

COMMERCIAL ENGLISH

4 COMMERCIAL SKILLS

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Explaining Figures

When presenting and explaining figures or data language matters but is often not used effectively. The ability to select appropriate and powerful verbs, adjectives and adverbs often makes the difference between an acceptable presentation and a great presentation. In addition numbers are often communicated in different forms in another language, direct translation often is not accurate.

Verbs

Rise, increase, grow, go up to, climb, boom, peak, fall, decline, decrease, drop, dip, go down, reduce, level up, remain stable, no change, remain steady, stay constant, stay, maintain the same level, crash, collapse, plunge and plummet.

Grades of change

Decrease, reduce & decline (100%-90%)

Deteriorate (100%-80%) Fall (100%-60%)

Plummet & crash (100%-30%)

Increase & rise (100%-110%)

Climb (100-150%)

Collapse (100%-10%)

Adjectives: considerable, dramatic, huge, minimal, massive sharp, rapid, substantial, significant, slight and small.

Adverbs: considerably, dramatically, hugely, massive, markedly, minimally, rapidly, sharply, steeply, substantially, significantly and slightly.

Adverbs to describe the *speed of a change*: rapidly, quickly, swiftly, suddenly, steadily, gradually, slowly.

Presenting Visuals

- As you can see from this table ...
- I would like to show you this graph on which you will see ...
- Please let me draw your attention to this section of the table ...
- Now let's look more closely at this season's sales figures.
- These figures only relate to the sales from USA China.
- This pie chart shows the company's share of the African market last year.
- As you can see, Zerco Ltd has an even bigger share.
- The bar chart represents sales from the South American franchises.

- On this slide we can see a comparison between ...
- Sales have collapsed over the past two quarters.
- There has been a decrease of 17% since August.
- I would like to draw your attention to a slight / notable / significant rise in ...
- The sales downturn began in June.
- This situation began to deteriorate in March.

Fluctuations

- The initial slow start developed into steady progress
- An initial upward trend was sadly followed by ...
- The team observed slight fluctuations through the month
- We believe that expected seasonal variations created downward pressure on sales
- The trend has been unstable since ...
- I hope you can see the instability in the rate of

Predicting Future Movement

- The team have forecasted improved sales in the coming seasons.
- As you can see from the chart, we plan to increase infrastructure spending.
- They predict improving sales throughout Autumn.

Conclusions - useful phrases:

- I believe the result / outcome will be ...
- Therefore, we must focus our attention on ...
- What I suggest is ...
- I believe we have no choice but to ...
- In conclusion, appropriate measures must be taken to ...
- Therefore, I strongly recommend ...
- To conclude, I regret / am happy to propose that ...

Additional Vocabulary

- abrupt change = sudden change
- calm = without much change
- dramatic = extreme, very big
- rapid increase = quick/very fast increase
- slight reduction = insignificant reduction
- steady - steadily = no change
- sudden change = change without warning

How to Say Numbers

- There were 15,126 visitors to the exhibition.
15,126 = “fifteen thousand, one hundred and twenty-six”
- There were about 130,000 spectators at the final.
130,000 = “one hundred and thirty thousand” or “a hundred and thirty thousand”
- The factory made 276,356,326 units in 2023.
276,356,326 = “two hundred and seventy-six million, three hundred and fifty-six thousand, three hundred and twenty-six”

In order to avoid confusion between commas (,) and full stops (.) in large numbers, there is an international standard, that is to use space.

653,279,752 → 653 279 752

If saying a large number, the numbers are not made plural, so do not make ‘one hundred’ or ‘one thousand’ or ‘one million’ plural.

Not all native countries say numbers exactly the same way, in Britain professionals say ‘and’ after ‘hundred’ e.g. six hundred and fifty seven

“One hundred” or “a hundred”?

Actually, it is a matter of personal choice, either is ok.

- 100 = “one hundred” or “a hundred”
- 1,000 = “one thousand” or “a thousand”
- 1,000,000 = “one million” or “a million”

Talking about Money

- That will be \$153.55!
\$153.55 = “one hundred fifty-three dollars fifty-five (cents)”
- On sale now for €1.99.
€1.99 = “one euro, ninety-nine cents”
- For 2 months only £125.50
£125.50 = “One hundred and twenty-five pounds and fifty pence.”

Alternatives to 'Thousand'

Often “grand” or “K” are used as alternatives to “thousand”, but only when exact thousands.

\$4,000 = “four grand / four k”

\$6,500 = “six thousand five hundred dollars”

How to Say Numbers with Decimals

Speak decimals as the number followed by “point.” Next, say each number beyond the point individually:

- 7.15 = “seven point one five”
- 12.63 = “twelve point six three”
- 3.2567 = “three point two five six seven”

How to Say Percentages

Say percentages as the number followed by “percent:”

- 23% = “twenty-three percent”
- 17% = “seventeen percent”
- 6% = “six percent”

How to Talk About Fractions

Say the first number as a cardinal number, then the second as an ordinal number + “s:”

- $7/9$ = “seven-ninths”
- $3/8$ = “three-eighths”
- $5/12$ = “five-twelfths”

Exceptions to this rule are:

- $1/4, 3/4$ = “one-quarter, three quarters”
- $1/3, 2/3$ = “one third, two-thirds”
- $1/2$ = “one-half”

When there is a whole number with a fraction first say the number then "and" then the fraction:

- $4 \frac{7}{8}$ = "four and seven-eighths"
- $23 \frac{1}{2}$ = "twenty-three and one-half"
- $1 \frac{1}{2}$ hours = "one and a half hours" or "an hour and a half"
- $3 \frac{1}{2}$ hours = "three and a half hours"

Putting Events in Order

For numbers after 1st, 2nd and 3rd add "-th" after the standard ordinal number.

- Can we move this agenda item to 2nd?
2nd = "second"
- The team came 1st in the sales competition.
1st = "first"
- You are currently 256th in the queue. Your call is important to us. Please hold.
256th = "two hundred and fifty-sixth"

Saying the time

When speaking informally, it is inappropriate to use 24-hour time. Use 24-hour time for planned events such as travel, it is normally used at train stations and airports.

- Our meeting starts at 16:00.
16:00 = "four" or "four p.m." or "four o'clock" or "sixteen hundred hours"
- We will speak at 14.00.
14:00 = "two" or "two pm" or "two o'clock" or "fourteen hundred hours"
- Please can we have the meeting at 13:30?
13:30 = "one thirty" or "half-past one" or "half one" or "thirteen thirty"
- We will meet at exactly 15.05.
15.05 = "fifteen oh-five" or "three (minutes) past three" or "fifteen oh-five"

Saying years in English

- Covid started in 2020.
2020 = "two thousand and twenty."
- Avian flu existed in China in 1997.
"Nineteen ninety-seven."

- The Euro was the currency of 11 countries in 2000?
“Two thousand.”
- There were many tornadoes in USA in 2003
“Two thousand oh three.”

When a year ends with double zero (e.g. 1800, 1200, 2200) say “hundred” after the first numbers (“eighteen hundred,” “twelve hundred,” “twenty-two hundred”). When a year ends with triple zero (e.g. 2000, 3000) say thousand after the number (“two thousand,” “three thousand”).

As with time “oh” when the year ends with zero then a number (e.g. 2003, 1905, 1806), say “oh” instead of zero (“two thousand oh three,” “nineteen oh five,” “eighteen oh six”).

Exceptions - with years 2001 – 2009 say “two thousand and one/two/three.....” do not say “oh”. In addition with the years after 2010 (e.g. 2015, 2020, 2025) some say “twenty fifteen, twenty-twenty, twenty twenty-five” and others say “two thousand and fifteen, two thousand and twenty, two thousand and twenty five.”

Saying the Time

There are three ways of saying “half past something”, “4:30” can be said three ways and none include “o’clock”.

- “It’s half past four.” (half past + number)
- “It’s four thirty.” (number + thirty)
- “It’s half four.” (half + number) - more informal, can confuse non-native speakers.

How to use “oh”

The last example above (3:03) is a little tricky. If you have to express a time like this, instead of saying “zero,” just say “oh.”

