

Business etiquette

Source 4: <http://businessculture.org/western-europe/business-culture-in-netherlands/business-etiquette-in-netherlands/>

Sections used in our cultural research document are indicated as followed:

This is a paragraph used in our cultural research document.

Attitudes and values form the basis of any culture. They reflect both the way people think and behave. Understanding attitudes and values can therefore be of significant importance if you wish to communicate with your counterparts effectively. Ignorance of these issues can result in a cultural barrier that may inhibit the communication process and have an adverse effect on the success of your activities in a given country.

Corporate Social Responsibility

As a matter of history, the Netherlands is one of the most environmentally conscious countries in the world. Owing its existence to a continuous battle against encroaching waters, harnessing wind power in support of its efforts, the country has an intimate and forgiving relationship with nature. A strong farming tradition, with market gardening and horticulture as a prosperous offshoot, has reinforced the process.

The only major challenge is that, with the current strong emphasis on livestock breeding, the Netherlands has a problem coping with vast quantities of liquid manure. For this reason alone, with the country having three large rivers – the Rhine, the Maas and the Scheldt estuary – water quality is a major issue.

Punctuality

The Dutch are generally excellent timekeepers. Punctuality in business is regarded as a virtue, although apologies for a late arrival will be accepted good-naturedly. If you are unexpectedly delayed, call ahead.

If you are invited for dinner, it will not be unreasonable to ask your host what time he or she would like you to arrive. Take that as your target and try to be prompt.

Despite the fact that, inspired by their culture, the Dutch are dedicated to business meetings to ensure consensus, they are still conscious of the passage of time. In addition to a fixed agenda, someone will almost always be given the role of chairperson to keep the agenda moving along, and someone else may even be delegated to act as a time-keeper.

Time keeping is equally important with regard to response and delivery times in all commercial relationships. Quotations should be drawn up rapidly and delivery promises kept.

For further information please visit the link below:

Executive Planet: http://www.executiveplanet.com/index.php?title=Netherlands:_Appointment_Alert%21 [en]

Gift giving

The Dutch do not like to feel obligated. Moreover, as an aspect of their even-handed approach to most things in life, they do not expect to give or receive anything other than the due reward for services rendered.

As a result, gift giving is not a common aspect of business relationships in the Netherlands. If you decide, however, that some sort of gesture is appropriate, for example on finalising an agreement, make the gift a reasonably modest one and make sure it is neutral – nothing with the company logo, or with your business card attached.

If you are offered a gift, open it immediately and show your appreciation. Some Dutch companies may offer end-of-year gifts and these should of course be acknowledged.

If you have the honour of being invited into a Dutch home, by all means take a gift for the hostess – flowers or a houseplant, wine (especially if the host is a male) or chocolates and sweets or a toy for the children. The rules on flowers are the same as for most other European countries: no chrysanthemums or carnations.

A handwritten note of appreciation the following day will also always be welcome.

For further information please visit the link below:

Executive Planet: http://www.executiveplanet.com/index.php?title=Netherlands:_Gift_Giving [en]

eDiplomat: http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_nl.htm [en]

Business Dress Code

The Dutch tend to dress fairly conservatively in business, though standards and styles vary widely from one industry to another: formal attire is normal in banking, open-neck shirts and jeans in the IT and entertainment sectors. In most Dutch organisations, it is generally normal to wear a jacket, not necessarily a suit, to take the jacket off when working. Colour has no particular significance, and colourful shirt/tie combinations are quite usual in some sectors, such as marketing and service industries.

Women, the younger generation in particular, may wear trousers, particularly trouser suits. When in doubt about the dress code for a particular business event, it is advisable to be well dressed rather than under-dressed. Uniforms, except at the janitor level, are rarely worn.

Sometimes, choice of clothing will be determined by the means of transport to work. In major cities such as Amsterdam, many people travel by bicycle or tram.

If unsure of the dress code and what to wear, it is perfectly acceptable to ask someone from the company you are visiting. It is often better to find out in advance, so that you can make any necessary changes to your clothing before your introductions. This will help you to feel confident and relaxed in your encounter with the company.

Bribery and corruption

While they have rightly earned a reputation as formidable opponents in international trade, the Dutch have a reputation for honesty. In Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2012 (www.transparency.org), the country came 9th in the world (out of 176) with a score of 84%.

A law revising corruption legislation came into force in February 2001. This includes a new article to extend the definition of bribery offences, which previously applied only to domestic public servants. The new article has now widened the law to include persons in the public service of a foreign state or an international law organisation, former public servants, persons anticipated to become a public servant and judges of a foreign state or an international organisation.

For further information please visit the link below:

Transparency: <http://www.transparency.org/country#NLD> [en]