

## 2 International meetings

- A** Think about the last three meetings you attended (not necessarily business meetings, e.g. residents' meetings or sports club meetings) and answer these questions.

- 1 What was the purpose of each meeting?
- 2 What size were they?
- 3 Were they formal or informal?
- 4 Were they successful or not? Why?

- B** Do the quiz.


What are the following called?

- 1 the person in charge of a meeting  
a) chief b) chair c) boss
- 2 the people at the meeting  
a) audience b) attenders c) participants
- 3 the list of points to be discussed  
a) agenda b) schedule c) timetable
- 4 one point on the list  
a) theme b) item c) topic
- 5 an official record of what was said or decided  
a) protocol b) notes c) minutes
- 6 what you send when you are unable to attend a meeting  
a) excuses b) apologies c) pardon
- 7 a method of reaching a decision  
a) vote b) proposal c) consensus
- 8 what is decided at the end of the meeting  
a) action plan b) agenda c) handouts


- C** Discuss your answers to the quiz with a partner. How important are these things in the meetings you attend?

- D** International meetings can involve people from very different cultures. Read the experiences of meetings in different cultures on the right and answer these questions.

- 1 Which would make you feel the most or least comfortable?
- 2 Which feels the most or least familiar?
- 3 Do you recognise any of the styles from direct experience?
- 4 Is there anything in your own business meeting culture which people from other cultures might find unusual?

- E**  CD1.43 Listen to an expert talking about international meetings and answer the questions.

- 1 Which three areas are identified as causing problems in international meetings?
- 2 What tips does the expert give for successful international meetings?

- F**  CD1.43 Listen again. Are the following true (T) or false (F), according to the expert?

- 1 Punctuality is important in all cultures.
- 2 In a hierarchical culture, people feel able to express disapproval of the ideas of a superior.
- 3 Clear meeting aims are a priority in most cultures.
- 4 The main purpose of meetings is to take decisions.
- 5 It is easy to misinterpret body language in meetings.

- G** Complete these expressions used by the expert and discuss the meaning.

- 1 time is .....
- 2 stick to the .....
- 3 loss of .....
- 4 getting down to .....
- 5 small .....
- 6 relationship .....

How important do you think these issues are in your business culture?

**A** Well, in my experience there's great respect for seniority. Participants will enter a meeting in order of seniority, with the most senior person sitting furthest away. The exchange of business cards is important. They respect silence, as this shows serious work is being done. They do not say 'no' directly, as this is considered impolite.

**B** The sort of meetings I attended were very goal-focused and efficient. People there like agendas which are clear and they stick to them. They believe in good preparation and they feel that meetings are for clearly defined purposes, with action plans at the end. There seemed to be a general feeling of time being precious and not to be wasted. I think they came up with the idea of business breakfasts.





## Task

You work for a large multinational company with over 100 offices worldwide (including in your country). The Communications Director has asked you to discuss the topic of meetings across the company and to report back with your findings. The information you provide will help with the future communications policy of the company.

- 1 **Work in small groups. Hold a meeting using the following as your agenda, and consider the advantages and disadvantages of each recommendation.**
  - a) Hold all meetings in English.
  - b) Limit the number of participants in meetings to a maximum of eight.
  - c) Stop holding meetings in the afternoon of the last working day of the week.
  - d) Use more video conferencing or teleconferencing calls for international meetings
  - e) Limit the length of meetings to one hour.
  - f) Conduct meetings standing up, without chairs, tables or refreshments.
  - g) Introduce weekly 'breakfast meetings' across the company.
- 2 **Write some tips for effective meetings based on your discussion.**
- 3 **Present your ideas to another group.**

*C In my experience, meetings follow an established format with a detailed agenda. The use of titles like 'Mr' and 'Mrs' is important. There seems to be a lot of handshaking and sometimes kissing on the cheeks. Discussion is more about process than results, so there may be fewer decisions or action plans. The timetable is changeable, with interruptions and changes likely. The focus is on establishing relationships before moving on to the tasks. A business lunch here can last up to three hours.*

