International Business Communication

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Introduction

The British business communication are known for the diplomatic language which prevails before directness. It is a distinguished characteristic of the British place diplomacy a great importance. Adopting a non-confrontational approach for business communication can make the British appear evasive, but is just their preference to express thoughts and form statements in a very positive way. The British also are carefully when using their words in a coded manner in situations where negative aspects need to be emphasised using positive phrases and in tense situations making use of humour. The British are very serious in business communications and prefer reserved and calm situations. Humour is well appreciated by the British society and that applies to business communications also (World Business Culture, 2023).

Morrisons PLC

The selected organisation for this report in Morrisons PLC. It is a British organisation which activates in the supermarket industry and is one of the major players along competitors. It has a strong presence in the UK and is also present in Gibraltar. The business has started as a market stall in Bradford where it still has its headquarters and has registered growth becoming the supermarket chain that is known and trusted by many customers (Global Data, 2023). The organisation has complex operations from procurement to manufacturing to online shopping and different services. Morrisons portfolio includes grocery products, clothes, products for home, appliances, garden furniture and so on. It has developed a strong infrastructure towards outsourcing products, manufacturing and distributing them for retailing, industrial and commercial customers (Morrisons, 2023).

Cultural differences: Germany

Germany is a central western European country with a large number of population in the geographical area. Germany has a disruptive history being split in East Germany and West Germany until 1990. The population of Germany is recognised for its stoicism and perseverance for progressing and dealing with difficult times and changes along the history. A specific attribute for Germany is the critical thinking and their inclination towards progress and prosperity. These qualities have helped the German society to thrive and develop strong moral sensitivity. The

German language has different dialects depending on the geographical area, but not very different that they don't understand each other. The cultural emblems of Germany highlight their patriotism and pride for their country and their traditional heritage such as celebrations, food, architecture.

Germans have a tolerant social attitude and are renowned for their organised lifestyle in the urban and rural areas. Germany is a country who is embracing other nationalities and religions and they are inclusive with the immigrants who come to their country. As in many countries there is a number of population who are unemployed and the high number of recent immigration arrivals from Middle East and North Africa have put pressure on the lower-paying jobs. They have a strong Government and use social hierarchy structures, but do not insist on class barriers and many share "the benefits of the strong middle class and receive a comprehensive, classical education" (Cultural Atlas, 2017).

Another characteristic of the population is the expectation for privacy which can make them appear distant to foreigners. The element of privacy is also important in the professional and personal life with a tendency of compartmentalisation between these. The Germans have a reputation for being honest which can be perceived as very direct and blunt (De Long, Fahey, 2000).

In the business environment the Germans are renowned for their orderly way of action, task oriented and punctuality. These cultural characteristics are valuable for organisations for methodical planning and industrious inclination which is specific for many industrialised cultures. The precision and care for detail is a strong characteristic as well as their drive to achieve objectives. Being oriented to achieve performance and being efficient is an attribute for the population of Germany and is defining for their culture. In the working environment Germans tend to have clear social-relational boundaries and what is expected and required in certain situations. The business culture of Germany suggests that there is no necessity to build personal relationships between co-workers in order to achieve objectives.

When analysing the German culture and the British culture it can be observed that the difference for the communication style, Germans preferring a more direct style, whilst British are less direct and little restraint, always being careful with the choice of words (Alphatrad, 2022). The British are more inclined to have a personalised approach for greetings and communication in general. For example birthday cards have a message written by each person who signs it. This applies to business communication also and workplaces. German is known to be a productive economy and at the workplace are aiming for efficiency. German put work first and pleasure second, but at the same time they understand the importance of rest and holiday for recharging and for future performance.

British are known for going to work whilst sick which reduces performance and can impact the co-workers (Goodwille, 2020).

Hofstede Cultural Dimensions indicate that Germany and UK have similar levels for the power distance. The perspective of the majority of the German population is to ensure equal access to opportunity without taking into account the social background and based on Hofstede's theoretical model of cultural dimensions, Germany has a low power distance score. This indicates that there is a dominant expectation of equality in the German society. The individualism in Germany is lower than the individualism in the UK and both countries have high levels on the masculine spectrum (Research Gate, 2012). The Germans rarely leave thing to chance preferring to follow rules and reduced risks and then therefore higher score for uncertainty avoidance. The Germans are also very pragmatic, similar to British and when consider will give priority to long-term relationships. UK registers higher levels for indulgence, whilst Germany is known to be more restraint (Monsoon, 2023).

Cultural differences: Spain

Spain is known for its hospitality and for the way of greeting and having a conversation. They are very warm and have a more relaxed lifestyle, taking time for siesta after lunch before preparing to end the work day. They are very respectful with each other and each others habits. Spanish people are known for being less punctual that other countries and getting accustomed to this can be challenging for others. In general Spanish people take their time to enjoy their time with peers and to have conversations. The pace of life is very different in Spain than in the UK, as well as in the working environment and in the lifestyle. Being late for work or casual meetings is not as strict and there is a more relaxed attitude towards lateness. The break time is longer and can be double time than in the UK. As long as the worker is not taking advantage of the situation, Spanish people are allowed to take longer breaks, rather than 30 minutes like in the UK (Research Gate, 2011).

