

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS
(LCBB6001_LON)
Assessment One

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Introduction

In today's increasingly linked and globalised world, efficient global business communication has become a critical component of corporate success. As companies grow outside their local boundaries, they meet a wide range of cultural norms, linguistic variances, and manners of communication, all of which impact the dynamics of international trade. Understanding and acknowledging the challenges of international business communication is essential to promoting cooperation, establishing trust, and reaching strategic objectives in a multicultural setting (Deresky, 2017). This essay delves into the key elements of international business communication, emphasising its significance in bridging cultural gaps, simplifying negotiations, and boosting organisational success in a globalised market from the perspective of business collaboration between companies based in The United Kingdom and Japan.

By evaluating current practices and theoretical frameworks, the debate emphasises the relevance of cultural intelligence, adaptation, and technological improvements in managing the problems and opportunities of international communication.

Product line collaboration between The Body Shop International Ltd and Shiseido Co Ltd

The Body Shop International Ltd: Business Overview

The Body Shop International Ltd, headquartered in London, UK, is a global manufacturer and retailer of personal care products, including skincare, makeup, and hair care items. It operates through owned stores, franchises, and online platforms across the Americas, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Australia, and the Middle East. With 2,568 employees, the company reported \$503 million in revenue for its last fiscal year, ending in December. Renowned for its ethical and sustainable practices, The Body Shop is a key player in the global beauty industry (Marketline, 2024).

Shiseido Company, Limited: Business Overview

Shiseido Company, Limited, headquartered in Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan, is a global manufacturer and marketer of cosmetics and healthcare products. Its portfolio includes skincare, hair care, body care, fragrances, and health and beauty foods, marketed under well-known brands such as Shiseido, Nars, Issey Miyake, Laura Mercier, and Tsubaki. The company distributes its products through department stores, cosmetic retailers, drugstores, and general merchandising outlets, operating across Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas.

For the fiscal year ending December 2023, Shiseido reported revenues of JPY 973,038 million (approximately USD 6.7 billion), with an operating margin of 2.9% and a net margin of 2.2%. As of June 2024, it saw quarterly revenue growth of 3.9%. Employing 30,540 people, Shiseido remains a leading name in the global beauty and personal care industry (Marketline, 2024).

A partnership between The Body Shop and Shiseido would be mutually advantageous, combining their capabilities to increase market presence and fulfil changing customer expectations. Customers who care about the environment would be drawn to both businesses' dedication to moral and sustainable business methods. Their complimentary product lines—Shiseido's high-end selection and The Body Shop's emphasis on natural, reasonably priced goods—would enable them to serve a wider market. The Body Shop's network across Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East, along with Shiseido's robust position in the luxury and Asia-Pacific markets, would allow for regional development (Zhu et al. 2019). They could develop cutting-edge goods by utilising The Body Shop's knowledge of natural formulations and Shiseido's sophisticated research skills. Furthermore, pooling resources for distribution, manufacturing, and digital initiatives would improve brand strength and operational efficiency, putting them in a position to seize important market possibilities (Smith, 2022).

Business culture overview

The culture of businesses refers to the common beliefs, conventions, practices, and behaviours that influence how organisations run and interact internally and externally. It includes both statutory and informal norms governing decision-making, interaction, and dynamics in the workplace. Business culture, which is rooted in a region's cultural, social, and economic settings, differs greatly among nations and industries, impacting aspects such as leadership styles and organisational structures to attitudes towards time management, dispute resolution, and innovation. Understanding organisational culture is essential for encouraging successful cooperation, increasing employee engagement, and meeting strategic goals in local and foreign markets (Deresky, 2017).



Figure 1 Country comparison tool (UK Vs Japan) (The Culture Factor, 2023)

Japan's Business Communication Culture: A Cultural Dimensions Analysis

Cultural factors such as power distance, individualism, achievement incentive, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence, as conceptualised by frameworks such as Hofstede's cultural

dimensions theory, have a significant impact on Japan's business communication culture (The Culture Factor, 2023).

Power distance

Japan has a medium to high degree of power distance, suggesting a hierarchical culture in which authority is respected, and decisions are frequently centralised. In corporate communication, this manifests itself as formal conversations, a significant focus on titles, and respect for seniority. Associates may avoid directly opposing superiors, preferring to voice disagreement or offer feedback more indirectly.

Individualism versus Collectivism.

Japanese culture relies strongly upon collectivism. Group cohesion and consensus-building (nemawashi) are prioritised in corporate communication. Decision-making procedures frequently entail lengthy discussions to ensure that all stakeholders are in agreement, even if this takes more time. Individual accomplishments are secondary to collective success, which reinforces collaborative communication methods.

Motivation for Achievement and Success.

Japan's high accomplishment mindset is seen in its commitment to precision, high standards, and professionalism, which is frequently summarised in the term "kaizen" (continuous improvement). Business communication demonstrates this via strict attention to detail, extensive documentation, and an emphasis on detailed preparation to ensure goals are reached.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Japan has a strong tendency for avoiding ambiguity, which impacts its risk-averse and methodical approach to corporate communication. Protocols, formality, and precise agendas are commonplace, reducing ambiguity and assuring clarity. This attribute also encourages long-term connections and trust-building to reduce uncertainty in business interactions.