- 6:05 = “six oh-five”
- 3:09 = “three oh-nine”
- 27.742° = “twenty-seven point seven four two degrees” (after point numbers said one by one.
- 22.4444444444... = “twenty-two point four recurring”

Talking about the temperature

- In the industrial fridge products are stored at -30°C .
 -30°C = “minus thirty degrees centigrade/Celsius” or “thirty (degrees) below (zero)”
- The kilim in the factory has to cool down to 5°C .
 1°C = “five degrees centigrade/Celsius” or “five (degrees) above zero”
- Is 45°F warm enough to create the chemical reaction required?
 12°F = “twelve degrees Fahrenheit”

Fahrenheit is used in the USA and a few small countries around the world where as Centigrade/Celsius is used in most of the world. With Celsius 0°C is where water freezes and 100°C is where it boils but with Fahrenheit 32°F and 212°F respectively.

To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius - take the Fahrenheit degree subtract 32, multiply by 5 and then divide by 9.

To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit – take the Celsius, multiply by 1.8 and then add 32.

Talking about Speed

- I need to average driving at 65mph to be on time.
65mph = “sixty-five miles per hour” or “sixty-five miles an hour”
- The electric van can drive at up to 25km/h.
25kmh/h = “twenty-five kilometres per hour” or “twenty-five kilometres an hour”

In most cases speed is measured per hour and the number of miles / kilometres is plural.

Talking about Physical Space

- The old factory was 3000m^2 .
 3000m^2 = “three thousand metres squared” or “three thousand square metres”
- We need boxes that are 45cm^3 for each unit of production.
 45cm^3 = “forty-five centimeters cubed” or “forty five cubic centimeters”

Presentations

The Process

- 1 Brainstorm the presentation**
- 2 Prepare the presentation**
- 3 Write the presentation**
- 4 Complete the presentation checklist**
- 5 Practise the presentation under pressure**
- 6 Practice answering questions**

Considering Previous Presentations

- 1 What went well in previous presentations?**
- 2 What did not go well before? What surprised you before?**
- 3 Did all the audience react and feel the same way?**
- 4 How did you feel after the presentations?**
- 5 How would the audience describe you after the presentations?**
- 6 How would you like the audience to have described you after the presentation?**

Personal Objectives

- 1 How would you like to feel after the presentation?**
- 2 What do you want from the audience?**
- 3 What 3 points do you want the audience to remember?**
- 4 What is the 1 sentence summary of your presentation?**
- 5 Why are you giving the presentation, what is in it for you?**
- 6 What is the general business climate at the time of the presentation?**
- 7 Which people in the audience are you really talking to and care about?**

Preparation Considerations

- 1 What will your boss/others have presented / said before you?
- 2 What is the big picture for your business and team?
- 3 Who will be in the audience?
- 4 What do they want to hear? What concerns do they have?
- 5 What questions will they ask? Can you answer their questions before they ask them?
- 6 What expectations do the audience have?
- 7 How will you engage with the audience?

The Presentation

- 1 Do you have an intro, narrative, story, conclusion and purpose?
- 2 Does your presentation connect with your company's vision, mission and culture?
- 3 How will you ensure you do more of what has worked before and less of what did not?
- 4 Is your presentation professional – clean fonts, formatted in the expected way and presented clearly? Are your graphics appropriate and clear?
- 5 Which points do you want to make strongly and how will you do that in the presentation?
- 6 Are your key points clear in any handouts or powerpoint screens?
- 7 Have you timed the presentation?

Cross Check

- 1 Have you considered the pre-conceptions, concerns and expectations of the audience?
- 2 Can you anticipate any questions such that you can avoid being interrupted?
- 3 Will the audience remember the purpose of my presentation and be able to explain it to their colleagues?
- 4 Will the audience leave with the perception of me that i want?

Presentations Principles

- Keep it simple, clear and structured such that the audience is more able to understand the message and purpose. Remember it does not matter what you say, what matters is what the audience hears, feels and remembers.
- Try to focus on three key points, then state them at the beginning of the presentation, separately through the presentation and then reiterate the points at the end. This means that even if the audience do not remember most of what you said, they will remember those three points.
- Use impactful headlines because they get noticed. First impressions are made in less than ten seconds so this is when to share headlines, the headlines should be concise and as short as possible. When possible start strongly, try to catch the audience's attention and keep it, sometimes the headline can help achieve this.
- Plan on how you will engage your audience, create different ways to make them feel involved. Asking questions or for points of view works, if relevant invite them to help with demonstrations. Many audiences have short attention spans, this means an engaging speaker needs to do something interactive every seven to 10 minutes.
- Use clear and simple visuals, breaking up speaking with visuals is more effective than solely speaking.
- When appropriate, find opportunities to smile, a genuine smile is a global way of connecting with an audience and encouraging engagement. Facial expressions are essential in body language, transmitting emotions and reinforcing signals. Utilize them to express enthusiasm, sorrow, or other relevant emotions to the presentation. Managers who are animated and dynamic speakers know they have a wider range of expressions to help tell their story.
- Believe in, and remember, the value of your presentation, focus on why you believe in the presentation and show it to the audience (do not just tell, show). If you are genuinely passionate about your subject, show it. A lackluster delivery not only undermines your enthusiasm, but also does nothing to enhance the meaning and effectiveness of your words. The words you use to share how excited you are to be there, typically, audiences will assume a monotone delivery is more indicative of your true feelings than your words.

- Remember to breathe, try to focus on your breathing, slow it down and at the same time try to breathe deeply. Plan and use pauses throughout the presentation, if preparing a script or speech cards add breathing prompts.
- Utilizing hand gestures enhances the impact of your speech and maintains audience engagement. Exercise caution against overutilization, as much motion may prove distracting.
- Altering your tone and tempo maintains audience engagement, plus can highlight essential topics. Employ a deliberate tempo to emphasize significance and a brisk cadence to express passion.
- The speed you speak is under your control, consider the audience's ability to both understand and consider what you are saying. There is no rule on the correct number of words to use per minute but generally 150 to 190 words a minute is most effective. If the aim of the speech is to motivate then speak faster up to 220 words per minute.
- Proper posture is essential for effective public speaking. Assume an upright posture, with feet positioned at shoulder width and weight equally balanced. This enhances your appearance and boosts your confidence.
- Maintain an open posture while delivering a public speech. Refrain from crossing your arms or legs. Instead, adopt a comfortable stance with your arms at your sides or employ natural movements while communicating.

Move, make sure you move around the meeting room, stage or walk into where the audience is sat, more than three quarters of communication is non-verbal. Get eye contact with each person in the audience. When it is not possible to move, use your hands, facial expressions and gestures to make your speech more interesting, Make your gestures open and confident. As a rule, the larger the size of the audience, the larger your gestures should be. Gestures accentuate your words and enhance the engagement of your message. Broad, sweeping motions demonstrate passion, whereas discreet gestures can communicate tranquility and professionalism.

Managers must be conscious of cultural differences. For example, some presentation hand gestures and expressions are part of universal language, but not all gestures mean the same thing in every culture. In some countries an OK gesture means 'ok', but someone from another country could see it as very rude.

- **Share stories** because they are powerful, audiences understand and remember them better than facts. The stories must be understood by all in the audience, creating connection, credibility and interest.
- **Avoid jargon, complex words and long sentences**, remember what you say does not matter but rather what the audience hears, understands and remembers matters.
- **Establishing eye contact with your audience is essential for fostering a relationship and communicating your message successfully.** Connect with numerous people throughout the room rather than concentrating on a single person. Normally within the audience, there is a target audience who matters more than the others. In advance identify what the target audience want, how you will make it clear and be heard.
- **Consult others and when possible, practice with effective speakers and people who understand the topic plus seek their feedback, seek their feedback, consider it and then respond rather than react.** (all feedback should be heard but not necessarily followed).
- **Create curiosity when appropriate, statements such as ‘Imagine’ or powerful open questions create curiosity that engage audiences, potentially lifting a presentation to another level.**
- **Practice makes perfect, you can never practice too much.** The most effective and powerful speakers rehearse, devoting significant time before every presentation. Many managers rehearse in front of a mirror or before other people, the danger of practicing in front of a mirror is that most people become far too self-critical and audiences are normally further away from the speaker. Video can often give a more accurate reflection of what the audience sees, setting the recording up to such that the recording represents the actual view the audience will have.
- **Never read the slides, most audiences expect the speaker to know the subject so well they do not need to, reading kills the speaker’s credibility and power.** Utilize props efficiently and maintain their organization. Try to refrain from mishandling them or developing excessive dependence on them, as this may detract from your message.
- **Practice under pressure, the most effective practice happens under pressure, simulating the pressure of the actual presentation develops performance.** Practicing the presentation with an audience is effective, be careful though not to ask the audience for opinions on what is said but do ask on how it is said.

