

## Business across cultures 3

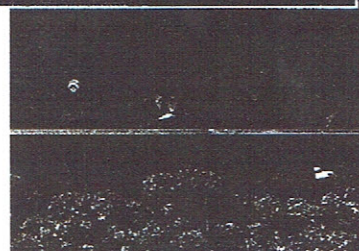
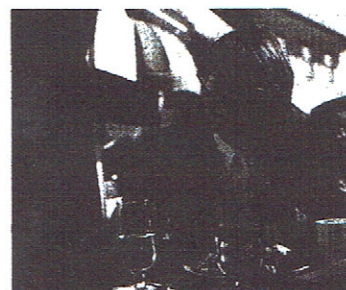
### A

#### Entertainment and hospitality

Alexandra Adler continues her seminar on cross-cultural issues.

Entertaining and hospitality vary a lot in different cultures.

- In Alphaland, entertaining is important. There are long **business lunches** in restaurants, where deals are discussed. Professional and private life are separate, and clients are never invited home.
- In Betatania, evenings are spent drinking and singing in bars with colleagues and clients.
- In Gammaria, lunch can be important, but less so than in Alphaland. Important contacts may be invited to dinner at home. **Corporate hospitality** is a big industry, with clients invited to big sports events.
- In Deltatonia, restaurants are rare outside the capital. Some entertainment takes place when important clients are invited to people's houses for dinner, or go sailing or to country houses for the weekend, etc.



### B

#### Time

Attitudes towards time can vary enormously.

In Busyville, people start work at eight, and officially finish at six, though many managers stay much longer. There is a culture of **presenteeism**: being at work when you don't need to be.

There is a two-hour **lunch break**, and a lot of business is done over restaurant lunches. (Lunch is the main meal. The **working breakfast** is rare.) There are no snacks between meals, just coffee, so eat properly at meal times.

As for **punctuality**, you can arrive up to 15 minutes 'late' for meetings. If invited to someone's house (unusual in business), arrive 15–30 minutes after the time given.

Don't phone people at home about work, and don't phone them at all after 9 pm.

There are a lot of **public holidays** (about 15) during the year. Busyville is empty in August, as many companies close completely for four weeks. Employees have five weeks' **holiday** a year and they usually take four of them in August.

BrE: holiday  
AmE: vacation

### C

#### Cross-cultural communication

Here are some other areas of potential cultural misunderstanding:

- a **distance when talking to people**: what is comfortable?
- b **eye contact**: how much of the time do people look directly at each other?
- c **gesture**: do people make lots of facial gestures? How much do they move their arms and hands?
- d **greetings/goodbyes**: do people shake hands every time? Are there fixed phrases to say?
- e **humour**: is this a good way of relaxing people? Or is it out of place in some contexts?
- f **physical contact**: how much do people touch each other?
- g **presents**: when should you give them? When should you open them? What should you say when you receive one?
- h **rules of conversation and the role of silence**: how long can people be silent before they feel uncomfortable? Is it acceptable to interrupt when others are speaking?

BrE: hur  
AmE: hu

1 In which country from A opposite might you hear these things?

- 1 How about a trip out tomorrow afternoon? We could see some horse racing and have a glass of champagne.
- 2 Do come out with us this evening! I know some great bars. How's your singing?
- 3 What are you doing this weekend? You could come to our summer cottage. You'll meet my family and we can take the boat out.
- 4 Let's get out of the office to discuss the deal. I know a nice restaurant near here, with some very good local dishes.

2 Look at B opposite. Tick (✓) the things this visitor to Busyville does right, and put a cross (X) by her mistakes.

I phoned my contact in her office at 7.30 pm. (1...) I suggested a working breakfast the next morning. (2...) She wasn't keen, so I suggested lunch. (3...) We arranged to meet at her office at 12.30. I arrived at 12.45 (4...) and we went to a restaurant, where we had a very good discussion. That evening I wanted to check something, so I found her name in the phone book and phoned her at home. (5...) She was less friendly than at lunchtime. I said I would be back in Busyville in mid-August (6...). Not a good time, she said, so I suggested September. (7...)

3 Which points in C opposite are referred to in this story?

Sally, a student, is working for a company abroad for work experience. The company has employees from all over the world. The head of the company, Henrik, invites Sally to a barbecue for his employees at his home, at 3 pm on Saturday.

She is the first to arrive, at exactly 3 o'clock. When the others arrive, some shake hands with each other. Some kiss on one cheek, others on both cheeks. Others arrive and say hello without kissing or shaking hands. (1...) Some bring wine or flowers, which the host does not open and puts to one side. Others bring nothing. (2...)

In conversations, some people move their arms around a lot and seem to make signs with their hands, others keep their hands by their sides. (3...) Some people do not let others finish what they are saying, and others say almost nothing; the people with them seem upset and move away when they can. (4...) Some people look directly at the person they are talking to. Others look away more. (5...) Some touch the arm of the other person whenever they are speaking to them. (6...) She notices that some people seem to be slowly moving backwards across the garden as the conversation goes on, while the person with them is moving forward. (7...)

Later, somebody makes a joke but nobody laughs. Everyone goes quiet. (8...) People start saying goodbye and leaving.