

Company culture in the United States

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Upper-intermediate

NUMBER
EN_BE_3905X

LANGUAGE
English

lingoda






Goals

- Can identify and explain the key differences between doing business in the UK and US.
- Can explain the importance of cultural awareness and use it to survive in a variety of business situations.





Learning a language is about far more than grammar and sentence structure. Another important aspect is **cultural awareness**, particularly in the **business world**.



Company culture in the United States

- Here's what we will cover in today's lesson.

The norms of US company culture	Common phrases in US offices	Dealing with different situations
Communication	Staying in touch	Scenario 1 – staying in touch
Management style	Creativity and brainstorming	Scenario 2 – creativity and brainstorming
Work habits	Successes and problems	Scenario 3 – successes and problems



Warm-up questions

Answer these questions and talk about cultural awareness with your teacher and/or classmates.

In your own words, what is cultural awareness?
Why is it important?

What cultures other than your own are you familiar with?

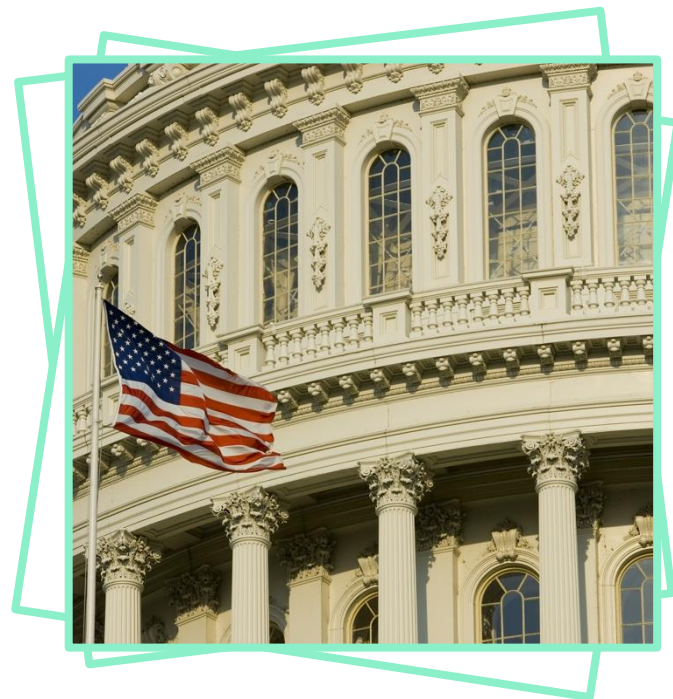
How are they different from your own culture?



Company culture in the United States

We're going to focus on
company culture in the United
States.

Have you ever been to the
United States before?
What do you know about how
Americans work?





US company culture – the basics

Americans value **hard work** and **commitment**. They work some of the **longest hours** in the world. American business can be quite **ruthless**. If someone can do your job better than you, you might be replaced. In the United States, people sometimes find **silence uncomfortable**. Do not be surprised if they often speak just **to fill gaps in conversation**. Despite that, there is not always much time for **small talk**. Americans in business are more interested in your **skills, experiences** and **credentials**. You should avoid **controversial** topics like **politics** and **religion**, as well as **people's age** and **salary**. In tech industries and startups, company culture in the US is **changing**. People dress **less formally** and office environments have become **more progressive**.



Communication – meetings



Different cultures approach meetings differently, so it's important to be aware of the preferences of the culture where your business partners or clients come from. Meetings start **promptly** in America and participants are expected to **express their opinions**. Don't be afraid to talk about your **successes** and **achievements**. American business can be **competitive** and **individualistic** and many people are very **ambitious** and **motivated** by doing well in their career. People in meetings will speak **confidently** and **disagreement** is normal. It is acceptable to **interrupt** someone when they are speaking if you do this **politely**.



Making polite interruptions

Your teacher will start speaking about the weather where they are. Practise using the phrases below to interrupt them.



Excuse me

Do you mind if I interrupt?

I don't mean to be rude...

Can I make a suggestion?

Sorry to interrupt...

Can I cut in here?