- When practicing focus on using your voice effectively, how you say things is as important as what you say. Variety increases impact, attention and what is remembered by the audience. Effective variation of the speed, volume and tone plus applying pauses, emphasis and repetition can significantly improve any presentation.
- Be careful with how you dress, managers' clothing communicates messages to the audience and influences their perceptions. In addition, clothing must be comfortable enabling the manager to be both confident and appear confident.
- Hand gestures

The Clinton Box / Holding the Ball

Many speakers have a problem controlling their hands, their movement appears to be out of control and is very distracting for the audience. This method helps speakers control their hands.

Holding the Ball - Merrill Research

Pyramid hands

When managers are on a stage or in a meeting and they are nervous, their hands often move about which can be distracting and announce the manager is nervous. On the other hand, they do not move their hands when they are confident. To stop looking nervous many managers clasp both hands together, making a relaxed pyramid with their hands.

Palms up

A palms up gesture demonstrates honesty, openness and sincerity. This can be used when a speaker wants to create a connection of trust with an audience.

Palms down

A palms down movement is not the opposite of a palms up, it can demonstrate authority, assertiveness and confidence.

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- Be careful with how you dress, managers' clothing communicates messages to the audience and influences their perceptions. In addition, clothing must be comfortable enabling the manager to be both confident and appear confident.

E-mail Structure

1 Title – ensure it is both concise and clear

2 Opening remark – ensure it is both polite and professional

3 Purpose of the e-mail – ensure it is specific and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time bound)

4 Provide background and / or information – summarise the 6 Ws (where, when, which, what, who and why?)

5 Call to action – ask the reader do something (confirm / reply / share / understanding)

6 Close – ensure it is polite and professional

E-mail Checklist

Simple

How many points is too many? What level of language is appropriate? How long should sentences be? Is it structured effectively with headings, paragraphs and spaced well?

Points – 3 is normally enough for most audiences, if there are more would splitting over 2 emails be more effective? Could some points be covered in a phone call or meetings then detailed in writing later?

Sentences – more than 20 words increases the chances of misunderstanding; plus good use of commas can help with clarity.

Headings, paragraphs and bullet points used well help the reader, especially when they are reading on a mobile phone or tablet.

Understandable

Does the email have a clear structure? Is the purpose of the email clear? Does the email contain a specific call to action?

Structure - is there an opening, clear points and an end?

Topic - is the topic easily understandable from the title?

Purpose - is the purpose written clearly at the start of the email?

Review - have you reviewed the email after writing it? The more important the more time should be spent on reviewing.

Safety – if it is an important email do not type the email address of the receiver in the ‘To’ box until you have reviewed the email and are completely sure about sending it.

Purposeful

Is there a clear reason for writing the email? Am I expressing this reason? Can its purpose be understood quickly? Is the subject clear?

The purpose must clearly connect with the email’s call to action. Many people receive 50+ emails per day, their purpose needs to be very clear and its worth remembering 50% of emails are read on mobile phones. If the subject contains clear key words and are searchable.

Executable

Urgency - if it is urgent or requires action, state that in the subject line.

Individualize - make them personal, use the receiver’s name.

Slow down - good writing takes time for most people.

Bite-sized - use short paragraphs and bullet points, they are easier to read, particularly on a telephone.

Attachments – only attach information that is understandable, relevant, formatted in a way that is usable and you have checked.

Relevant

Being relevant means the receiver knows why they are receiving the email?

Language – is it appropriate to? Is it appropriate in terms of how formal and polite it should be?

Tone – this is important and is often misunderstood, in cross-cultural communication tone must be both relevant to the situation and relationships. The receiver will remember the emotional tone of the email much longer.

Timing - are you sending this email at the right time? What else is going on for the receiver? Remember the receiver might not be in the same mood as you when they read the e-mail. Think about how the receiver could interpret it, review and find a clearer way to phrase your words if necessary. Always consider would it be better to pick up the phone.

Humour - be careful, particularly in cross-cultural emails, irony and sarcastic comments and jokes normally just does not work and can damage relationships and business.

Think How You Would Feel if it Went Public

What if your email landed in the receiver's boss' or your boss' inbox? What if it was published on the web?

Be aware of what is going on in the world at the time for all

If you are aware of events happening in the receiver's country, mention it such that the receiver knows you are thinking of them and build the relationship.

Know why you are copying each receiver into this email

The To: Line. Only include people you actually want to do something.

The Carbon Copy: Line. Include those who will benefit from knowing what is covered in the email.

The Blind Carbon Copy: Line. Be very careful using this as it can create significant issues.

Reply to All only if you really need to as nobody needs extra email.



Useful Phrases for Emails

Greetings

Dear Sir/Madam, (very formal) Dear [Name],

Hello [Name],

Good morning [Name], Good afternoon [Name],

Starting

I recently read/heard about . . . and would like to know . . . I would be interested in (obtaining/receiving) ...

I received your address from ... and would like to ...

Thank you for taking the time to [write to us/give us some feedback etc. — something the customer has done for us]

Thank you for your email on [date]. Congratulations on [achievement if you know it]!

Opening Lines

Please allow me to introduce myself I hope this email finds you well

I hope you enjoyed your weekend I am eager to get your advice on... I am reaching out about...

Thank you for your help

Thank you for the update Thank you for getting in touch

Thank you for the quick response

Opening Statement/Reference

Thank you for contacting us about

We have received your request for a demonstration of....

I'm writing to you in connection with

Further to our telephone conversation yesterday,

Following your email enquiry,

Thank you for expressing an interest in.....

My colleague has informed me you're interested in.....

I would just like to follow up your interest in

Stating Your Purpose

I would like to give you a personal demonstration of

I would like to arrange a time to present

Could we arrange a time for one of our representatives to....?

Could we meet you to explain the benefits of....?

It would probably be a good idea if we met you to explain.....

Could we arrange a demonstration of....?

We'd like to explain the many benefits of using.....

We'd like an opportunity to show you how your company can benefit from....

Reference by Thanking

Thank you for your email of 21st September.

Thank you for your call of 5th March.

Thank you for our meeting on Thursday.

Thank you for your e-mail about ...

Thank you for your email regarding ...

Thank you for visiting our offices yesterday.

If You're Following Up on Something

As promised, I am...

As we discussed on our call...

Please can you provide me with an update on... I am getting back to you about...

To follow up on our meeting... Congratulations on [recent accomplishment] How did [recent project] turn out?

I hope you enjoyed your [event or vacation]

[Mutual Contact] recommended I get in touch with you

Referring to Previous Correspondence

With regard to your recent email, I....

I have received your request of 22nd May for...

In response to your email, we are able to confirm...

With reference to your call of 2nd October, we...

I refer to your email of 15th December regarding...

In reply to your email of 12th November, we would like to update you regarding...

Referring to Your Own Previous Correspondence

On 2nd April, I emailed about.....

Further to my email on 17th April regarding ..., I...

In reference to my previous email of 21st May concerning...

We recently contacted you about ...

Referring to Previous Verbal Communication

Further to our discussion yesterday, I...

Regarding the meeting we had at the conference last month, we....

Further to our virtual meeting this afternoon, we would like to confirm that...

I refer to the negotiations that took place on the 21st of June, ...

Following our phone conversation on Tuesday, ...

Referring to Someone's Request

As promised, I am forwarding the sales plan...

As you suggested, I am sending my CV for review.

As requested, I am submitting our project plan for review.

In response to your earlier request, I have attached a copy of our company brochure.

Regarding your request for further information on..., we...

Referring to Something the Reader Already Knows

As previously agreed, the product launch will take place on 10th October...

As we discussed on Monday, we would like to offer a further 5% discount and marketing contribution.

As you already know, the sales launch was not a success, therefore we are submitting plans for a new exciting advertising campaign.

In line with your suggested project plan, we would like to...

Request a Convenient Meeting Time

When would be a convenient time for me to?

When would be a good time for us to....?

Could you let me know when you would like us to?

When would be a suitable time for us to meet you?

Suggesting a Suitable Meeting Time

One of our representatives could come to your office anytime next week.

I could demonstrate our product sometime next week.

I would be happy to present our services to you at a convenient time for you.

I'd be happy to explain the benefits of using our company's service anytime you are available.

