



## These Scales Reveal Everything You Need To Know About Different Cultures And Business Communication

### A) Warm up

1. In your role, do you communicate with international colleagues or clients? If so, have you noticed any differences in the way that you communicate?
2. Have you ever visited a country which you felt was culturally very different to your own? What were some of the biggest differences that you noticed?

### B) Adapted Text - These Scales Reveal Everything You Need to Know About Different Cultures And Business Communication

#### These Scales Reveal Everything You Need To Know About Different Cultures And Business Communication

Adapted from an article published in 2015 by Business Insider

Many people underestimate how differently business people communicate in different parts of the world. It could be said that many Americans and British people tend to **beat around the bush**; French, Dutch, Israelis, and Germans **get straight to the point**; Latin Americans and Asians have a long history of hierarchy; Scandinavians think the best boss is just one of the crowd. It's no surprise that when we all try and talk to each other, chaos breaks out. So how can we possibly **navigate** a world in which we all communicate so differently?

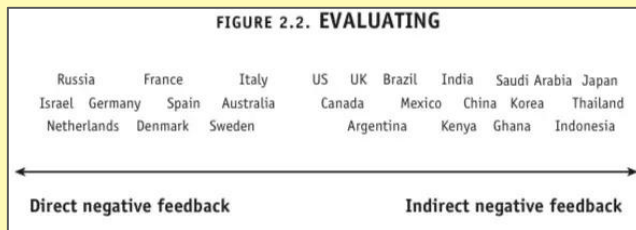
Luckily, Professor Erin Meyer has come to the rescue in her 2014 best-seller: "The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business."

Erin Meyer is an international business expert guiding through this business world in which people from completely different backgrounds are expected to work harmoniously together. She collected data on communication and cultural differences by conducting extensive research, including interviews and surveys with over 300 executives from various countries and industries. She also **drew on** her own experiences as a consultant and professor of cross-cultural management at INSEAD, a global business school. Consequently, she was able to **draw up** a model for decoding how cultural differences impact international business. The model is based on 8 scales of communication. Meyer claims that you can improve relationships by **gauging** where you and international partners fall these 8 scales, 6 of which we will look at below.

#### Evaluating

Americans may be very explicit communicators, but they are in the middle of the spectrum when it comes to giving negative feedback — as anyone who has been to an American school knows.

Israelis, Russians, and Dutch are among the most direct when it comes to negative feedback.

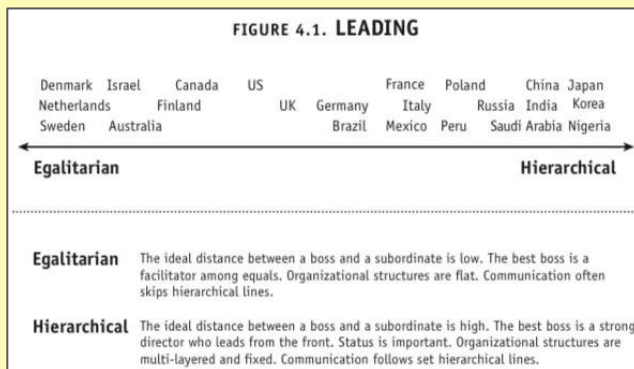


### Leading

"In Denmark, it is understood that the managing director is one of the guys, just two small steps up from the janitor," a Danish executive told Meyer. This represents one extreme in attitudes toward leadership.

On the other side of the spectrum in countries like Japan and Korea, however, the ideal boss should stand far above the workers at the top of a hierarchy.

America strikes a **middle ground** here.



### Deciding

How organizations make decisions relates closely to how they view leadership, but with some important differences.

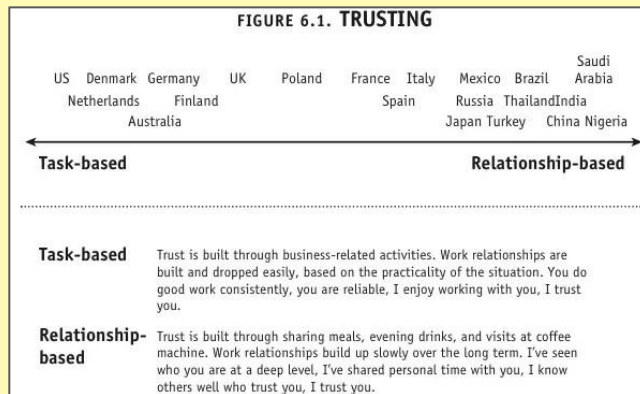
Notably, while Japan has a very hierarchical leadership system, it has a very consensual decision-making system. This is the famous ringi system, which involves **bouncing ideas around** and **building a consensus** at a lower level before bringing a proposal to a higher level, **thus** enabling broad corporate consensus.