Multiple choice

1. It is common to talk about _____ and _____ in American company culture.

- a. race, civil rights b. politics, gun control c. achievements, successes d. age, income

2. In general, which words best define Americans in business?

- a. ambitious and driven b. unmotivated by money c. unconfident and risk-averse d. shy and quiet

3. Meetings in the US normally start very _____.

- a. formally b. late c. promptly d. informally

4. What is an American most likely to do with a business card?

- a. quickly look at it before putting it away b. give it to you only using their right hand c. offered with both hands d. Americans don't use business cards



Management style – Talking to your boss



In the UK, it is very common to **over-apologise**, even if you haven't done anything wrong. This is **not common** in the US.

Americans are also **much more direct** than Brits, so don't be surprised if Americans **challenge what you say** or ask you **blunt questions**. Using **irony** and **sarcasm** is also far **less common** in the US than in the UK.

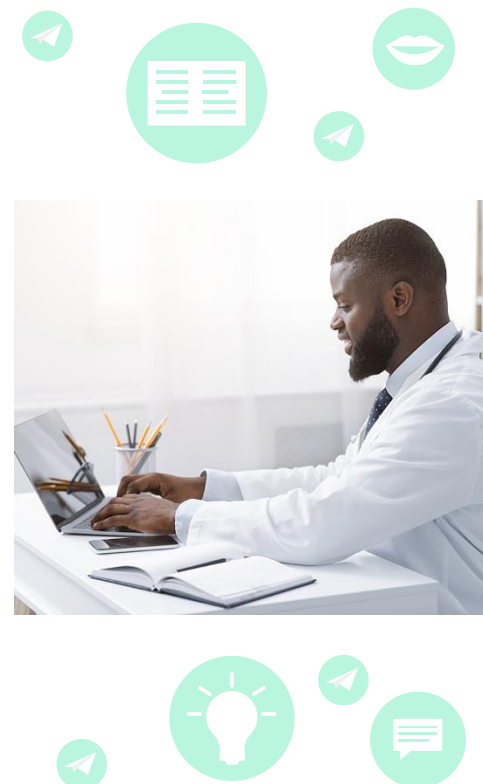
Funnily enough, Americans don't always **expect an answer** when they ask you, "how are you?". People use it when greeting one another to mean the same as "hello".



Management style – writing emails

Most emails in the US and the UK will begin "Dear Ms. / Mrs / Mr." followed by the name of the recipient. Always use a **comma** after the recipients name and **leave one line** before starting your email. It is very common to start the main body of your email with "**I hope this email finds you well**" or "**Thank you for your email**". If you already know someone quite well, it is fine to ask "**How are things?**" or "**How was your holiday?**" if you want to be **less formal**.

How do you begin emails in your country's culture?





Management style – writing emails



At the end of an email, many Americans will use a phrase like **"I look forward to hearing from you soon"** or **"Thank you in advance"**. In most cases, Americans **prefer** you **to send an email** rather than call. This gives them **time to respond** and this means there is a **record** of your conversation. People in business receive many emails every day, so you should allow at least **one week** for a reply. If you have an **urgent question** or **problem**, it is of course acceptable to make a phone call, but you should avoid this if possible.

How do you use emails in your country's culture?



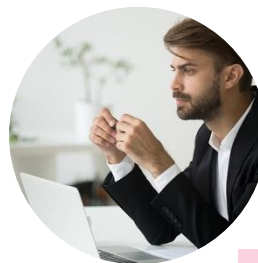
Management style – a conversation between colleagues

a. plenty

b. understand

c. not

d. need



e. disagree

f. know

g. possible

h. unreasonable

Does this conversation surprise you? Does it seem rude?

1. I _____ that report by 3 o'clock.

3. Why _____?

5. I gave you _____ of time.

7. You have until 4 o'clock at the latest. _____?

2. That's not going to be _____.

4. You _____ why. There wasn't enough time.

6. I _____. The deadline was _____.



Write a short email to a senior colleague you have met a few times

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r.smith@USbusiness.com

Financial Projections

Your colleague is called Racheal Smith. She is married. You know that she recently went on holiday but you have not spoken to her since. You need to ask her to send her financial projections for the coming year.