Please let me know when you are available to meet me.

I would be grateful if you could let me have your availability over the coming weeks.

Declining an Request Meet

Thank you for your offer to meet us but.....

Thank you for offering to demonstrate.....

I'm afraid we're not able to meet you at the moment.

We're not ready to make any decisions at the moment.

I'm sorry but we're not interested at the moment.

I don't think we require a meeting at this stage.

We don't require a meeting at present.

Accepting a Request to Meet

Thank you for offering to meet us.

I appreciate your offer to demonstrate....

I'd be happy to meet you.

We would appreciate a demonstration of...

We'd be happy for you to present.....

We would welcome a demonstration from you.

We'd like you to meet us and explain....

We'd like you to demonstrate....

Delaying a Request to Meet

I appreciate your offer to demonstrate the product to us.

Please get back to us in a few months.

If we are interested, we'll get in touch with you later in the year.

We might be interested in this later in the year.

I've put your company details on file and will contact you if....

Suggesting Specific Meeting Times

Could you meet us on....?

What about next Thursday afternoon?

How about sometime towards the end of the week?

Are you available on Monday at 10.30 a.m.?

How does Wednesday afternoon, around 4 o'clock suit you?

Could you possibly make Thursday at around 10?

Saying a Date/Time isn't Convenient

I'm afraid I'll be in a meeting on Monday morning.

I'm sorry but I'm tied up all week.

Sorry, that time doesn't suit me.

I'm afraid I can't make it on Tuesday.

Saying a Date/Time is Convenient

Friday, 16 June at 10am suits me fine.

I can meet you on Friday, 16 June at 10am.

I am available to meet you anytime on 16 June.

When you're initiating email contact with someone new

Very formal

"Might I take a moment of your time..." (to begin the email) "Please may I introduce myself..." (to begin the email) "Many thanks again for your time." (to end the email)

More informal/friendly

"I am just emailing to ask..." (to begin the email) "I am a friend of Bob's..." (to begin the email)

When you've answered someone's question(s)

Very formal

"I trust the above resolves your queries. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me."

More informal/friendly

"I know that is a lot to take in, so let me know if anything I have said does not make sense."

"I hope the above helps, but please email again if you are still having any difficulties."

When you're asking the recipient to take some action

Very formal

"I would appreciate your help in this matter."

More informal/friendly

"Please could you look into this?"

"Would you mind checking it out for me?"

"Please can you get back to me once you have had a chance to investigate?"

When you need a response (but not necessarily any action taking)

Very formal

"I await a response at your earliest convenience."

More informal/friendly

"Please can you drop me a quick word so I know you have received this?" "I look forward to hearing from you."

When you've heard nothing back and want to chase up a reply

Very formal

"In reference to my email of June 20th ..."

More informal/friendly

"I wondered if you got my email (June 20th)?"

"When you get a moment, please could you drop me a line about my last email?"

Explaining Why You're Writing I am writing to tell you about ...

This email is to confirm that... (e.g. This email is to confirm that we've received your payment.)

We're sending you this email because...

In this email we wanted to [tell you about/give you...]

We are writing to [why you're writing]

We wish to inform you of [news] (e.g. We wish to inform you of a change in our rates.) I am writing concerning/with regard to/about ...

Just a short email + [to inform you that/ to confirm/ to request...]

I am writing just so you know ...

I am writing to remind you about... I am writing to let you know that...

This email is just to let you know that...

Just a quick reminder that...

I would like to [action]. (e.g. I would like to inform you that...)

This is just to let you know that...

I wanted to give you a friendly reminder that...

I am contacting you for the following reason.

Just a quick email to [purpose] (e.g. Just a quick email to see how you're doing.) I just wanted to let you know that...

Reconnecting with Old Customers

So happy we reconnected after this time.

So glad that we're in touch again.

It's always nice to get in touch with old friends!

Long time no see! Glad to hear from you again.

Introducing Value

I highly recommend (doing something, e.g. visiting our new Knowledge Base/checking out this new article)

Here is a copy of the information...

[value] will help your team [do something] (E.g. This library will help your team create websites much faster)

To get the most out of [Product], [what you want them to do, e.g. don't forget to take a look at the Start Guide]

In this email, we wanted to give you a few links to articles that we've written that will help you get up to speed on how to use some of our best features.

We brought together some of the best tutorials which

We're confident you'll see big improvements since ...

We know you're busy but we would hate to see you miss out on this opportunity! You can do so much with...

Here's how to... [action which is important to the user] We thought you might find this useful.

Referring to Previous Contact

Thank you for your letter of March 15 ...

Thank you for contacting us. • In reply to your request ...

Thank you for your letter regarding ...

With reference to our telephone conversation yesterday ...

Further to our meeting last week ...

I would just like to confirm the main points we discussed on Tuesday. Further to your email on [date], ...

I am writing in reply to your email on [date] about [topic]. In reply to your email ...

We understand from your email that you're interested in (product/service/feature). We talked last week about...

We had a phone call on [Date] about... It was nice to hear from you yesterday. I was glad to catch up yesterday.

Making a Request

We would appreciate it if you would ... I would be grateful if you could...

Could you possibly tell us/let us have... In addition, I would like to receive ...

It would be helpful if you could send us ... I am interested in (obtaining/receiving...)

I would appreciate your attention to this matter. Please let me know what action you propose to take

I would be grateful if you could send me further information about... Shall I [verb]? (e.g. Shall I meet you at the airport?)

Would it be possible to...? (e.g. Would it be possible to have a quick chat on Monday?)

Would you mind if [+ past simple]? (e.g. Would you mind if I took the day off on Tuesday?)

I was hoping you could [do something]. What would you like to do next?

Could you please send me ... ? Let's discuss your next step.

Could you please [what you want the person to do]? It would be great if you could...

Would you mind [doing something]? (e.g. Would you mind having a quick chat?) I was wondering if you could...

Could you confirm these details?

Would you like me to ... (e.g. Would you like me to send you a link to the article?) Just wondered if (you could send me a copy/there is any news etc.)

Enquiring (would like to know)

We are writing to ask the lead time required.

We are writing to ask if the statistics are already available.

I would like to know further details.

I'd like to know where we can obtain further information.

Enquiring (tell, let (you) know, confirm)

Please could you confirm the deadline?

Please would you confirm when your manager will contact me?

Could you tell me if you have xxxx in stock?

Could you let me know you weekday opening times?

Further Enquiring (same subject)

Further to this, I would like to know if...

On the same subject, could you tell me if...

In the same connection, I'd like to know whether....

Further Enquiring (new enquiry)

Also, could you confirm whether.....

I would also like to know if/whether...

One more thing, could you tell me if/whether...

In addition/Furthermore, please would you let me know

Requesting Further Details

Please would you let us have further details of ...

Please can you give us full particulars of...

Would you please let us have further information about...

Giving Reasons for an Enquiry

Please could you let us know the date of delivery as we need the equipment urgently?

We'd appreciate it if you could let us have this information soon because we need to make a purchase decision by the end of the month.

We need these details now due to a problem with...

Email Body

Here are the details on...

Furthermore...

In addition, I would like to...

In spite of/Despite [something] (e.g. We're glad the issues got sorted out in spite of the delay.)

For example/For instance, ... In other words, ...

In order to [do something], we would need to [do something else]. (e.g. In order to fix this bug, we would need to research it a bit further.)

That's why ...

Would [time] would work for you? I'm pleased to hear that...

First of all, ... Firstly/Secondly...

Talking about Problems and Solutions

There seems to be a problem with the new feature. Issue number 35402 has been resolved.

Here are the possible solutions:

We could [solution 1], or we could [solution 2]. (e.g. We could add a new button or we could redesign the whole dialog.)

While running the tests, we've discovered that [something] is not working properly. Which option would you like us to work on?

What would you like us to do about [problem]?

The [page, feature, button] is not working the way it should.

The first solution will take about 3 days, and the second one can take up to 10 days. If we implement the first solution, we can have [possible problems] in the future.

However, the second solution will take much longer, and we cannot give even a rough estimate at the moment.

We'd like to research this problem a bit more in order to give you a more detailed list of options.

What would you like to go with? Which solution works best for you? We've found a bug in [where].

Here's how we would like to take care of this issue. How would you like us to solve this issue?

When we click on the [button], we should see [result]. However, now [problem]. (e.g. When we click on the Create button, we should see a new page. However, now it shows an Error message.)