Long-term orientation.

A profoundly embedded long-term mindset influences Japanese work practices and communication. Patience, dedication, and strategic planning are encouraged. Business connections are established gradually, with a strong emphasis on developing trust and mutual respect gradually. Negotiations tend to last longer, indicating a preference for long-term relationships over immediate benefits.

Indulgence versus Restraint

Japan is characterised by restraint, with a strong emphasis on self-discipline and humility. In corporate communication, this is reflected in a quiet and official tone that avoids open displays of excitement or

individual aspirations. Politeness and humility are valued, ensuring that conversations are professional and courteous.

"Export to Japan" (Crane, 2023) gives insight into Japanese business etiquette for businesses looking for Japanese partnerships. Trade with the outside world is a major factor in Japan's economic dominance. Remembering Japanese ideals and respect is essential while navigating Japanese business etiquette. Punctuality is essential, as events frequently begin early. Because English is not frequently used in business or government, an interpreter is typically necessary. Respect for older and higher-level jobs is crucial, and British companies ought to have their business cards translated into Japanese. When exchanging business cards, a slight bow demonstrates respect and good manners.

Japanese culture encourages collaborative decision-making and gives pitchers more time to clarify their points. It is advisable to schedule business meetings ahead of time and create an agenda beforehand. Japanese corporations use the honorific "san" after their names and take notes in meetings. Hiring an interpreter could help maximum benefit out of meetings. Establishing trustworthy relationships with Japanese partners is essential, and it is not recommended to have dedicated team for specific collaboration.

United Kingdom's Business Communication Culture: A Cultural Dimensions Analysis

The United Kingdom's corporate communication culture is impacted by cultural aspects such as power distance, individuality, accomplishment incentive, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. These factors influence the nation's disposition to workplace relationships, decision-making, and arbitration (The Culture Factor, 2023).

Power Distance

The United Kingdom has a comparatively low degree of power distance, emphasising equality and approachability in working environments. Communication is casual and open, and executives frequently embrace a collaborative management approach. Individuals have the opportunity to express their viewpoints, and there is less dependence on strict hierarchies, encouraging an inclusive environment in conversations.

Individualism versus Collectivism.

The United Kingdom ranks high in individualism, indicating a strong emphasis on independence and responsibility. This individualistic approach to corporate communication promotes directness, determination and self-expression. Professionals frequently showcase their accomplishments and contributions, and decision-making may favour individual knowledge above mutual agreement.

Motivation for Achievement and Success.

The UK prioritises achievement and success, however this mentality is balanced by a preference for moderation and balance. In communication, this is expressed in a results-oriented strategy that emphasises pragmatism and efficiency. However, emphasising professionalism and manners helps to combine assertiveness with politeness and tact.

Uncertainty Avoidance

The United Kingdom demonstrates modest levels of uncertainty avoidance. While organisations value precise norms and well-defined procedures, there is still room for flexibility and creativity. In communication, this emerges as a readiness to partake in debates that consider alternate points of view or innovative solutions without becoming excessively dependent on norms.

Long-term orientation.

The UK has a mix of short-term and long-term approaches. While long-term partnerships and long-range strategy are prized, the company culture additionally allows for rapid decisions when necessary. In communication, this balance is demonstrated by emphasising keeping strong professional networks while remaining responsive to immediate possibilities and problems.

Indulgence versus Restraint

The United Kingdom favours indulgence, reflecting a society that values fun, creativity, and work-life balance. Humour and informality are frequently utilised in business communication to foster a welcoming atmosphere. However, this skilfully matches the professionalism necessary in formal contexts, highlighting the subtle interplay between excess and restraint.

In many ways, the corporate communication cultures of Japan and the United Kingdom differ dramatically. Japan has a large power distance, focusing on hierarchy and honouring the level of seniority which frequently leads to decisions being taken at higher levels. In contrast, the United Kingdom has a lesser power distance, favouring a more democratic approach that encourages cooperation and open dialogue at all levels.

Comparative analysis of UK and Japan

Japanese culture is profoundly collectivist, with a focus on unity and consensus among people, which frequently leads to prolonged processes of decision-making to secure everyone's agreement. Individualism is valued in the United Kingdom, where individual accomplishments and personal expression are prioritised, resulting in faster, more independent decision-making (Ashta, Stokes, 2023).

Significant differences exist in communication methods as well. Japanese communication is high-context and indirect, focussing on non-verbal clues and nuance, and places a great value on being kind and avoiding humiliation. On the other hand, communication in the UK is uncomplicated, low-context, and centred on clear, unambiguous statements that value efficiency and clarity (Ronen, Shenkar, 2013).

In order to build lasting relationships, meetings in Japan are usually formal and planned, with well-defined agendas and procedures. Meetings in the UK might be more relaxed and casual, encouraging honest debate and prompt decision-making.