Work habits – long hours



Both in the US and the UK, it is fairly common for workers to **eat lunch alone at their desks**. Sometimes, they eat while they work. English workers often leave work earlier than Americans. That is not to say they work less hard than Americans. In the US, there is more pressure to work **beyond the hours of your contract**. In the UK, the average working hours a week is 36.6, compared to 47 in the US.

Do people work long hours
where you live?



Work habits – Holiday time

When it comes to holidays, most western Europeans are fortunate. Many countries offer up to six weeks paid holiday per year, and employees have many bank holidays free as well. However, **things are different** in the United States. In the US, employees are allowed **two weeks paid holiday** per year, if they are offered any at all. And many don't even take the time off they are allowed!

How do you feel about the statements in this text? Are you surprised?





What can you remember about US company culture so far?

Talk about each of the topics below with your teacher.



working hours

dress code

topics of
conversation

behaviour in
meetings

emails

holidays



Common phrases in US offices – staying in touch

- In the next few slides, we will look at **some phrases** and **expressions** that are very common in **American workplaces**.
- **To touch base** means to **speak with someone** about something after a period of time to **review the progress** of an activity.
- **To keep (someone) in the loop** means to give someone **regular updates**.



Let's **touch base** in two weeks to see how the project is going.

Email me if anything changes. You need to **keep me in the loop**.





Common phrases in US offices – creativity and brainstorming

- Can you tell your teacher what you think each of these phrases mean?



I don't like that idea. Let's **go back to the drawing board**.

I want you to **think outside the box** when you are designing this advert.



Has anyone got any good ideas to **bring to the table**?



Common phrases in US offices – successes and problems

- Here are some more examples. What do you think they mean?



Both options are bad. We are **stuck between a rock and a hard place**.

There is nothing I can do. **My hands are tied**.



We want to **corner the market** with our new product.

It's a **long shot**, but it is worth a try.





Each of the boxes below gives a definition of one of the phrases from the previous slides. Match the phrase to its definition

1. When you cannot do anything about a situation



2. An idea that is unlikely to work



3. To start again



4. To give someone regular updates about something



5. To make your product or service the most successful of its kind





Each of the boxes below gives a definition of one of the phrases from the previous slides. Match the phrase to its definition

1. To agree to contact someone in the near future to discuss something



2. To approach a task in an unusual or creative way



3. To make valuable suggestions



4. When there are two possible outcomes and they are both bad



5. Do you know any other common American phrases you might hear in a workplace?





Dealing with different situations

Act out the scenario below with your teacher or another learner in the class. Practise using the phrases from the previous slides.

- Scenario 1: you manage someone who has just started working on a new product



- You say you want an update in two weeks
- You then change your mind and you want the person to send you an email every day





Dealing with different situations

Act out the scenario below with your teacher or another learner in the class. Practise using the phrases from the previous slides.

- Scenario 2: you work for a fashion house and are in a meeting
- You and your colleagues are trying to think of new ideas for the summer line of clothes



- Encourage your colleagues to think of different, exciting ideas
- You ask someone if they have any good ideas
- You decide you need to start again





Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer key

Exercise p. 10

1. c; 2. a; 3. c; 4. a

Exercise p. 14

1. d; 2. g; 3. d; 4. f; 5. a; 6. e; h; b

Exercise p. 22

1. My hands are tied

2. A long shot

3. To go back to the drawing board

4. To keep someone in the loop

5. To corner the market

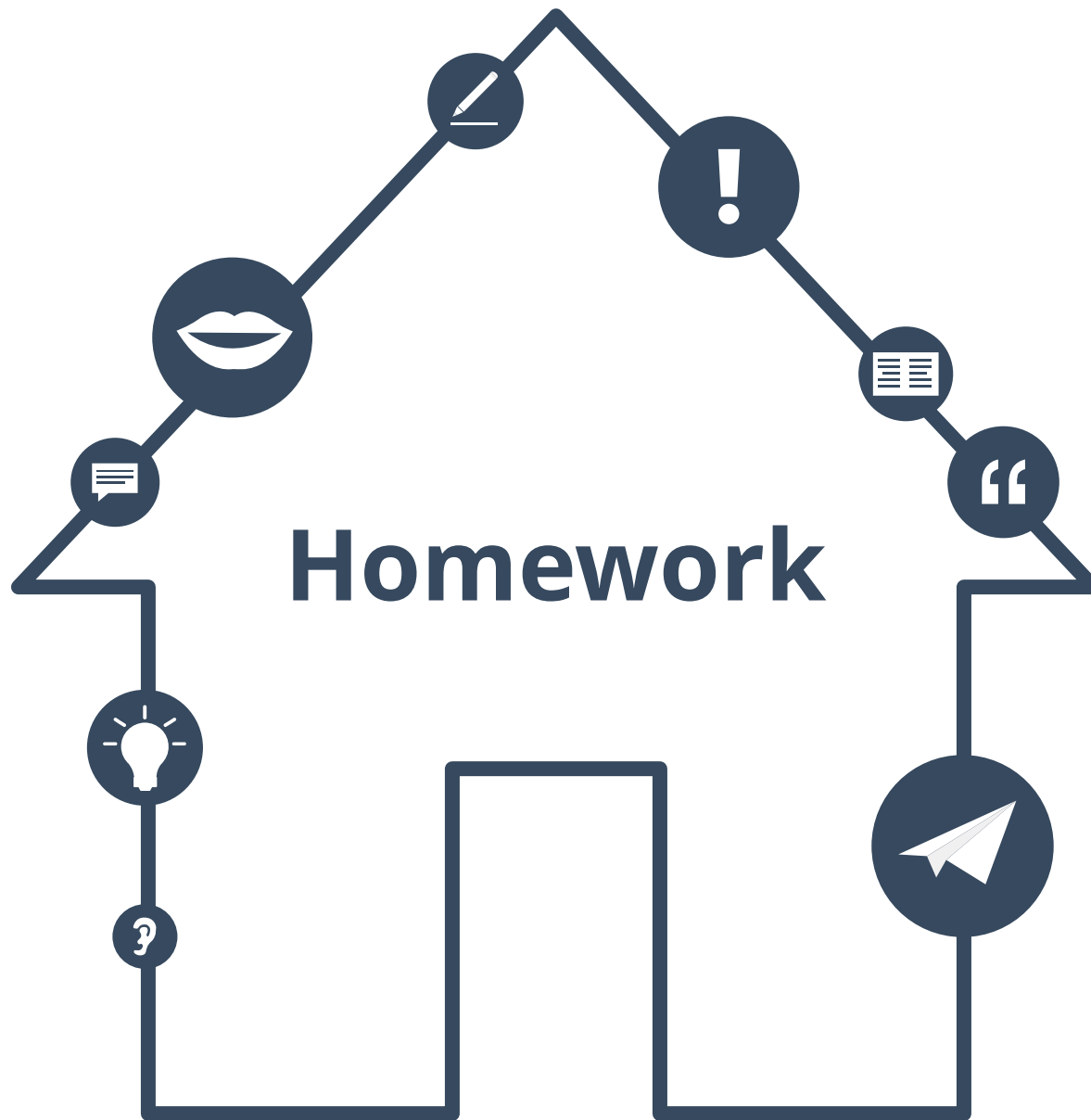
Exercise p. 23

1. To touch base

2. To think outside the box

3. To bring something to the table

4. Stuck between a rock and a hard place





Answer the questions

Do some research and answer the following questions about the US economy.

1. The GDP per capita is _____.
2. The unemployment rate is _____.
3. Minimum wage is _____.
4. Where does the US economy rank globally?
5. Who are America's top 3 trading partners?



Write an e-mail

Write an e-mail to a colleague about some of the cultural differences you've experienced while doing business in the United States.

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To:

Subject:

Hi Sean,

Greetings from the US!



Homework answer key

- Exercise p. 30**
1. \$532,400 (2020)
 2. 7.9% (2020)
 3. \$7.25 per hour
 4. 1st
 5. China, Canada, Mexico



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