



Business across cultures 1

A

Cultures and culture

Alexandra Adler is an expert in doing business across cultures. She is talking to a group of British businesspeople.

'Culture is the "way we do things here". "Here" may be a country, an area, a social class or an organization such as a company or school. You often talk about:

- **company or corporate culture:** the way a particular company works, and the things it believes are important.
- **canteen culture:** the ways that people in an organization such as the police think and talk, not approved by the leaders of the organization.
- **long-hours culture:** where people are expected to work for a long time each day.
- **macho culture:** ideas typically associated with men: physical strength, aggressiveness, etc.

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

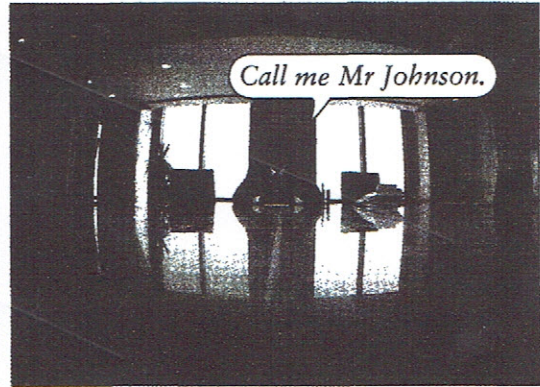
B

Distance and familiarity

Distance between managers and the people who work under them varies in different cultures. Look at these two companies.

In Country A, managers are usually easy to talk to – **accessible** and **approachable** – and there is a tradition of employees being involved in **decision-making** as part of a team of equals.

In Country B, managers are usually more **distant** and **remote**. Employees may feel quite distant from their managers and have a lot of **deference** for them: accepting decisions but not participating in them.



This company is not very **hierarchical**, with only three **management** layers.

Companies in Country B tend to be more **hierarchical** than those in Country A, with more **management** layers.

Deference and distance may be shown in language. Some languages have many forms of **address** that you use to indicate how **familiar** you are with someone. English only has one form, 'you', but distance may be shown in other ways, for example, in whether first names or surnames are used.