## Trusting

In some cultures, notably America, people don't worry so much about **gauging** a potential business partner's trustworthiness, mainly because they trust their legal system to enforce contracts, and so business negotiations focus on what's practical.

In others, including many emerging market economies but also **to a lesser extent** Western Europe, personal relationships are much more important, in part because people don't trust their legal system as much to enforce contracts.



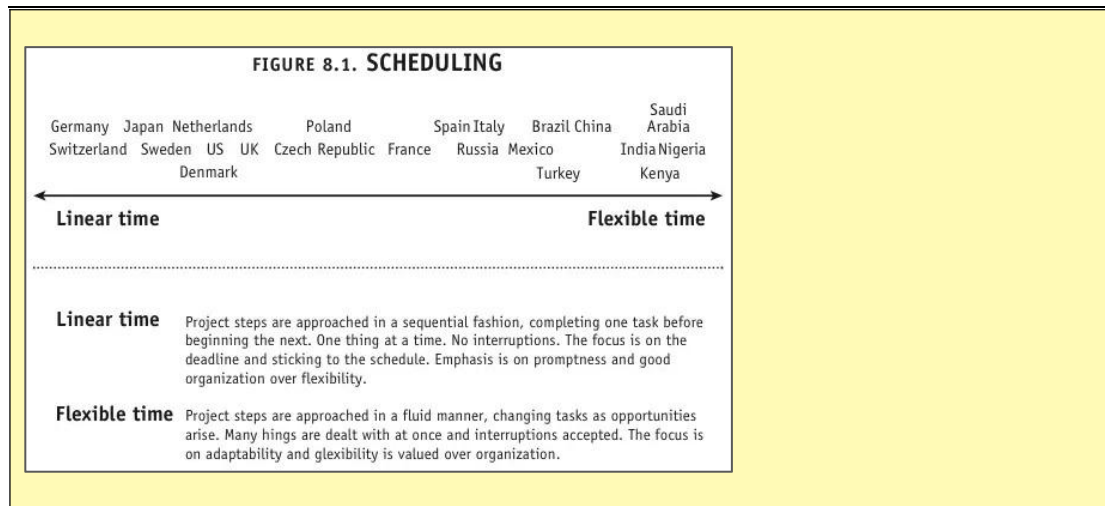
## Disagreeing

Some cultures **embrace** confrontation while others avoid it. This scale looks a lot like the scale showing the directness of negative feedback, though with some differences, such as Sweden **leaning more towards** the “direct” side of the scale on negative feedback and more towards the “avoiding confrontation” side on disagreeing.



## Scheduling

That different cultures treat time differently is one of the most common observations for anyone working or even travelling abroad. On one extreme you've got the **exceedingly** precise Germans and Swiss; Americans fall relatively close to this end of the spectrum; Western Europeans and Latin Americans tend to be more flexible; Africa, the Middle East, and India are extremely flexible.



The original article can be found in the link below:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-culture-map-8-scales-for-work-2015-1>

### C) Key Words from Context

Based on the context of the article, can you match the words in the box to the definitions listed below? Then add the word into the example sentence. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the meaning of the sentence.

to beat around the bush	to get straight to the point	to navigate
to draw on	to draw up	to gauge
to bounce ideas around	to build a consensus	a middle ground
to embrace	to lean towards	thus
		exceedingly

1. To prepare and write a document: \_\_\_\_\_

*"I will \_\_\_\_\_ and send it to you by the end of next week."*

2. To talk about ideas in an informal way in order to get different people's opinions on it:

\_\_\_\_\_

*"We need to come up with some creative ideas for our next campaign. Let's \_\_\_\_\_ in our next meeting."*

3. As a consequence of, therefore: \_\_\_\_\_

*"We invested a lot of money in new technology, \_\_\_\_\_ increasing our efficiency."*