*D I found that people like to know well in advance about a meeting. They expect an agenda and timetable and dislike alterations. They communicate in a very direct way, follow the agenda precisely and minute all items. My jokes didn't seem to make people laugh, so I guess not being serious is disapproved of. Any proposals were presented in detail with supporting evidence. Generally, the meetings were dominated by the senior person.*



*E My experience of meetings here was that they are unstructured and often informal, more like a social event. It's normal to have long discussions on other issues, so it's a good idea to prepare and send out an agenda in advance. There was often careful analysis of small details. I found that meetings were more for decision-makers to get input from participants, while key decisions may be made elsewhere.*

VOCABULARY

NOUN COMBINATIONS

## 4 Organisation

1 Match the verbs (1–6) to the nouns (a–f) to make common collocations.

- |                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 draw up              | a) press releases |
| 2 install and maintain | b) contracts      |
| 3 keep                 | c) research       |
| 4 train                | d) systems        |
| 5 carry out            | e) records        |
| 6 issue                | f) staff          |

2 Write the name of the activity from Exercise 1 which is typically performed by each of these departments.

- R&D
- Public Relations
- Legal
- IT
- Human Resources
- Administration

Match a noun from column A with a noun from column B to complete each of the sentences below.

A	B
consumer	style
sales	headquarters
management	range
company	revenue
product	awareness

- Our ability to attract top people is a reflection of our ..... – trying to be close to employees, clients and markets.
- Arlito's ..... has recently been extended and now includes a greater variety of soft drinks.
- The travel sector is being encouraged to go green by the growing ..... of environmental issues.
- The company's total ..... for 2009 was about £1.37bn, compared with £1.8bn the previous year, i.e. a 24-per-cent decline.
- The new tax regime is an attempt to make our country a more attractive location for .....



**WRITING**

Put the sentences (a–g) in the correct order to write an e-mail.

X

To:
Rodrigo Estay

From:
Jan Kopke

Subject:
Yesterday's meeting

Dear Rodrigo,

a) The subject of employment inevitably provoked a heated argument, and no decision was reached ...

b) The main item on the agenda was, as you know, the proposed relocation to Slovenia.

c) However, in the current economic climate, it was felt that there were more urgent priorities.

d) Most people agreed that this would result in a reduction in costs, and consequently that it would be good for our profits.

e) The most immediate of these, some argued, is to safeguard employment in our country.

f) ... except to postpone the discussion till our next meeting, which I know you won't want to miss.

g) As promised, here's a brief summary of what happened at yesterday's meeting.

Talk soon,

Jan

**VOCABULARY**

**5 Advertising**

Complete the text with the words in the box. There are some words which you will not need.

advertorial	commercials	endorsed	flyers	free samples	viral
hoardings	placed	point-of-sale	pop-ups	slogans	

You may disagree that advertising is an art, you may even find it irritating at times, but it has certainly become part of our life. The newspaper article that you started reading turns out to be an .....<sup>1</sup>. The programme you are watching on TV is suddenly interrupted by a series of .....<sup>2</sup> for various consumer goods, including one for Crispin's Crisps, .....<sup>3</sup> by your favourite film star. And no sooner do you start surfing the Internet than .....<sup>4</sup> invade your screen. So you take a break and go for a stroll, only to take in once more how much .....<sup>5</sup> have indeed changed your cityscape. Then, on entering your local supermarket, you notice immediately that .....<sup>6</sup> advertising is alive and well, but do not refuse the .....<sup>7</sup> given away that day. Finally, you just do it – yes, you buy three packets of Crispin's and walk back home with a spring in your step.

## ARTICLES

In each sentence of this text, one article is missing. Write *a*, *an* or *the* where appropriate.

