

Company culture in France

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL

Upper-intermediate

NUMBER

EN_BE_3914X

LANGUAGE

English

lingoda






Goals

- Can understand typical business culture and conduct in France
- Can use new phrases to clearly share my own views on work-life balance and express disagreement with a colleague





Learning more about how workplace cultures operate gives us **valuable wisdom** about how people think in the world of business.

Workers in France deeply value and fiercely defend **workers' rights** and **work-life balance**.

Let's learn about business culture in **France!**



France

What do you already know about France?





French values



Have you ever visited France?

What do you know about French values or history?

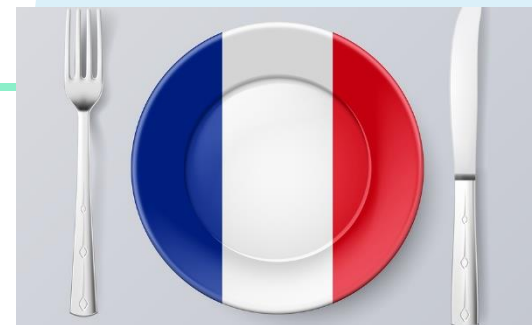
Discuss with your teacher or classmates.



France

France has one of the biggest economies in the world and is geographically the largest country in Western Europe. The country is **ethnically** and **culturally diverse** and, as a place to do business, it is **committed to** rules and regulations, and is **reluctant** to take risks.

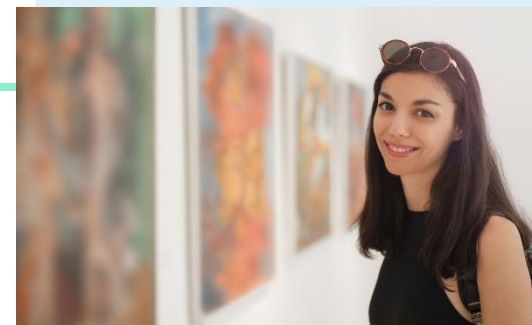
France has a **distinctive** working culture, which is a **consequence** of its unique history. It has one of the highest rates of economic growth in Europe, but **investing** successfully in this country requires a knowledge of the country's unique culture and **customs**.





French working culture

Work-life balance is a key issue for French employees. The opportunity for people to spend more time with their families or to **devote** more time to hobbies and personal interests means that working hours are often different to the standard 9 to 5 from Monday to Friday. The standard working week in France is 35 hours and, compared to other OECD countries, the French have an above average amount of **leisure time**.





French working culture

Debate and **disagreement** is also encouraged in the French workplace. **Confrontation** is seen as healthy and employees will happily debate openly with their colleagues. For the unprepared it can be **unsettling** to take part in what seems like a heated public argument at the workplace. However, it is important to not **take it personally**. In addition to this, feedback and **criticism** in France can also be considered **direct** when compared to some other cultures.





French working culture



French culture also values long lunch breaks during the working day; multiple courses and wine are considered **acceptable**.

Meetings also typically last much longer than in other working cultures and **tend to** involve lots of debate.





Respond in writing

Respond to each of the questions below using full sentences.

What is the French approach to giving and receiving feedback?

What is the French perspective towards work-life balance?

What are some ways in which French working culture differs from your own?



Role play

You are organising a meeting
with a French firm.

Talk to your teacher about what
it is important to know and
understand for the meeting and
how you can succeed.





Work-life balance

- One of the **defining issues** for workers in France is having a balance between work and leisure.

- While expected in some cultures, **taking work home** is uncommon in France, as is doing **overtime**.
- **Leisure time** is considered valuable, and completing work over the weekend is generally not typical.

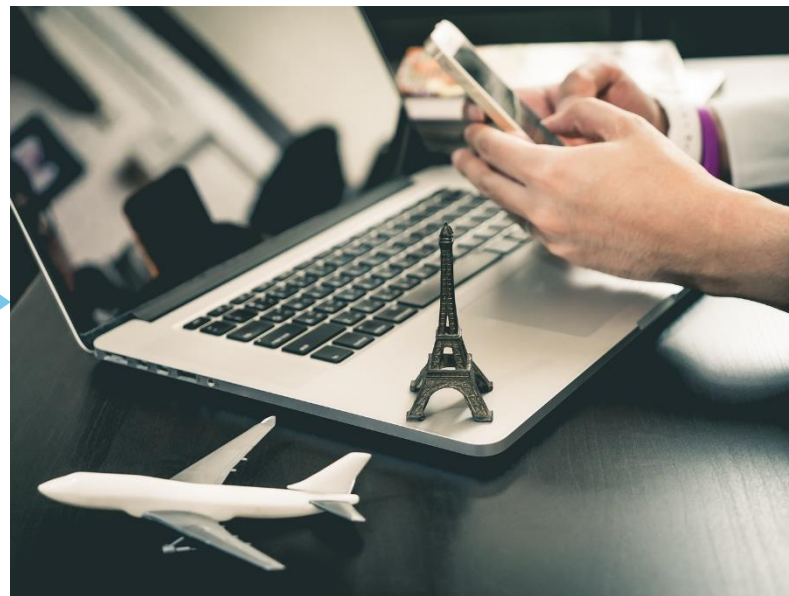




Leisure and the French identity

- The French are proud of their system, which values the **independence** and **liberty** of the individual. They typically do not **define themselves** by their job or profession.
- In France it is considered rude to ask a stranger or acquaintance what they do. There is a clear **distinction** between someone's identity and the job that they do.

