

BUSINESS ETIQUETTES AND CUSTOMS



GERMANY

WORKING HOURS

- Core hours are often from Monday to Friday from 9 to 5 p.m. However, working hours vary according to branches, projects, jobs and the individual preferences of employees.

BUSINESS CLOTHING

- In most German businesses, employees appear well dressed, regardless of where they are going or what position they hold. Even when dressed informally, they usually wear neat and conservative clothes. However, in some occupations (e.g. research or IT) or start-up companies, times are changing and employees begin to dress more casually

GIFTS AND PRESENTS

- Giving gifts among business associates is not common in Germany.
- There has recently been a move towards concentrating much more on the actual business at hand, and less on formalities and rituals like giving gifts when travelling on business. However, for more social occasions, gifts may be expected.
- A visitor thinking of giving a gift should choose one that is small and of good quality, but not overly expensive, for example items of office equipment, wine or liquor.

BUSINESS MEALS

- Especially in cities, German cuisine offers a large variety. Besides traditional food, which is still more dominant in rural areas, you can easily find food from Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, France or Asian countries like India, Thailand or Vietnam. In Düsseldorf, the Japanese cuisine obtains a great mark of the restaurants.
- Beer and wine are part of a normal dinner and alcoholic drinks are usually offered to guests. The type of beer differs from region to region – even between small villages the discussion about the best beer can be quite challenging. For example, the rivalry

between the “Kölsch” in Colonia and the “Altbier” in Düsseldorf is a more than a hundred-year old discussion. Not drinking, however, is completely accepted and becoming more prevalent. At lunch time, usually non-alcoholic drinks will be chosen.

PUNCTUALITY

- Not turn up late for an appointment or when meeting people. In general, Germans are quite punctual. If you are late, call in advance and explain your situation.



BUSINESS MEETINGS

- The efficient administering of a meeting is vital to negotiations with German counterparts.
- It illustrates your competence, motivation and dedication to making a deal and also highlights your professionalism.
- Germans usually discuss business after a few minutes of general discussion.
- Meetings adhere to strict agendas, including start and end times. Send company profiles, personal profiles, etc., to German colleagues before your visit to establish credibility.
- Arrive at meetings well prepared. Avoid hard-sell tactics or surprises. Written or spoken presentations should be specific, factual, technical and realistic.
- Reports, briefings and presentations should be backed up by facts, figures, tables and charts.

ADDRESSING A PERSON

- To many Germans, titles are quite important.
- Do your best to address people by their full, correct title.
- Traditionally, colleagues and business partners call themselves by their surname.
- However, calling each other by first name is becoming more and more common.

OFFICE FACILITIES

- In many cities, office rents have skyrocketed within the last few years.
- This effect can be recognized by small rooms with many employees and short opportunities of storage.
- Employees need to move closer together and limit their standards.
- A lot of companies have introduced open-plan offices like in the US.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- Suitable balance between work and life is a challenge for all workers, especially working parents
- Working arrangements like "Home Office", working part time or with flexible working hours are becoming increasingly more important in many branches

CONVERSATION

- Industry topics, wine, beer, sport (especially football), regional sights or attractions or frequent delays of the "Deutsche Bahn" can be interesting conversation topics

HOLIDAYS

- Usually between 25 and 30 days per year.
- Additionally, depending on the region, there are up to 13 days of public holidays.

WAY TO WORK

- Most of the employees do not live near their workplace.
- This fact is mainly caused by the high rent in the city centres.
- On average the way to work counts up to one hour for one way.

