



Cultural competency. Poland, business culture and cross-cultural relationship

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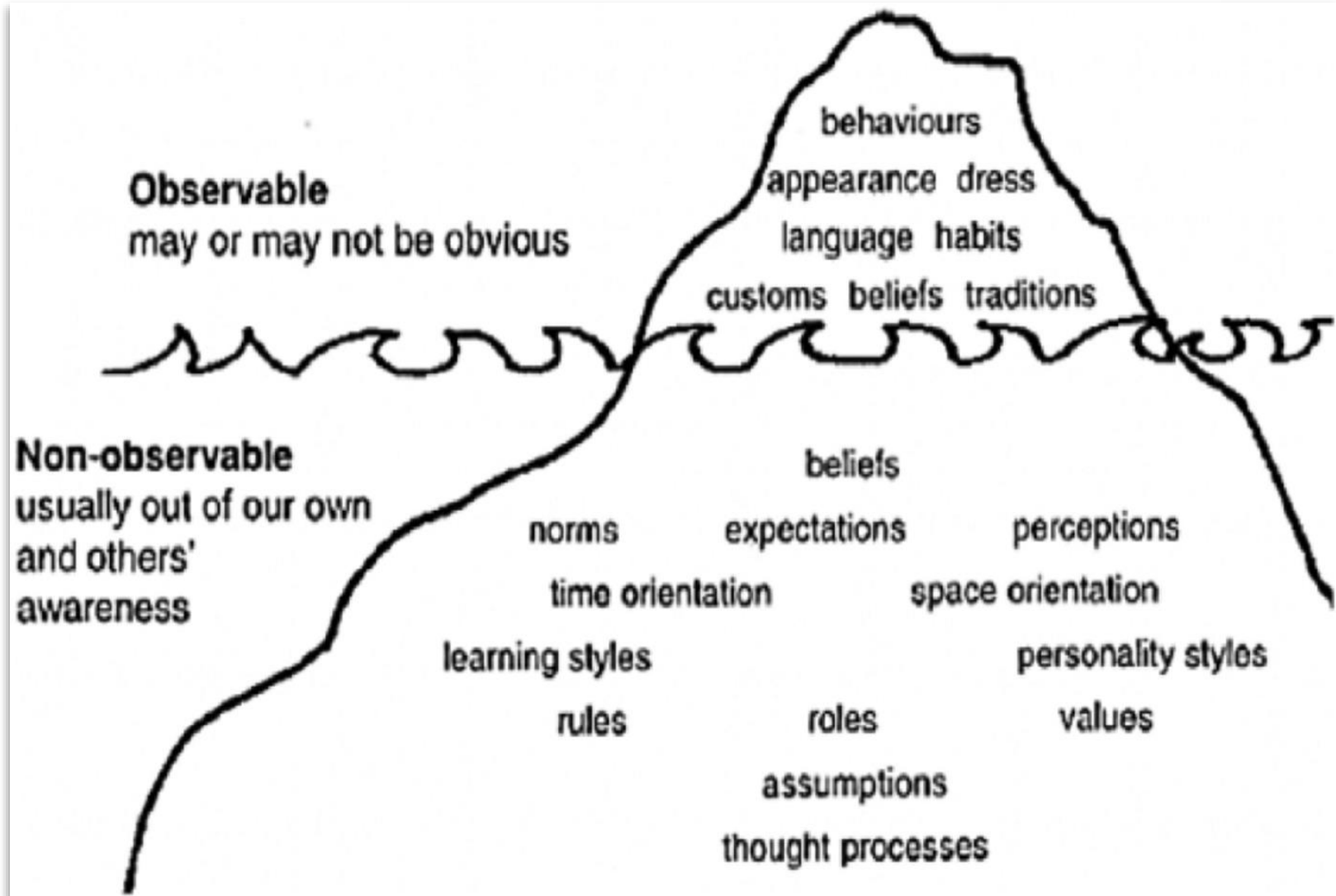


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Poland - living and working



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go... “Business is business wherever you

“The world has become a global village...”

“As long as they speak English, everything will be alright...”

“If they don’t speak English, it doesn’t matter- we just need to employ interpreters and translators...”

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nl2VmTRR4-E&index=4&list=PLAEKUX2eV4jJEqwQnxJjXjlz09G7GGk7f>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALWwK7Vz4gY>

Things to remember when doing business with Poland

- In Poland, people often start by expressing negative comments, rather than being positive about what has worked.
- If asked to express an opinion, Polish people will often start by listing the things that need to be corrected.
- Criticism comes before appreciation BUT....
- Poles very often feel under an obligation to give positive feedback.
- Take time to build relationships and gain trust.