We can see three options.

There are two ways to solve this. We've taken care of bug [name].

We've come up with a workaround for this issue.

This solution is better, but it will take longer to implement.

If we go with the first option, we might run into some problems with [topic] in the future.

Showing Empathy

I hope you haven't been inconvenienced by our team's visit.

Sorry, I hope this hasn't caused you too much trouble and work.

We hope our requests have not inconvenienced you.

We regret the problems this has created.

Apologising (formally)

We would like to apologise for delivering the stock 3 days late.

I would like to apologise for not attending the meeting on time.

I must apologise for my team's approach to the problem.

We wholeheartedly apologise for quality of the work not being satisfactory.

I apologise for everything that happened and are putting a plan in place to correct this.

Please accept my apologies for failing to take on board the severity of the issue.

Please accept our apologies for not responding to the request appropriately.

Apologising (strong)

I am extremely sorry for delay in the calling the meeting.

I really am sorry about last week's meeting.

We are very sorry for not appreciating the urgency of the issue.

We would like to apologise for not replying promptly.

Giving Reasons

He was late because of the bus strike.

Our late reply was due to the fact we were short-staffed.

The drop in sales was caused by a shortage of stock.

The quality problem was the result of a maintenance issue.

Giving Assurances

I will do my best to resolve the issues you have raised, thank you for bringing them to my attention.

I would like to assure you that we understand the inconvenience caused.

We assure you that this will not happen again.

We can give you our assurances that your business is appreciated and we are doing everything in our power to regain your trust.

We guarantee that we have learnt from this and have already put a plan in place to prevent this happening again.

We promise you the quality team are closely monitoring everything such that it can not happen again.

Rectifying Problems / Mistakes

I am doing my best to rectify this issue as quickly as possible.

I will correct the problem as quickly as possible.

The team are taking all the necessary steps to improve the service.

We are doing everything we can to improve the quality of production.

We are doing our best to resolve the problems in production.

We have rectified the situation and are now in communication with your team.

We have resolved the system failure.

Asking for Clarification

Could you give us some more details on ... please?

Could you please clarify when you when we can re-arrange the meeting?

If I understand correctly, your team would like us to...

Please confirm exactly what you mean by...

Please could you be more specific?

Please could you clarify what you would like us to do about our failure to deliver the goods on time?

Please could you explain what you mean by ...?

Please could you repeat what you said about ...?

Sorry, did I hear you correctly when you said ...?

Therefore, would you like us to...?

Asking Questions

Have you given any further consideration to our proposal?

How would you feel about meeting next Monday?

Please confirm when it would be convenient for my team to visit?

What would you like us to work on next?

Which option would work best for you?

Would it be possible to update us next month on the project milestones?

Would you like to reschedule to a later date?

Would you prefer a discount or a contribution to your marketing budget?

Would you prefer to delay the product launch?

Call to Action

Are you considering [action]? (e.g. Are you considering upgrading to the new version?)

Just book time on my calendar and I can answer all your questions on the product and pricing.

Or if you'd rather [alternative option], you can...

Help us [give value to you] by [what action we want them to take]. (e.g. Help us give you the best advice by telling us a bit more about your project.)

I would appreciate it if you could walk me through your project.

This may be a great time to ... [call to action] (This may be a great time to take a look at our Knowledge Base)

If you are interested, drop me a line and we can [action] (e.g. If you are interested, drop me a line and we can have a quick chat to discuss your further steps.)

Come check out what's new and get inspired!

Asking Them to Contact Us

Could you please keep us updated on this?

You can reserve a free consultation here [link] or just give us a call at [number]

If you have any questions, please email or call me. Please feel free to contact me anytime.

If there is anything I can do for you, please let me know.

You can reach me at [phone number] if there's anything you'd like to discuss. Feel free to call me.

Talking about Meetings

At the meeting on Tuesday/yesterday, we discussed [topic]. Let's discuss this at the meeting, if you don't mind.

At our last meeting, we talked about [topic]. At the meeting, we agreed to [do something]. We'd like to have a meeting about [topic] on Thursday. Let's have a meeting sometime this week.

How about talking this over at a meeting?

Why don't we talk this over at a meeting?

I'd be glad to tell you more about this at the meeting today. This issue came up at the meeting we had on Friday.

Let's have a meeting to discuss this issue.

I have set up a meeting for Friday at 5 p.m. Here's the link.

Offering Help

We are quite willing to ... (e.g. We are quite willing to consider a discount.)

Our company would be pleased to ... (e.g. Our company would be pleased to work with you.)

If there's anything I can help you with, just let me know. We would be happy to ... (e.g. We would be happy to help.)

Would you like us to ... ? (e.g. Would you like us to create a template for you?)

Thanking

Thank you for your consideration.

I appreciate that you [did something] (e.g. I appreciate that you took the time to give me these details.)

Thank you for taking the time to [do something] (e.g. Thanks for taking the time to give us your feedback.)

Thank you for [Verb-ing/noun] (e.g. Thank you for your email. Thank you for writing to us.)

Thanks a lot for everything. Thank you for your time.

Thank you very much for ... Many thanks for...

You are so helpful.

That is really thoughtful of you. I really appreciate your help.

Thank you for your patience.

It was really great of you to [do something]. Thank you for clearing this up.

Thank you for helping us in this matter.

Giving Good News

We are pleased to announce that .../ to inform you that...

We have some good news for you. [News].

It is my pleasure to let you know that [news]. I am glad to tell you that...

I just wanted to let you know that...

You will be pleased to learn that .../ to hear that...

Giving Bad News

We regret to inform you that ...

I regret to inform you that due to a mistake in our database, ... Unfortunately, we cannot/we are unable to ...

After careful consideration we have decided (not) to ... I am afraid it would be impossible to [do something].

Due to [reason], it would be impossible to [do something]. It is against company policy to [do something].

Despite my best efforts, it has proved to be impossible to... I am afraid I've got some bad news for you.

Unfortunately, [news]

I am afraid it would not be possible to ... Unfortunately, I have to tell you that...

I am afraid that we can't [do something]. That's not really possible.

I can't see any way to ...

It's out of my hands. (means that there's nothing you can do about it, you don't have enough authority)

I am afraid I won't be able to... I am sorry to tell you that...

Apologizing

We apologize for [what you're apologizing for]. I wish to apologize for... (Verb-ing/noun)

I regret any inconvenience caused by...

I apologize for the problems you've had. Please accept my apologies.

Sorry for any inconveniences this situation may have caused. I would like to apologize for (the delay/the inconvenience) ... Once again, I apologize for any inconveniences.

We are sorry for the delay.

I'd like to apologize for making you wait. Sorry to keep you waiting.

I am really sorry, but ... Sorry again for ...

Talking about Orders

Thank you for your quotation of ...

We are pleased to place an order with your company for ... We would like to cancel our order #...

Please confirm that you have received our order. Your order will be processed as quickly as possible.

It will take about [period of time] to process your order. We can guarantee delivery before ...

I would like to cancel the order I placed on [Date]. I would like to place an order for [product].

Please confirm your order.

We are processing your order and we'll get back to you as soon as we can. We have received your order #...

Thank you for your order.

Your order shouldn't take more than 2 days to arrive. Thank you for your order #...

We are glad that you chose us to help you with this!

Delays / Apologies

The items are back-ordered and we expect delivery....

We will be able to ship your order within three weeks.

Your items have been delayed due to....

We are experiencing a delay in filling some orders due to....

Unfortunately, your order has been delayed.

We are sorry to inform you that your order has been delayed.

Please accept our apologies for the delay.

We are sorry for the delay in shipping your order.

We apologise for the delay to your order.

Cancellations

I'm afraid we are unable to wait for our order.

Unfortunately, we have to cancel our order.

I'm sorry but we must cancel our order due to the delay.

Please cancel our order.

Please would you cancel our order for?

Attaching Documents I am attaching ...

Please find attached ... You will find attached...

I have attached the [file] for your review. The attached [file] contains ...

Could you please sign the attached form and send it back to us by [date]? Please take a look at the attached [file].

I have attached ...

Closing Remarks

If we can be of any further assistance, please let us know. For further details ...

If you require more information ...

Thank you for taking this into consideration. We hope you are happy with this arrangement.

We look forward to a successful working relationship in the future. I would be happy to have an opportunity to work with your firm.