4. To reach the main idea of something, to start discussing the main idea of something:

\_\_\_\_\_

*"He sometimes talks too much in meetings and fails to \_\_\_\_\_."*

5. To discuss something without getting to the point: \_\_\_\_\_

*"Let's not \_\_\_\_\_ here; we have some really serious issues to discuss."*

6. To accept and welcome something enthusiastically: \_\_\_\_\_

*"In business, it is very important to \_\_\_\_\_ change."*

7. To find your way and progress through something: \_\_\_\_\_

*"It is really challenging to \_\_\_\_\_ this complex market."*

8. Extremely: \_\_\_\_\_

*"Such difficult situations are \_\_\_\_\_ rare."*

9. To determine the amount, level or volume of something: \_\_\_\_\_

*"We can \_\_\_\_\_ the effectiveness of our campaign through our analytics tool."*

10. To be moving towards one particular opinion: \_\_\_\_\_

*"Of the two options that you have presented, I am currently \_\_\_\_\_ the first one, because it looks more profitable, but I am interested to look further into both of them."*

11. An area of compromise between two opposing groups: \_\_\_\_\_

*"In terms of pricing our products, we had to find a healthy \_\_\_\_\_ between maximising profits and remaining really competitive in the market."*

12. To use your skills, knowledge, talent or data as a resource: \_\_\_\_\_

*"When the company faced some difficult challenges last year, I had to \_\_\_\_\_ my extensive experience in order to steer the ship in the right direction."*

13. To come to a general agreement among a group of people: \_\_\_\_\_

*"We should \_\_\_\_\_ among the rest of the team before we make a final decision. We really don't want to get this wrong."*

**D) Comprehension**

**Can you answer the questions below about the text?**

1. From which 4 methods did Erin Meyer collect data for her model of cultural differences in communication?

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2. How does Erin Meyer claim that we can use the model to improve relationships?

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3. In the section “Evaluating”, what could be considered paradoxical about Americans’ communication habits?

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4. What do you think a Danish executive meant by the following statement: *"In Denmark, it is understood that the managing director is one of the guys, just two small steps up from the janitor"*?

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5. What is specifically notable about the leadership and decision-making systems in Japan?

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6. According to the article, what key factor influences cultural differences when it comes to trusting?

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7. According to the article, which cultural difference are you very likely to notice when you visit another country as a tourist?

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8. To what extent do you agree with the author’s findings, and where would you place your country on each of these scales?

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### E) Key Words in a New Context

Below you can find a paragraph. Can you fill in the gaps in the paragraph with the words from the box below? You may need to change the form of some of the verbs in order for them to fit into the sentence.

to beat around the bush	to get straight to the point	exceedingly
to draw	to gauge	a middle ground
to bounce ideas around	to build a consensus	to lean more towards
		to embrace

#### Communicating Facts and Theories When Presenting

When learning some new grammar in a new language, which of these strategies do you think would work best for you?

1. Learn the grammar rules and then look at some examples.
2. Look at some examples first and then try work out the rules for yourself.

The first method is known as ‘deductive learning’ and the second method is known as ‘inductive learning’. According to Dr. Meyer’s study in the culture map, some cultures prefer deductive learning, and others prefer inductive learning.

In some cultures, notably the French and Italians, people \_\_\_\_\_ “deductive arguments”, meaning that they focus on the rules first before looking at the examples.

On the contrary, many native English-speaking cultures, prefer inductive arguments, starting by looking at the examples and encouraging learners to \_\_\_\_\_ on these examples in order to work out the rules or theory. These cultures believe that this encourages people to \_\_\_\_\_ as they try to work out the rules and theory from the examples given. If people manage to \_\_\_\_\_ on rules, then they are more likely to \_\_\_\_\_ them and understand them more fully.

Certain Latin European cultures may think that this method is \_\_\_\_\_ time-consuming, and that it would be much quicker to \_\_\_\_\_ by exploring the rules first instead of \_\_\_\_\_ with unnecessary discussion.

So how can we apply this in a business context?

When faced with a business presentation whereby you need to present facts and principles to an international audience, English-speaking cultures prefer to get examples before hearing the facts and principles. Latin European cultures prefer to hear the facts and principles before looking at examples. Considering the culture of your audience is extremely important in order to \_\_\_\_\_ what kind of approach you should take in a presentation. If you have a multicultural audience, a possible \_\_\_\_\_ is to cycle back and forth between discussing rules, theory and examples. Hopefully this should keep everyone happy!