- It is difficult for Polish people give or receive constructive criticism because they are concerned that they will offend the other person.
- Poles like to keep their distance and are not too direct (depends on organizational culture - American ones promote directness).
- Poles sometimes are distrustful if someone is too enthusiastic.
- Poles expect politeness and even reserve at an introductory meeting - You shouldn't use first names with people you don't know or only know a little.
- It is a sign of good manners to use titles 'Ms' ('Pani') and 'Mr' ('Pan')

- In business relationships, always wait to be invited before using someone's first name.
- If communications are too informal, it can be perceived as disrespectful and there may be a fear of losing authority if the atmosphere is too friendly.
- Only ask "How are you?" when you know someone - something that can cause Polish people irritation is when someone ask "How are you?" and don't bother to listen to the response.
- Polish society is quite traditional and patriarchal.
- Stereotypes of how people should behave are often governed by their gender.

- Polish people are sometimes considered cynical and negative.
- They may think that ‘everybody lies’, a legacy of the communist past.
- Motivational speeches seem to go well in some countries; but not in Poland - Polish people are allergic to propaganda.
- Poles are flexible about planning.
- Hierarchy is important in Poland and questioning superiors is viewed negatively.
- Poland is not a feedback-giving culture.

Views and values

- Respectful attitude towards women (old fashioned gentlemen, hands kissing).
- Family is the basic unit of Polish life (two-sided personality: ☐
- a fierce crusader in public, reserved, grim and formal ☐
- a soft touch at home and in private showing great warmth and hospitality).
- Ca. 95% are Roman Catholic (this doesn't mean they all go to church but don't make jokes about the Pope).

Gifts

- If someone invites you for dinner or supper at a home, you should be aware that small gifts such as a bottle of wine or a bouquet of flowers for the hostess are expected as also a hand-written card to your host/hostess or phone call thanking them for their invitation and time.
- The best gifts are always items which are typical of your culture.
- Do not give an extremely expensive gift as Poles feels they have to reciprocate and this is very difficult sometimes.

Entertaining

If you want to get to know your fellow workers or business partners better, just invite them for a cup of coffee and a piece of cake to a cafe or for lunch.

- Breakfast meetings are uncommon and supper meetings are more usual when signing contracts.
- Do not bring up the subject of business unless your business partner does so.
- Tipping in restaurants, pubs and other cafes is advisable but not necessary. One usually gives about 10% of the amount of the bill.
- When you are invited to an informal social event at a Polish home, you should arrive a quarter of an hour after the given time. Do not, however, be late by more than 30 minutes.
- If you propose a toast it is important to maintain eye contact.
- In Poland the common toast is '*na zdrowie!*'

Guidelines for business dress

- T-shirts, sweatpants, shorts, and running shoes aren't acceptable--even if it is 39° centigrade.
- In small and medium-sized companies [excluding banks and consulting firms], executives wear rather casual, conservative clothes, such as cotton trousers or jeans, fine shirts, along with sweaters or jackets. You should dress well, but modestly. The business culture in Poland dislikes ostentatious displays of wealth.
- In big companies, conservative suits and ties in subdued colors are the norm. Vivid colors are considered inappropriate.
- For women preferred colors are black, gray, brown, beige and dark blue. A scarf or a tie expressing your personal style is usual.

Guidelines for conversation

- Poles maintain direct eye contact during a conversation. Remember to be yourself; do not pretend to be someone you are not. Polish people are very sensitive to body language.
- Polish business people love to conduct discussions on a wide range of topics including public life, family and career.
- If your partner is telling you something, show an interest in what he or she has to say.
- The best ice-breaker is to start with introductory, neutral conversation topics, such as the weather, your trip to Poland, interesting facts about your homeland and short-term plans.

Welcome Topics of Conversation

- your home country or city
- your work experience
- hobbies
- art
- prices
- good developments in Poland.

Topics to Avoid

- comparison to Russian culture
- politics
- money (Polish people are very sensitive to the fact that they do not have as much disposable wealth as many of their European counterparts)
- religion.

Things to be aware of....

- Poles' humor and resourcefulness is super!
- Poles are individuals but like to have structured frames to feel safe.
- Agreed plans may change easily.
- Sometimes the process seems to be more important than the end results.
- Trust has to be built, one way is to meet often to get to know each other.

- Negative feedback is taken personally or it may look as if it is ignored. Though keeping one's face is important to all of us.
- Money and opportunity to learn are big motivation drivers.
- Power distance is still in the backbone.
- Uncertainty bothers and makes uneasy, it may cause resistance and paralysis.
- Poles love brands (changing for quality).
- Most business people and young people speak good English, English speaking customer service is not guaranteed even in the capital.
- Poles know how to enjoy good meals in a good atmosphere.

Values selected by the Polish people as the most important factors for a happy and successful life (the participants could choose three answers from the list):

Health	65.0
Happy marriage	54.9
Children	44.8
Work	34.5
Providence, God	15.4
Integrity	10.1
Cheerfulness, optimism	9.2
Friends	8.3
Reputation, respect	6.8
Education	6.4
Strong will	5.0
Freedom	5.0
Other	



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Mówisz po polsku?

- <http://mowicpopolsku.com/polish-vocabulary-phrases/saying-hello-and-goodbye-in-polish/>
- <http://www.staypoland.com/poland-food.htm>



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Thank you very much

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