I look forward to seeing you next week. Looking forward to hearing from you.

I would appreciate your reply.

I look forward to doing business with you in the future. I enjoyed working with you and look forward to...

Thank you once more for your help in this matter.

If you require any further information, please let me know. Looking forward to hearing from you,

Let me know if you need any help.

If I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please do not hesitate to contact us again at [telephone number/email address] if there's anything we can help you with.

Thank you for your help.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you for your patience/time/cooperation Please let me know what you think

Thanks again

Thank you for taking your time

Ending Your Email Sincerely

Yours sincerely Yours faithfully Kind regards Yours truly Many thanks Regards

Best regards Best wishes All the best Thank you

Have a great weekend!

Have a wonderful day!

Take Care

Managers should take a lot of care when selecting the language they are using. Slang, idioms, phrases and phrasal verbs can often be misunderstood as they are not taught in many countries, so managers should only use them when they are confident, they will not be misunderstood, or the listener will give them the benefit of the doubt. If in doubt it is always best to use clear and simple language. Words hold significant power, many of the words used every day are often misunderstood and transmit meaning the manager is not conscious of. The following words are some to avoid.

Dramatic words, words such as ‘absolutely, totally and very’ often do not offer any value, instead they create a drama of little value and actually make the message more difficult to receive, understand and remember.

The words “just” and ‘basically’ immediately reduces the importance and impact of the language that follows this word, in addition it presents an impression of the speaker that is normally not desired. The word is a ‘protector’ word which means it softens what the speaker is trying to achieve. If a manager writes, ‘I am just following up on my project brief...,’ they reduce the importance of their e-mail and their reason for sending the email.

Defensive words, words such as ‘Arguably’ or ‘I think...’ can communicate that a manager is not confident and might be wrong. The only time these words might be appropriate is if it is advisable for the manager to protect themselves if the audience has a tendency to over-react and their confidence could be perceived as aggressive. On the other hand, sharing an opinion clearly and directly, even if others are likely to disagree, often gains respect.

A lack of commitment and belief can be communicated by an ‘I will try’ as it shows a lack of confidence and leads to anxiety in the audience. This is where expectation management is complicated because managers are better off saying ‘I will’ and then be careful with the rest of the sentences.

Appropriate apologies are very effective and required in business communication, but the more the word ‘sorry’ is used the less impactful and sincere it appears.

Condescending words such as ‘actually’ and ‘obviously’ are used by many managers but are often very damaging to effective communication. These words can be annoying because they imply that the audience does not understand the topic, but the manager does.

Purchasing and Buying

Introducing your company or department

“I work in the (sales/purchasing/quality/other) department that is part of a (medium-sized/large) company called

We develop/make/produce/provide

Our department is divided into

We also are more actively involved in...

My team/group makes sure that...”

Getting through to the right person

“Good morning / afternoon, please could you put me through to your buying department?”

“I would like to speak with someone from the buying team, is John available please?”

“Could I speak to Jane Smith please?”

Dealing with long term partners

“We would like to make this one off proposal of very favourable conditions because of our long standing co-operation.”

“Our companies have worked together successfully for decades, I am sure we can resolve these issues and move forwards.”

“The team here would be really excited to work with your team on this deal next year, sadly the price and quality combinations is provisionally not competitive and needs improving.”

Asking for deadline commitments

Could you give us an answer by next week?

How long do you think you need to create a new offer with better conditions?

Would it be possible for you to send me the new offer by (date) at the latest?

I would be grateful if you sent me the new offer next week.

Comparing competitors' products

“On consideration, we believe both suppliers' services are comparable.”

“All of the suppliers achieved the required audit scores to be proceed to the next stage of the approval process.”

“Proof of compliance with the new EU regulations must be submitted by both suppliers before the end of the month.”

“Please explain why you believe your products have a unique selling point compared to your competitors?”

“Therefore, we must talk to 3 new suppliers such that we have some better proposals to consider.”

Explaining cost-related issues

“Conditions are changing daily, supply and demand movements are setting new market prices daily.”

“The market price is spiralling due to the risk to the supply chain that existed then.”

“I must inform you that my team have been in contact with other suppliers to verify if the price offer is competitive.”

“Sorry Bob, we understand that your prices have increased more quickly than your competitors and this means we have had to change our sourcing.”

Clarifying Cost Prices

“Thank you for the presentation, I would like to ask a few questions, some about your ability to satisfy our supplier code of conduct and some about the product range.”

“What is price range we expect on their products?”

“My target price is \$15 for an opening order of 12,000, this means I need a reduction in your offer of \$1 and to accept 3,000 less units on an opening order.”

“If we write orders of 30,000 units over 4 orders of 7,500, can you give us the volume price of 30,000 rather than the price for orders of 7,500 to make this deal happen?”

“I understand the minimum wage has increased by 5%, material prices by 6% and freight costs by 8%, but please understand why you are now asking for an increase of 10%?”

Requesting improved offers

“Please can your factories to double check the quality of cardboard they are using and printing process as I think the packaging costs are increasing disproportionately. I think there are unnecessary costs that you are trying to pass on to us.”

“The business does want to give you an opportunity to deliver this tange but the price is simply not matching your competitors, please can you review it and come back with an improved offer?”

“I appreciate we are considering a diverse range of products on the opening order, there are a range of quantities and requirements but this will enable us to get a read on sales and plan developing the business. The problem is we need a price stucture to test the range at the prices that will be achieved when we buy in volume, can you give us this for the opening offer”

Clarifying conditions

“We ask that you accept our offer including the delivery dates and support for the instore launch, my concern is that is we go into lengthy discussions on minor details we will miss the delivery dates requested.”

“Please can you cross check the requirements of your supplier code against what we are offering as we believe we have satisfied them all, but your team are saying we have not.”

“We need to clarify the situation on the discussed order of free stock, please can you confirm whether you think you will order and if so by when will we receive the order?”

“Ok I think we have clarity on price and order quantity but what delivery date is possible if we send the order on 1st June?”

Thanking for receipt of an offer or proposal

“Kate, thank you for your offer, please let me review it and come back to you shortly.”

“Thanks for sending the order so promptly, I will revert with questions and confirmation as soon as possible.”

“Thanks for adjusting the original offer, this really helps us make this happen.”

“Thank you for the offer Ben, I will go through all the details and come back to you shortly.”

Justifying a request for a price reduction

“Sorry Malcolm, without a price reduction we will not be able to consider your products.”

“Our deadline is getting very near, I think we have explained our position as clearly as we can, can you offer this discount we need to make this happen before it is too late?”

“I can see that on the face of it the price reduction appears high, but we are able to pay on delivery and will promote it really well, this should mean it can become a continuity line ?”

“We would really appreciate it if you could improve the price to make this happen.”

“We both know the margins on this type of products is tight, we have shown how we are cutting our final sales margin to the bone, I am asking you to help make this happen by providing a discount of 25 cents such that we can sign the deal today.”

Arranging follow-up meetings and calls

“Mark, please can I come to your office to finalise everything next Tuesday?”

“Martine, please can I call you on Thursday to to finalise everything?”

“Could I call you in the next few days?”

“Could we agree our next meeting?”

“Possibly we could meet next week to resolve the outstanding issues?”

“Please send me a brochure and price list, I will review and get back to you if there is any interest.”

“I will send over the revised proposal on Thursday, then I will call on Friday to discuss it, is that ok?”

Next steps

“Thank you for the proposal, we will make our final decision during a sourcing committee meeting next week and I will come back to you by the end of the week.”

“Normally the next steps will be planned by the buying team and they should contact you shortly in writing.”

“After we have reviewed all the supplier presentations and audits we will decide which suppliers will be approved and the next steps to onboard them.”

Final steps

“I think it has been a useful meeting, thank you for your contributions, lets move on to how we can agree progress.”

“We are waiting for the revised offer, once received we will move quickly to finalise evrything.”.

Closing

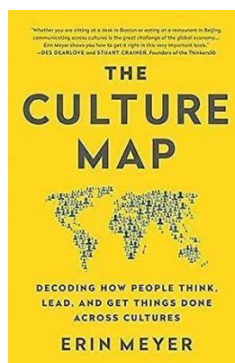
“Thank you, looking forward to our visit in May and I hope we can make this partnership work for both of us.”

“Jane, please feel free to contact us again and we look forward to working with you.”

“I look forward to our next meeting.”