- There are a number of laws and regulations put in place by the French government that protect **worker's rights**.
- Recent laws have even granted French workers the right to **disconnect** from the internet and e-mails to help them re-establish a **boundary** between their professional and personal lives.





Work-life balance

Discuss the work-life balance.



1

Explain in your own words the French worker's approach to balancing work and leisure.



Work-life balance

Discuss work-life balance.



1

Explain in your own words the French worker's approach to balancing work and leisure.



2

What are some of the benefits of a more flexible work-life balance? Are there any drawbacks?



Work-life balance

Discuss work-life balance.



1

Explain in your own words the French worker's approach to balancing work and leisure.



2

What are some of the benefits of a more flexible work-life balance?
Are there any drawbacks?

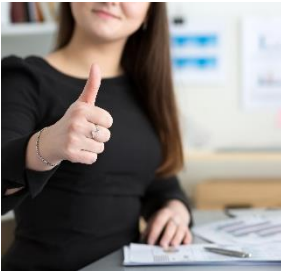


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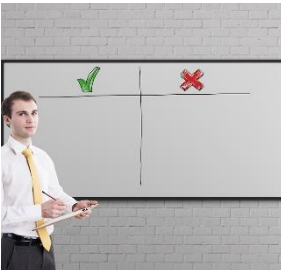
Imagine your ideal working week. What would it look like?
Justify your answer with examples.

feedback and criticism

Feedback, when provided, is often **direct**. This can come across as **blunt** and **threatening** to workers who are used to a more **indirect** communication style. However, it is rare for the French to **sugarcoat** negative feedback.



French people will often express themselves with more gestures, emphasis and body language.



Positive feedback is given less frequently in France than other workplace cultures.



Confrontation and debate

- In the French workplace, **individual opinions** are valued. Employees are expected to **share** and **express their opinions** in meetings and conversation.
- **Open debate** and sharing different viewpoints ensures that French workers feel that **their voice is heard** in the workplace.



Conversations can often develop into **heated debates**.
Expressing disagreement can be a key skill in the French workplace.



Expressing opinion



In my opinion...

I take the view that...



As far as I'm concerned...

It seems to me that...





Expressing disagreement



I take your point, but...

I'm afraid I disagree.



That's a fair point, but...

The way I see it...





Get ready to listen



The next page will test your listening skills.



Disagreeing

Your teacher will now say eight statements. After each one, respond by disagreeing with it.

Use the phrases you have learnt to express your disagreement.



Extended meetings

- One key element of French working culture is the **tendency** to spend more time on **social engagements**.
- Workplace meetings involve more **discussion** and **debate**, and French managers often give their employees much more space to **share their ideas and opinions**.
- Below are some more aspects of French meeting culture to keep in mind.

The use of first names too soon can be considered disrespectful.

Women and men often greet each other with a kiss on each cheek.

Standing when a superior enters a room is considered polite.

Punctuality is highly appreciated.





Lunch breaks

- The long lunch break is another **defining characteristic** of French business culture.
- It is not uncommon to take an entire hour (or more) for lunch. The break can involve multiple courses and even wine.

- However, the modern approach of a **hastily consumed lunch** is creeping into the French workplace.
- Cigarette and coffee breaks are also commonly enjoyed in French business culture.
- Inviting colleagues to lunch is considered polite. Sharing lunch breaks together can be a good way to strengthen professional relationships.





Debate with the teacher

French business culture is too committed to leisure. Long lunch breaks are bad for productivity.

Agree or disagree?

Use expressions learnt during the lesson to express your opinion on the statement above.





Free talk

Discuss each of the following aspects of French work culture with the teacher.

Which do you think would be the most challenging to adapt to?



extended lunch breaks

confrontation
and debate

direct feedback



Talk to the teacher



Summarise what is important to remember when doing business with the French.



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!





Transcription

Exercise p. 22

- 1) Being a vegetarian is a healthy lifestyle choice.
- 2) Hiking is an extremely dangerous hobby.
- 3) The younger generation spends far too much time on their mobile phones.
- 4) Cigarettes should be banned worldwide.
- 5) Taking up a sport is a worthwhile pastime.
- 6) The 1970s was the peak of popular music.
- 7) Britain is home to the most beautiful beaches in the world.
- 8) Travelling is generally a waste of time and money.





Fill in the gaps

_____ balance is a key issue for French employees. The _____ for parents to contribute more time to their _____ life, and individuals to devote more time to _____ and personal interests means that working life is often organised differently, with shorter working days or even _____ on the typical Monday to Friday working week. The standard working week in France is 35 hours – _____ to other OECD countries the French have an above average amount of _____ time.

hobbies
compared
opportunity
leisure
work-life
variations
family



Writing activity

Summarise what you have learnt about the following aspects of French business culture.

Write a short response for each of the topics below.

direct feedback

work-life
balance

not being
defined by work

extended lunch
breaks

debate and
confrontation

shorter working
week





Homework answer key

Exercise p. 31

Work-life, opportunity, family, hobbies, variations, compared, leisure



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