Sweden has long history of rules and regulations aimed at guiding citizens on the right path. A majority of Swedes seem content with the prohibitions they believe help keep their country one of safest on Earth. As Sweden is extremely child-focused society, much of the paternalistic protection is directed towards children. For example, all television advertising aimed at children under age of 12 – from junk food to toys to video games – has been banned on terrestrial channels before 9 p.m. since 1991. Although it has many admirers, ban is not entirely successful because the satellite television stations that broadcast from outside Sweden are free to target children as much as they like. Despite this, health professionals say the relatively low incidence of children's advertising has been big factor in the exceptionally low levels of overweight children in Sweden.

## SKILLS

Complete this presentation.

Good morning. On behalf of Lintex International, I'd like to welcome you all. My name's Selim Melki. As you know, I'm here today to talk about our next global advertising campaign. I have divided my talk into three parts. First, I'd like to state our objectives. Second, I'll explain why this time headquarters has decided to focus on celebrity endorsement, and outline the main ideas so far. And finally, I'll look at our budget.

Please feel free to interrupt at any time if you'd like to ask a question.

## 6 Money

### VOCABULARY

Complete the newspaper article with the words in the box.

bankruptcy	dividend	forecasts	gains	investment
pre-tax profits	recession	share	shareholders	turnover

# Stormgard shines when others stumble

While two of its rivals are teetering on the brink of .....<sup>1</sup>, Stormgard, one of Europe's largest manufacturers of insulation and roofing products, reports record preliminary results, with sales growth and market share .....<sup>2</sup> made in all three regions of Scandinavia, western Europe and the Mediterranean. ....<sup>3</sup> at Stormgard increased almost 14 per cent last year, with

demand for insulation products rising, as companies and individuals looked for ways to cut costs and save energy in the midst of the current .....<sup>4</sup>. ....<sup>5</sup> were €62.4m, up 8 per cent from last year. ....<sup>6</sup> will certainly not be disappointed, as the directors recommended the payment of a final .....<sup>7</sup> of 9.25c per .....<sup>8</sup>. ....<sup>9</sup> are optimistic, and Stormgard even plans to increase

its .....<sup>10</sup> in plant and equipment in the near future. Commenting on the results, Lucas Reiner, Chairman of Stormgard, said: 'Against a background of mixed market conditions, our company faces the future with confidence and looks forward to continued progress in the year ahead.'

### DESCRIBING TRENDS

1 Complete these verbs, which are all used to describe trends.

Downward movement

1 to p \_ \_ m \_ \_ t

2 to d \_ \_ p

3 to f \_ \_ \_

4 to \_ \_ c l \_ \_ \_

Upward movement

5 to \_ \_ c r \_ \_ \_

6 to \_ i \_ \_

7 to \_ \_ c k \_ \_

8 to j \_ \_ \_

2 Complete the chart.

infinitive	past simple	past participle	noun
to decrease	1	2	3
to fall	4	5	6
to drop	7	8	9
to peak	10	11	12
to rise	13	14	15

Profit figures

2008: €7.5m

2009: €4.5m

3 Complete the sentences below with appropriate prepositions.

- 1 There was a sharp drop ..... profit.
- 2 Profit decreased ..... €7.5m ..... €4.5m.
- 3 Profit decreased ..... €3m.
- 4 Profit now stands ..... €4.5m.
- 5 There was a drop ..... €3m ..... profit.

SKILLS

Write these numbers in full.