5 Working Cross-Culturally

The Culture Map by Erin Meyer



This book is recognized as one of the best if not the best book on working and communicating across cultures. Erin Meyer has helped many people directly and indirectly to improve their effectiveness and understanding, the latest edition has been translated into several languages and can be bought from most good bookstores. Below there are a number of summaries and examples of her work, we have used her 8-dimension framework in the following pages to help understand these different dynamics.

[Business Speaker Erin Meyer: How Cultural Differences Affect Business - YouTube](#)

[Leadership Speaker Erin Meyer: Low Context vs. High Context Societies - YouTube](#)

[Business Speaker Erin Meyer: The Language of Negative Feedback - YouTube](#)

[Erin Meyer - YouTube](#)

[The Culture Map by Erin Meyer \(Book Summary\) - YouTube](#)

[Erin Meyer, getting to yes across cultures - YouTube](#)

[The Culture Map: Summary of Key Ideas \(norberthires.blog\)](#)

[Book Notes - The Culture Map by Erin Meyer \(patkua.com\)](#)

[The Culture Map PDF Summary - Erin Meyer \(12min.com\)](#)

2.1 Communicating

There are 2 types of verbal and non-verbal communication, low-context and high-context communication. The key difference is that in high-context cultures the tone, meaning and context is critical not solely the words, whereas in low-context cultures the aim is to be very clear and avoid the risk of misunderstanding.

Low-Context Communication is clear, precise, specific and simple, what is said is taken as all that is being communicated and nothing is to be read into what is said beyond the words.

High-Context Communication works on more levels, there is meaning beyond what is specifically said, assumptions might exist and it is expected that the listener will think beyond the words as to additional meaning that is implied by the style of communication but not said.

Low-Context	Mid-Context	High-Context
United States, Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom and Scandinavia	Poland, France, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Russia, Italy and Spain	Middle East, India, China, Korea, Indonesia, Japan and Indonesia

This table broadly simplifies the classification – for specifics please research further, sadly currently there is not any research relating to Africa but most countries are commonly seen as somewhere between mid and high context.

Society Trends	Low-Context	High-Context
Type of communication preferred	Preference for verbal	Preference for non-verbal
Importance of a strong public image	Very important	Less important
Culture	Focus on family and community	Individualism and independence is important
Knowledge	Explicit and conscious	Implicit and not fully conscious
Work ethic	Task-orientated	Relationship-orientated
Relationships	Numerous, less intense and shorter-term	Less, closer and longer- term
Planning	Explicit, specific, written and formal	More implicit, spoken and informal
Attitude to change	Change prioritized over tradition	Tradition often prioritized over desire for change

Not all Communication is Verbal

“The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn’t said.”

-Peter F. Drucker

There are both dramatic and significant differences in nonverbal communication between countries and cultures that become clear in international business. Nonverbal communication describes communication beyond words spoken, Dr. Charles Tidwell in his works including ‘Surrounded by Idiots’, explains the value of nonverbal communication:

- To accent or reinforce the meaning of a verbal messages (eg pointing when giving directions or identifying an object)
- To complement or contradict a verbal message being given (eg showing a feeling such as sarcasm by changing the verbal tone)
- To regulate or direct interactions with others in a meeting (eg using nonverbal cues such as a ‘nod’ or a ‘turn of the head’ to indicate when people should and should not speak)
- To substitute or replace a verbal messages (such as nodding instead of saying “yes” or shaking head instead of saying “no”)

The challenge in international business is learning to read the nonverbal communication of others, some nonverbal communication is given consciously and some unconsciously. In negotiations many professionals share more than they would like unwillingly through nonverbal communication.

Low-Context Communication	High-Context Communication
Precise, open and more dramatic	Less direct and understated
Personal physical space is critical	Speaking is one after another in an orderly respectful manner
Conflict is accepted but disagreements are often not personal and resolving does not have to be immediate	Conflict is avoided and resolved quickly if it occurs
Meaning is communicated through direct and specific words	Less direct and topics are discussed generally
Speed and efficiency are desired	Accuracy is important and respected

Giving Negative Feedback

Giving feedback to people who share your language, culture and country can often be challenging, with people of other cultures and countries it can be particularly difficult and potentially problematic. People of course are not uniform, but there are common trends across the world regarding how people prefer to receive negative feedback.

Direct negative feedback is delivered in an open, direct and specific way, plus are not surrounded by positive feedback to make it easier to accept. This type of feedback is common and is often given in front of others (please be very careful if ever considering doing this as it could go spectacularly wrong).

Indirect negative feedback differs, it is delivered diplomatically, carefully and with softer tones, plus commonly comes with some positive feedback. When in countries where indirect feedback is the norm, negative feedback should be given 1 to 1 and in private.

<u>Direct Negative Feedback</u>	<u>Mid Negative Feedback</u>	<u>Indirect Negative Feedback</u>
Israel, Russia, Netherlands, Germany, France, Scandinavia, Italy, Spain and Australia	United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico	India, China, Kenya, Ghana, Middle East, China, Japan and Korea

Agree the Rules

When working cross-culturally there are many chances for misunderstanding so often the best strategy is to agree the rules and agree what you expect from each other and agree the rules for what will happen if either side is offended. It is often helpful to use the following;

“What is important to you in communication and is there anything we should be careful about?”

“I know we are both committed to making this project work and there could be challenges plus stressful situations, how would you like us to give and receive feedback?”

“If I say something that offends you please can I ask you to help me by explaining it to me such that I can both learn and apologise?”

Feedback is required for improvement so create an environment in which it can safely be given.

Persuading Others

Persuasion is seen as an art rather than a science, it varies across cultures and in business needs to be learnt to build and develop relationships.

Principles-first persuasion starts with statements, facts or an opinion, then ideas or concepts are added to support or explain the conclusion as is required. Messages and reports commonly start with an executive summary or bullet points, discussions are presented and conducted in a clear, specific and practical way. In everyday business discussions which are very theoretical or philosophical are rejected.

Applications-first persuasion starts with developing a theory or complex concept before presenting facts, statements or opinions. Normally messages or reports start with the building up of a theoretical argument before moving to a conclusion, principles in each situation are constantly assessed.

Principles-first	In between	Applications-first
Italy, France, Spain, Russia and Germany	Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Scandinavia and Netherlands	United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and United States

Both ways can lead to success plus they can work well together if a process is established such that they can work their preferred way and meet in agreement at a point.

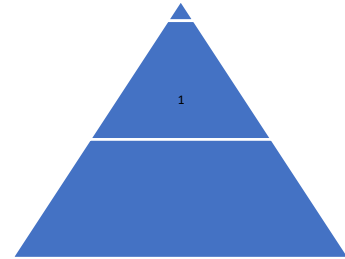
Principles-first	Applications-first
Create the solution or idea then find the facts to back it up	Find the facts and figures then decide on the theory or idea
Like to understand the 'why' before taking action	More focus on the 'how' than the 'why'
Theories and complex concepts are developed before presenting specific facts or opinions	General conclusions are based on factual findings from the world

Leading

If a company is seen as a traditional pyramid shape with the seniors at the top and juniors at the bottom then the egalitarian pyramid is a lot flatter.



Egalitarian



Hierarchical

Egalitarian leadership – bosses behave more like one of the team, closer to staff and more openly communicating, structures are flatter with more direct communication.

Hierarchical leadership – bosses are strong leading from the front, their status is valued and preserved, organisations are rigid with many layers between seniors and juniors.

Egalitarian	In Between	Hierarchical
Scandinavia, Netherlands, Israel, Australia and Canada	United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, France, Italy and Spain	Poland, Mexico, Russia, Middle East, China, Japan, Korea and Nigeria

Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Ideal distances between bosses and staff are low	Distances between bosses and staff are high
The best bosses are a facilitator and coach among equals	The best bosses are those who look strong and lead from the front
Communication often jumps over hierarchical lines	Communication follow set lines that are hierarchical
Status is less important	Status is important
Leadership is seen as 'being one of the team' instead of separating from junior staff	Bosses display their power by creating and emphasizing the distance between themselves and more junior staff
Organizational structures are flatter	Organizations have several fixed layers
Boss's opinions are questioned, often challenged even in public	Boss's opinions are followed, rarely challenged
Action often happens without the boss's approval	Action rarely happens without the boss's approval

Decision Making

Decision making styles also vary across the world and there are trends that connect with egalitarian and hierarchical leadership cultures. In most egalitarian cultures there is consensual decision making whereas in most hierarchical cultures top-down decision making dominates. This is not always true though, in Japan consensual decision making is more common and valued despite it being a very hierarchical country.

