction is mainly in English.*

### Seminar Goal:

The acquisition of intercultural competence will be the focus. The main points of interest will deal with communication and behavior strategies, which can considerably influence the foreign assignment.

### Who should attend:

Managing executives, group leaders, engineers, technicians, who are dealing and working with British and German firms.

### Seminar Contents:

#### 1. Examining the concept of "culture"

- The unspoken assumptions of British and German cultures
- Theoretical frameworks of Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede
- The need to stereotype others and behave ethnocentrically

#### 2. Discovering British and German cultural values

- Historical analysis of the two psychologies – values, ethics, traditions
- Process-orientation and formality: How do British and Germans differ?
- What's important to me when working with my foreign counterpart?

#### 3. Exploring different communication styles of British and Germans

- German need for extensive information (*Wahrheitssuche*) versus British need to be indirect
- British humor: the "understatement" as a form of verbal aggression
- Practical tips for speaking and listening to English more effectively

#### 4. Contrasting British and German businesses

- Problem-solving / Decision-making: A clash in role perception and personal responsibility
- British orientation towards relationship versus German orientation toward task

#### 5. Learning how to be intercultural competent

- The cross-cultural "swinger"
- Dealing with the relativity of cultural values
- Building a Team Charter

Interactive exercises, discussions, case studies and role playing confirm the above topics

### The Seminar Trainer:

Patrick Schmidt, an American by birth and education, has been more than 20 years active in the field of English and intercultural training. The focus of his seminars is international personnel work, the cooperation in multinational teams and transfer of management methods. His book "*Understanding American and German Business Cultures*" is also published in German "*Die amerikanische und die deutsche Wirtschaftskultur im Vergleich*". More information can be obtained through his website: <http://www.agcc.de>

**Length of the Seminar: 2 days**

Workshop Design for a two-day  
**Cross-Cultural British-German Training Course**

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Training Purpose</u>
<b>DAY 1</b>		
10-20 mins.	<b>Brief self-introduction</b>	Opening & establishing credibility
	<b>Icebreaker activity</b> (Arabic intro)	Establish a climate of group participation in examining cultural values
15-20 mins.	<b>Expectations of both trainer &amp; participants</b>	
<i>Transition: After exploring the expectations of participants and trainer, introduce the workshop objectives that refers and reinforces (corrects) the expectations that have been expressed.</i>		
30 mins.	<b>Participants introduce themselves;</b> stress cross-cultural experiences and why they need to improve their intercultural awareness	Participants get to know each other; information sharing
45 mins.	<b>Examining the term <i>culture</i></b> □	Awareness that each culture believes it has the only right solutions to life (ethnocentric)
	<b><i>Driving too fast</i></b> □ case study —	How cultural values can affect decision making

**Transition:** *After examining the term culture, we will discuss how social researchers have designed theoretical frameworks to explain why people from different countries do things in different ways.*

45 mins.	<b>Examining basic cultural concepts</b> of Edward Hall & Gert Hofstede	Viewing cultures from low & high context, time, uncertainty, power distance, motivation
1 hour	<b>Analyzing cultures</b> through variables with case studies	Participants learn how to identify the core values of British and German cultures
60 min.	<b>LUNCH</b>	
45 mins.	<b>Examining the term <i>stereotype</i></b>	Group activity involves why we need to "pigeon-hole" others and become aware of ethnocentrism
45 mins.	<b>Reaching consensus</b> on subconscious ethnocentric statements	To point out fallacies & biases in commonly held attitudes. Provoke discussions

**Transition** *□ We have looked at some counterproductive stereotypes and prejudices which we might have about people of other cultures. Now, we will examine British values as they contrast with values in Germany.*

40 mins.	<b>Quotations of foreign visitors;</b> the common stereotypes of Germans and British	Group activity involves questioning why we do things the way we do, looking for the logic behind our actions, looking at ourselves from a different viewpoint
20 mins.	<b>Discovering Germans &amp; British values through media.</b> Comparison of editorials from <i>The Times</i> and the <i>FAZ</i>	Seeing Germans and British values through ads, books, magazines
20 mins.	<b>Discovering British &amp; German values through language</b>	Seeing British and German values through proverbs
20 mins.	<b>Ending the first day</b> Questions or relevant comments	Questions, answers, discussion

## **DAY 2**

15 mins.	<b>Welcome and review</b> of previous day.	Set the stage for activities of day 2
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**Transition**☐ *How do the different perceptions discussed earlier illustrate the various ways the communication was received.*

45 mins.	<b>Examining communication</b> Introduction and discussion on how we communicate	Introduce the idea of German & British communication styles and its impact on cross-cultural interactions
45 mins.	<b>What's important to me</b> when working with my foreign counterpart?	Highlight how concepts like trust, teamwork, commitment, honesty are perceived according to cultural upbringing
1 hr.	<b>Problem-solving, decision-making</b>	Illustrate how Germans and British misunderstand each other because of different cultural values and communication styles
1 hr.	<b>Creating &amp; acting out</b> of German businesspeople in Great Britain. Humorous role playing activity	Applying theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. Exercise in self-perception and implications of one's own cultural assumptions
60 mins.	<b>LUNCH</b>	
30 mins.	<b>Creating a "snapshot" of German and British values</b>	Becoming aware of one's own cultural preferences in order to become more cross-culturally effective.

**Transition**☐ *We have up to now studied cultural differences from a behavior viewpoint. Another important aspect is the use of English as a language of communication.*

30 mins.	<b>Using English internationally</b> as perceived by native and non-native speakers	Becoming more sensitive & aware when speaking or listening to English
20 mins.	<b>Ten tips</b> for using English in an English and non-English environment	Avoiding a communication breakdown

**Transition** □ *When going abroad and settling down in a new culture, there is a period of adaptation, known more commonly as culture shock. It is a time of psychological disorientation. Let us discuss it and how one can best overcome it.*

15 mins.	<b>The symptoms of culture shock</b>	Description of the occupational hazards of living overseas. Familiar things are no longer familiar
30 mins.	<b>Characteristics of the interculturally competent person</b>	Becoming conscious of what it means to be sensitive to other cultures

**Transition** □ *What have you learned in the past two days? What tools can we use to continue our cross-cultural development when we are overseas. What more do you need to learn?*

5 mins.	<b>Suggestions for further reading, extensive bibliographies</b>	Where to go for more information
60 mins.	<b>Group analysis of main points covered in workshop</b>	Summary, evaluation and feedback
	<b>Building a team charter</b>	Action plan for the <i>Intercultural Manager</i> . Finding a balance between frankness and politeness
	□ <b>Question</b> □ <b>What was German and British about this workshop?</b>	To reinforce the idea that what we do, even in a workshop, reflects our culture

## References

Hans Schick, Leiter Controlling und Betriebswirtschaft Giessereiwerk Mannheim – <b>DaimlerChrysler</b>	0621 39 322 24
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