- 1 14
- 2 40
- 3 £8.50
- 4 €515
- 5 12.5
- 6 13.36%
- 7 0.125
- 8  $\frac{1}{3}$
- 9  $\frac{3}{4}$
- 10 5,678

Cultures: International meetings

Complete the sentences below with the words in the box.

action	agenda	body	building	business	face	key	small	times
--------	--------	------	----------	----------	------	-----	-------	-------

- 1 Different cultural assumptions mean that sometimes ..... language can easily be misunderstood.
- 2 In a hierarchical culture, criticising or disagreeing with a boss or manager can result in a loss of ..... for both people involved.
- 3 In many countries, people like to go away from a meeting with a clear ..... plan.
- 4 Not all cultures have strict approaches to starting and finishing ..... or the duration of discussion.
- 5 The idea of hierarchy in a culture is one of the ..... areas to bear in mind.
- 6 The new manager has a very relaxed attitude towards meetings and sees them as the place for relationship ..... and developing trust.
- 7 The participants made ..... talk for a few minutes, then the Chair cleared her throat and said, ‘So, let’s get down to .....’
- 8 Their meetings are for clearly defined purposes, and they like to stick to the .....



# Cultures

*'When overseas, you learn more about your own country than you do the place you are visiting.'* Clint Borgen, American activist