Japan handles conflict resolution in an indirect manner, emphasising peace and avoiding direct conflict. However, the UK has a tendency to deal with disputes directly and with pragmatism, seeking to find speedy and efficient solutions.

Time management is highly valued in Japanese corporate culture, which emphasises timeliness, careful preparation, and long-term planning. The UK balances between immediate and long-term plans by allowing for greater flexibility while still respecting timeliness.

Another area of difference is formality: in corporate settings, Japan fosters a high degree of formality by using honorifics and titles, whereas the United Kingdom takes a more casual approach and frequently uses first names even in professional situations.

Japanese companies tend to pay close attention to details. Careful planning and documentation are standard practices. Although documentation plays an important role in the UK, time and conciseness are valued more.

Building relationships in Japan takes time and is founded on mutual respect and long-term trust. Both short-term and long-term partnerships are valued in the UK, where networking and quick outcomes are prioritised.

Japan adopts technology cautiously yet thoroughly, incorporating it gradually but methodically. The UK is quicker to adopt new technology for efficiency and is more adaptable and adaptive.

Lastly, Japan demonstrates a high degree of uncertainty avoidance by minimising risk and favouring transparent, organised procedures. The UK embraces a moderate degree of uncertainty avoidance, is willing to take measured risks, and has adaptable procedures (Morrison et al. 1994)

Fostering productive teamwork and overcoming the difficulties that come up in international business interactions require an understanding of these cultural variations.

Possible complications and recommendations for successful collaboration between UK and Japan

Complications

Cultural variations in communication methods, decision-making, and workplace standards might hamper business communication between British and Japanese organisations. Japanese communication is indirect, depending on subtlety and nonverbal clues, whereas British communication is upfront and unambiguous. Decision-making methods vary, with Japanese corporations prioritising consensus-building and UK companies favouring speedier, individual or small-group decisions. Japanese corporate

culture values hierarchy and respect for seniority, whereas British companies are more egalitarian. Japanese businesses prioritise thoroughness and may prolong deadlines, whereas UK businesses focus on fulfilling deadlines. Japanese business etiquette is more transactional, whereas UK businesses may see Japanese corporations as cautious or slow to commit. Conflict management approaches are different, with Japanese individuals avoiding direct confrontation to preserve harmony and British professionals freely discussing disputes. Language issues can further complicate matters, with Japanese professionals avoiding subtle phrases and British colleagues employing humour or informal phrases. Work-life balance requirements vary, with Japanese employers requiring dedication through extended working hours and UK enterprises emphasising a better distinction between work and home life.

Recommendations

Overcoming barriers to corporate collaboration among UK and Japanese enterprises necessitates an array of cultural awareness, adaptability, and effective communication tactics. Both parties could benefit from investing in cultural awareness training to better comprehend one another's business etiquette, communication methods, and decision-making processes. British professionals can adjust by being more tolerant with indirect communication, but Japanese partners can aim for more evident clarity when necessary. Active listening and clarifying enquiries can also help prevent misconceptions (Morrison, Conaway and Borden, 1994).

In order to balance discrepancies in decision-making, Japanese firms can shorten some procedures to conform to the UK's faster-paced manner, while UK companies may reflect the Japanese tendency for consensus-building by allocating extra time for talks and approvals. Respecting hierarchical disparities is also important. UK professionals should follow Japanese formalities, such as treating senior executives with suitable titles and adhering to cultural conventions like bowing and correct business card handing. Where suitable, Japanese equivalents can adjust to the more equitable working culture of the United Kingdom (Zhu, Nel and Bhat, 2019).

Clear timelines, outcomes, and communication standards are critical for successful partnership between British and Japanese firms. Both parties should find a balance between Japan's emphasis on quality and the UK's emphasis on efficiency. Building solid ties is critical because Japanese firms appreciate trust and long-term collaborations. Addressing language obstacles, utilising interpreters or multilingual employees, simplifying language, and utilising technology can all help to improve communication. A collaborative approach is required for dispute resolution, with British professionals treating disagreements with care and Japanese colleagues voicing concerns more openly. Regular reviews and feedback channels are vital for ensuring alignment and resolving issues. Celebrating milestones and successes can help to improve relationships and promote mutual growth (Crane, 2023).

Conclusion

To summarise, building effective corporate cooperation in a globalised environment necessitates recognising and overcoming cultural and communication gaps. The study of business dynamics between the United Kingdom and Japan demonstrates how cultural differences influence interactions. A collaboration between The Body Shop and Shiseido demonstrates the possibilities for combining complementary assets, such as market reach and similar principles of sustainability and creativity.

Companies may bridge gaps and improve collaboration by using techniques such as cultural awareness training, clear communication frameworks, and mutual appreciation for diverse traditions. Building long-term trust, respecting shared objectives, and using adaptive communication strategies will not only help you overcome possible obstacles, but will also open up chances for mutual progress in a competitive global economy.

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