The cultural background shapes the communication style and that is applied in the business environment also. The same information can have different signification from a culture to another one and the cultural background has a great influence in the way of doing business (Chow et al, 1994). The Spanish people are very friendly and this applies at the workplace, with enthusiasm and greetings. Spanish people are more open to friendly greetings, whilst British prefer to maintain their personal space. For Spanish people is very natural to be close too people and do not think excessively about keeping distance from each other.

The Business Communication in Spain has a formal character and have various rules of protocol. They take pride in their work and their achievements and respect is an important value for them. Another characteristic is being charismatic and entertaining even in business meetings. Even the body language is more friendly and expressive and direct eye contact. The population is very proud with their regional heritage and take traditions very seriously and can get offended easily. Family is very important for the Spaniards and sport, especially football is a very popular subject to discuss. Spaniards prefer direct contact and face to face meetings rather than emails and telephone, which is more specific for the British. A high number of the Spanish population will speak English and generally, the conduct of most international business negotiations is in English. Spaniards take their time in business also, and they do not like to be rushed in taking decisions. Trust is very important in doing business and building relationships on long term. Due to the value of trust within business relationships, Spanish executives usually do not insist on written confirmation of a deal. In business communications courtesy titles should be used which is a similar characteristic for Spanish and British (Business Culture, 2023).

Based on Hofstede (2001) the index of uncertainty avoidance has quite a high level with a score of 86 as Spain has a reputation for being more relaxed. It is learnt from young ages to deal with situations in order to reduce uncertainty and stress. The Spaniards are more likely to stay in a job they do not like just to avoid uncertainty and the stress of unknown. Regarding the masculinity versus femininity, the Spain has a 42 score as competition is moderate and seek harmony. The individualism versus collectivism, Spain has a score of 51 which again is a moderate value. The power distance index as the "extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1991). Spain has a hierarchical society where elders are respected and authority is respected. In Spanish businesses, it may be more common for the boss to work separately from employees and to act, dress, or speak in a way that distinguishes him or her from subordinate workers. Long term versus short term orientation, which for Spain has a moderate index, with a tendency to live in the moment and be open for short term commitments.

Potential communication barriers in Germany and Spain

Germany is a desirable country to do business in because it has an impressive economy in Europe. Despite that different communication barriers may arise for a UK company intending to enter the new market in Germany. Morrisons PLC could benefit of the developed infrastructure of the

country, stable economy, as well as for the integrity and reliability as a country. Potential barriers could be encountered in business communication due to an expanded diplomacy for making statements and negotiating. Germans would prefer getting things done efficiently and could find the British representatives of Morrisons too hesitant. The language in Germany is quite different than English and for a better start the company should look into this aspect. Despite the language barriers, English is spoken by large number in Germany. The selected company should be ready to adhere to much more stricter rules such as an official working hours of 40h per week in comparison with UK where the limit is 48h, but even that can be extended.

Spain is a popular country to conduct business because it has a modern infrastructure and it is open for foreign investors. The unemployment has seen a rise lately which can influence the power of purchase, but this can be used as a positive to attract work force. Regarding the cultural differences an UK organisation might find difficult to adapt to a very active and direct environment, showing high levels of emotions. British people are known for being reserved and keeping on their personal space. It could be overwhelming for British representatives of Morrisons to deal with Spanish people who are more direct and struggle to fall quiet for a long time. It can be considered rude the way Spanish people interrupt each other and even the volume of the voice (Cultural Atlas, 2017).

Recommendations for Morrisons

Based on the cultural differences evaluated in this report for the United Kingdom to expand in Germany or Spain, it is recommended that it should expand to Germany. Germany can be a more suitable location for Morrisons as it is more certain to surpass the cultural differences between the two countries. Although Germans are more direct and blunt, British could find the working environment feasible for entering the supermarket industry.

It is recommended for Morrisons that it takes into account the directness for communication of the Germans. It should take into account the societal values of Germany and it should ensure the business is perceived as an added value to the society which respects the “order” and existing structures. Also referring to the business communications it is recommended to have a focus on long-term relationship. It is also very important to ensure there is a balanced power and control in order to have efficient management and comply with the German legislation. It is important that Morrisons identifies the risks proactively and has rigorous negotiation whilst maintaining degrees of flexibility. Lastly, it should have a plan for exit in case the strategy it does not work.

Conclusion

In conclusion there are very high chances for Morrisons to be able to grow their new operations in Germany and have an efficient and positive environment. It would be a positive strategy for Morrisons and enable the organisation to expand and generate profit, as well as building the brand name internationally.

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