## OVERVIEW

### LISTENING

Cultural differences

### VOCABULARY

Idioms

### READING

Culture shock

### LANGUAGE REVIEW

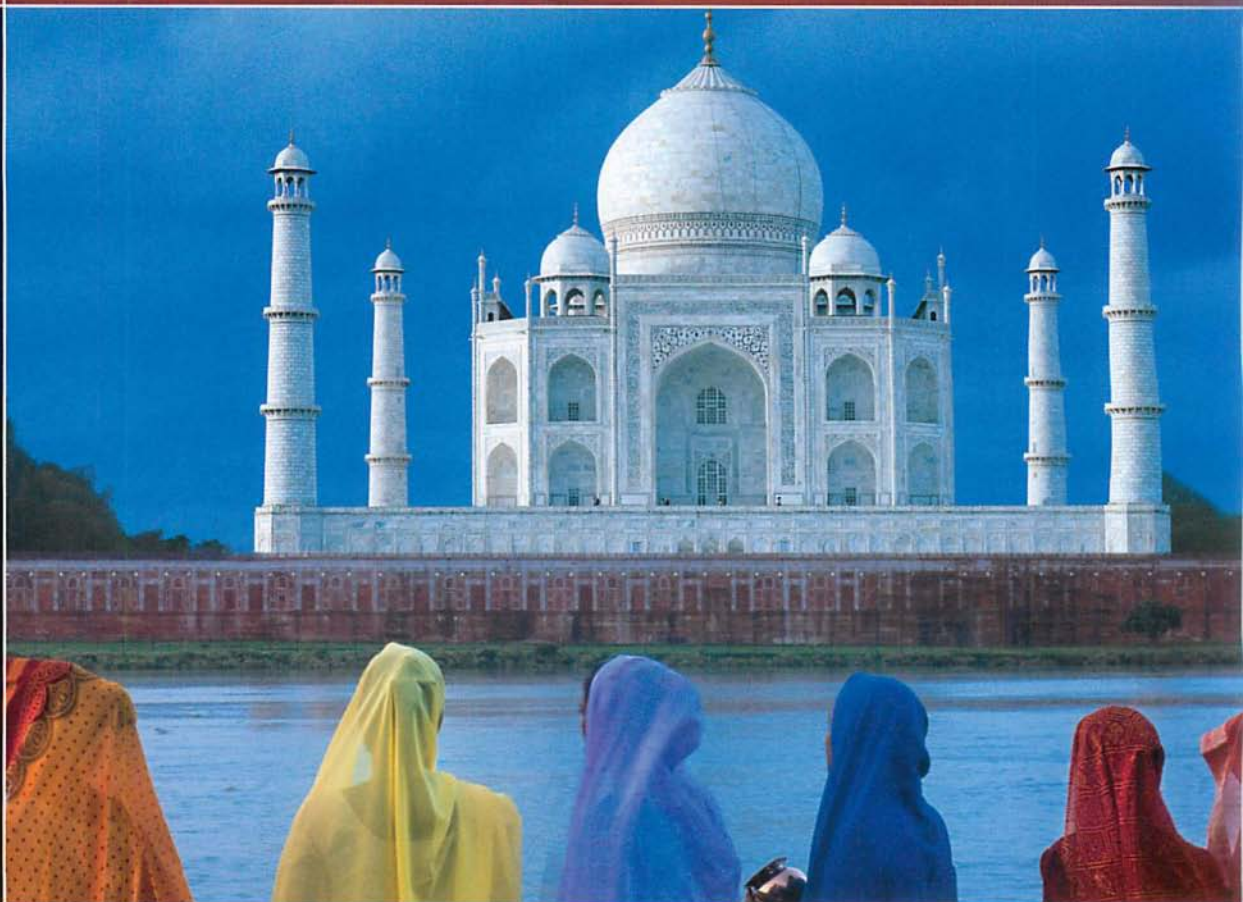
Advice, obligation and necessity

### SKILLS

Social English

### CASE STUDY

Business culture briefing



## STARTING UP

**A** What do you miss most about your own culture when you go abroad?

**B** Why is cultural awareness important for businesspeople? Give examples.

**C** What is culture? Choose the four factors that you think are the most important in creating a culture. Give your reasons.

climate	historical events	language
architecture	behaviour and attitudes	institutions
religion	social customs and traditions	cuisine
geography	ceremonies and festivals	arts

**D** Do you think cultures are becoming more alike? Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Give reasons for your answers. Think about:

- improved communications
- cheap foreign travel
- global business
- trading groups (such as the EU, ASEAN, USAN)

**E** How important are these things when doing business in your country? Are they a) important, b) not important or c) best avoided?

- exchanging business cards
- being formal or informal
- shaking hands
- punctuality
- bowing
- humour
- kissing
- eye contact





- socialising with contacts
- small talk before meetings
- accepting interruption
- giving presents
- being direct (saying exactly what you think)
- using first names

## LISTENING Cultural differences



Jeff Toms

Watch the  
interview on  
the DVD-ROM.



**A** CD1.44 Jeff Toms is Marketing Director at an international cultural training centre. Listen to the first part of the interview and answer the questions.

- 1 What two factors affect the 'Middle East clock'?
- 2 What can cause problems for Americans when they do business with Latin cultures?

**B** CD1.45 Listen to the second part of the interview and say what qualities companies should look for when sending staff abroad.

**C** CD1.46 Listen to the final part of the interview and complete the gaps.

I think also one of the key features of the successful .....<sup>1</sup> is to be non-.....<sup>2</sup>. For instance, if you're coming from an Asian culture to try and do business with a Western culture, for certain the way that people do things will be fundamentally different – the .....<sup>3</sup>, the structure, the .....<sup>4</sup>, the seniority and the .....<sup>5</sup> of the people you're doing business with – will be fundamentally different.

**D** If you could be sent anywhere in the world to work, which country would you choose? What aspects of its culture do you particularly like?



## VOCABULARY

## Idioms



## A

**Complete the idioms in the sentences below with the words in the box.**

end      eye      eye      fire      foot      ice      water      water

- 1 Small talk is one way to *break the ice*..... when meeting someone for the first time.
- 2 I was *thrown in at the deep*..... when my company sent me to run the German office. I was only given two days' notice to get everything ready.
- 3 We *don't see eye to* ..... with our US parent company about punctuality. We have very different ideas about what being 'on time' means. It's a question of culture.
- 4 I *got into hot* ..... with my boss for wearing casual clothes to the meeting with the potential Japanese customers.
- 5 I really *put my* ..... *in it* when I met our Spanish partner. Because I was nervous, I said 'Who are you?' rather than 'How are you?'.
- 6 I *get on like a house on* ..... with our Polish agent; we like the same things and have the same sense of humour.
- 7 When I visited China for the first time, I was *like a fish out of* ..... Everything was so different, and I couldn't read any of the signs!
- 8 My first meeting with our overseas clients was a *real* ..... *-opener*. I hadn't seen that style of negotiation before.

