

Business Protocols in the UK

Global Advantage 2010

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The Basics: United Kingdom

- 4 countries
 - England
 - Wales
 - Scotland
 - Northern Ireland



The Basics

- Queuing fairly is important in the UK: if someone was there before you, let him/her be served first
- Small Talk
 - Acceptable topics
 - Topics to avoid

British Communication Styles

- British are masters of understatement
 - tendency to qualify their statements with such as 'perhaps' or 'it could be'
- Written and e-mail communication

Business Practices in the UK

- First names are used almost immediately with all colleagues.
 - Exceptions are very senior managers. However, you should always wait to be invited to use first names before doing so yourself.
- A firm handshake is the norm; no issues over gender
- Business cards are an essential prop and are usually exchanged.

Business Practices in the UK

- In accordance with British business protocol, punctuality is essential at any business meeting or social event
- When making business appointments it is best practice to do so several days in advance.
- Business meetings in the UK are often structured but not too formal and begin and end with social conversation.
- The British are inclined to follow established rules and practices; therefore decision-making is often a slow and systematic process.

Working Relationships in the UK

- UK managers generally favour the establishment of good working relationships with their subordinates.
- The boss often takes the role of a coach, creating an atmosphere of support and encouragement.
- Teamwork is very important, however there exists a strong feeling of individual accountability for implementation and error.

Business Gifts

- Business gift giving is not part of the business culture.
- If you choose to give a gift, make certain it is small and tasteful.
- Good gifts include desk accessories, a paperweight with your company logo, or a book about your home country.
- Inviting someone out for a meal can be viewed as a gift.

British Business Etiquette: Do's

- DO respect personal space. The British value their space and keeping an acceptable distance is advised.
- DO remember to shake hands on first meetings. It is considered polite to do so.
- DO make direct eye-contact with your British counterpart, however remember to keep it to a minimum or it could be considered impolite or rude.

British Business Etiquette: Don'ts

- DON'T ask personal questions regarding your British counterpart's background, occupation or income.
- DON'T underestimate the importance of humour in all aspect of business in the UK.
- DON'T forget that instructions are often disguised as polite requests.

British Culture Quiz: Question #1

In accordance with British business etiquette, when entering a room allow those of a higher rank to enter first.

British Culture Quiz: Question #2

It is considered polite to enquire about an individual's profession and salary during an initial meeting in the UK.

British Culture Quiz: Question #3

In the UK the number 13 is considered extremely unlucky.

British Culture Quiz: Question #4

When invited to an English home, it is customary to arrive at least 10-20 minutes before the arranged time.

British Culture Quiz: Question #5

Sitting with folded arms during a business meeting is a sign of boredom and that you are uninterested.

Extra Resources

- The World Wide Web!
- Ask friends/colleagues
- Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour, Kate Fox (Hodder and Stoughton, 2004)
- Notes from a Small Island, Bill Bryson (Black Swan, 1996)

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