## B

 **CD 1.47 Listen to eight people using the idioms from Exercise A and check your answers.**

## C

**Consider the context of each idiom in Exercise A and decide which have:**

- a) a positive meaning                      b) a negative meaning.

## B

**Match the idioms in Exercise A (1–8) to the correct meanings (a–h).**

- a) given a difficult job to do without preparation
- b) quickly have a friendly relationship with someone
- c) feel uncomfortable in an unfamiliar situation
- d) say or do something without thinking carefully, so that you embarrass or upset someone
- e) disagree with someone
- f) an experience where you learn something surprising or something you did not know before
- g) make someone you have just met less nervous and more willing to talk
- h) get into trouble

## E

**Work in pairs or small groups. Discuss the following.**

- 1 What tips do you have for *breaking the ice* at meetings with new clients/people from other cultures?
- 2 Talk about a place you have visited which was *a real eye-opener*.
- 3 Describe a situation when you
  - a) *put your foot in it*
  - b) *felt like a fish out of water*
  - c) *got into hot water*
  - d) *were thrown in at the deep end*.

See the **DVD-ROM**  
for the *i-Glossary*.



READING

Culture shock

**A** Read the article below quickly and decide which of the following (1–5) are:

- a) referred to in a positive way in the text
- b) referred to in a negative way in the text
- c) not referred to at all.

- 1 understanding the culture of the country you are living in
- 2 asking British colleagues personal questions when you meet them for the first time
- 3 hiring staff who are flexible and tolerant
- 4 providing staff with practical support
- 5 looking at the role of the spouse (husband or wife) in the selection of candidates for overseas postings.

**B** Read the article again and answer the questions.

- 1 What things are people from different countries in an organisation:

a) likely to have in common

b) likely not to have in common?
- 2 What is ‘cultural awareness’?

**C** Work in pairs. What do you think should be covered in a cultural training course?

**D** Write a paragraph using information from the article and giving tips to people doing business in the UK.

Standard Bank overcomes culture shock

It is increasingly common for multinational businesses to send employees on international assignments, but without the right cross-cultural skills, staff will often struggle. Wayne Mullen, Head of Learning and Development at Standard Bank, discusses the impact that cultural challenges can have on employees relocating to another country. In order to be successfully transferred, employees must understand the host-country culture, he argues.

Colleagues from different countries might share similar professional knowledge and skills within a single international organisation, but their ways of working, social skills, body language and ways of doing business are likely to be completely different. They may have different patterns of behaviour which need to be understood and appreciated in order for everyone to work together successfully. For example, while it may be acceptable for Chinese office workers in Hong Kong to use the door-close button on a lift no matter how many people are also getting in, doing

such a thing in London would make people extremely angry. It is common for South Africans to ask personal questions of their counterparts shortly after being introduced, while a British colleague may perceive this as impolite and inappropriate. Latin Americans’ need for personal space is much less than that of their British colleagues.

Global companies should never underestimate the effect that culture can have on international assignments. Cultural awareness is much more than simply knowing about a country’s history and geography. It is about understanding how and why cultures work differently. It is also important to understand your own cultural make-up in order to work more effectively, maximise teamwork and strengthen global competence.

The Standard Bank group operates in 38 different countries, and its London office alone has 56 nationalities. This wide range of nationalities needs to communicate effectively in order to work as one

team. The bank recognised that in order to harmonise working practices within its culturally diverse office, it needed to provide foreign workers with a meaningful understanding of British business culture and communication styles. It also needed to offer practical support which allowed employees to cope with the challenges of living and working in an unfamiliar environment; their reactions to day-to-day issues such as the weather, public transport and social etiquette are often the most visible manifestations of culture shock.

Standard Bank has engaged Communicaid, a European culture and communication skills consultancy, to design a tailored training solution which introduces delegates to some of the key cultural differences that they are likely to face in the UK.



from Finance Week