Consensual Decision Making	In Between	Top-down Decision Making
Japan, Scandinavia, Netherlands and Germany	United Kingdom, United States, France, Brazil and Italy	Russia, India, China and Nigeria

A UK company Leader Shape Global have studied this area and produced several reports, they also have a great website with useful resources ([LeaderShape Global - Home](#)).

Leadership & Decision Making	Style of Leadership	Dominating Culture	Countries
Egalitarian & Consensual	Coaching & Affiliate	Supportive & Development	Sweden, Norway, Denmark & Netherlands
Egalitarian & Top-down	Democratic & Visionary	Achievement & Value	United States, Canada, United Kingdom & Australia
Hierarchical & Consensual	Pace-setting & Innovating	Structure & Respect	Japan, Korea, Germany & Belgium
Hierarchical & Top-down	Commanding & Controlling	Power & Command	Russia, Middle East, France, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey and many African countries

The table can be used as a generalization but not a decision-making formula. Leader Shape Global added styles of leadership and dominating culture, from there GTP has added more detail. We increasingly work in a world where corporate culture is a powerful dynamic, many companies have 'leadership rules' or 'values' or 'corporate rules' that set behavioural expectations and standards. These can often be more impactful than any other factor including cultural factors, often behaviour might reflect cultural dynamics but be judged by corporate cultural rules.

Trust

Task-based cultures – here trust is created through work activities or tasks, practical assessable work in a particular situation. Relationships are developed and finished relatively easily, people tend to prefer working with people who are reliable in delivery of their work.

Relationship-based cultures – trust differs significantly here, trust is created by social time at work whether having a coffee together, a meal or drinks after work. Through time spent together, sharing, being seen on a personal level and reputation awareness trust grows.

Task-based	In Between	Relationship-based
United States, Scandinavia, Netherlands, Germany, Australia and United Kingdom	Poland, Austria, France, Spain and Italy	Mexico, Japan, Tunisia, Thailand, Turkey, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, India and Nigeria

Task-based	Relationship-based
A clear focus on tasks, job roles and both team and company structure	A shared focus on relationships, well-being and level of motivation
Results first! Delivery of results whether targets, goals, solutions or innovation comes before relationships	Developing positive work relationships is prioritized
Emphasis on the setting of goals or targets supported by a plan	Emphasis is given to team members and communication within the team
Schedules and detailed plans expected with incentives to follow plus failure to follow is punished	More casual connections encouraged and more frequent team meetings
When approaching a challenge or task aims to understand the task and getting started with working on it	When approaching a challenge or task aims to understand the people who they are working with first.
Emphasis on effectiveness and productivity over relationships	Emphasis on human connections and relationships over getting the work done.
Can be prone to getting work started without establishing connection with team mates and trust.	Can be prone to spending too much time discussing personal issues and not enough on tasks.
Tendency to micro manage others and take over their roles	Tendency to avoid conflict or negative feedback

Disagreeing

Confrontational disagreeing – here challenging others and disagreeing is both encouraged and expected, this is seen as a way of brainstorming, solving problems/misunderstandings, learning and creating improvements / innovation.

Confrontational side of the spectrum it's encouraged to challenge ideas in a team, disagree with others as it's perceived more as a way to effectively develop ideas and grow, disagreeing is not inappropriate and will not negatively impact relationship. Open public disagreements are appropriate, created and seen as part of the working process.

Avoids disagreement – confrontation is consciously avoided and debate is both planned and often managed to keep it under a level of control. Open disagreement is not acceptable, harmony and maintaining relationships is prioritized. Personal offence can be taken as instead of ideas or opinions being seen as challenged the person feels attacked personally.

Confrontational Disagreeing	In Between	Avoids Confrontation
Israel, France, Germany, Russia, Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, Italy and Australia	United States, United Kingdom, Brazil, Singapore, Sweden and Mexico	India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Peru, China, Ghana, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand

Numerous studies have been completed to compare confronting / avoiding disagreement cultures with the dynamic of how expressive cultures are eg expressive / unexpressive.

	Confrontational Disagreeing	Avoids Confrontation
Emotionally Expressive	Israel, Russia, France, Spain, Italy and United States	Brazil, India, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Philippines
Emotionally Unexpressive	Germany, Netherlands and Denmark	United Kingdom, Sweden, Korea and Japan

Erin Meyer's HBR article on this can be seen here - [Getting to Si, Ja, Oui, Hai, and Da \(hbr.org\)](#)

When approaching a meeting it can be productive to assess the probable attitude to disagreement and being aware of how it will show itself such that emotions can be managed effectively.

Scheduling

Linear Time – phases of a task or project are handled in a logical / ordered manner with the first task being completed before the second, handling one task at a time in a deadline / milestone focused way with real commitment to a schedule. Being effectively planned, well organized and meeting deadlines is valued over flexibility.

Flexible Time – phases of a task or project are dandled in flexible and fluid way, changing tasks as it feels appropriate or more effective. Here teams might handle several tasks at once, accepting changes or interruptions, adaptability and agility being prioritized over organization.

Linear Time	In Between	Flexible Time
Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Sweden, Netherlands, United States, Denmark and United Kingdom	Czech Republic, Poland, France, Spain, Italy and Russia	Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, China, India, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Kenya

In international business and within international teams there are often differences in scheduling and they can often cause arguments, resentment and trust / respect issues. Ideally in such situations everyone should aim for a level of adapting, consideration and organizing reflecting the business cultures of others. When considering the best approach to take it is clear though that when you are planning a meeting with a boss, stakeholder or customer its probably safer to be on time or early wherever you are.

Linear Time	Flexible Time
Meeting times as set, attendance should be on time or slightly early to avoid the risk of being late	See meeting start and finish times as a suggestion not a definitive rule
Being on time is a critical part of the meeting and forming an illustration of them and what it would be like to work with them	Slight and occasional lateness is forgiven, often reflecting the general business environment
Once a milestone or deadline is set it is assumed to be unchangeable – all potential problems are anticipated, allowances built in and accuracy in forecasting is valued	Deadlines can be amended and often potential problems are not built in to planning.

Linear Time	Flexible Time
Being on time as committed is valued more highly than actual speed	Being seen to the best you can is valued more than accuracy in managing expectations
Responsibility for the management of time is with the individual, individuals are expected to anticipate delays and create back up plans.	Time is seen as something that cannot be fully controlled, it can be described as almost a force of nature. It is accepted that the traffic, weather or health conditions can make them late and that is acceptable.
Time is seen as a resource that is valued and should be very carefully managed	There is assumed flexibility with milestones / deadlines even if others see deadlines as having to be met
Deadlines can be set very aggressively preventing debate, counter ideas to be raised and prevent creativity	A best case scenario approach is taken such that it can feel that reality is always worse so expectations are not managed effectively
When deadlines are at risk leaders might overreact preventing the best course of action taking place	When deadlines are missed leaders might just accept without making people accountable, learning lessons and changing behaviour to develop skills for the future

When it comes to adapting there are challenges for people from both types of cultures, it is probably true that a linear approach on an individual level is safer for team members whereas for managers clarifying rules and expectations is normally better.

When managing teams of mixed time cultures managers can openly discuss the differing business cultures regarding time, often referencing company attitude can be safer to avoid causing offence.

For example if working as a manager for a company from Germany in a country with a flexible approach to time and a group of mixed culture it might be most effective to say, 'I appreciate we are all used to doing things differently, on this project I would like to follow the expectations of our company values and founder.'

With lateness / missing deadlines it would also be advisable for managers to manage the first instances carefully, accepting they will set the tone and expectations for the future. In these situations it is important to be, and be seen to be, fair, open, clear and reasonable.

Peaches and Coconuts

The communication method of each culture is distinct. Subtle variations exist among nations and occasionally within specific regions of a single nation. Their unique communication style is a result of these variations. It is a common practice to compare the communication styles of individuals in specific regions or countries to determine whether the area is a "Peach" or a "Coconut" culture.

Knowing the cross-cultural communication differences between the Peach and Coconut cultures and identifying your own culture will assist in the removal of barriers and the development of your communication skills in your new country.

The Dutch organizational theorist, Fons Trompenaars made the "fruit" concept popular, he concluded that this is since each culture perceives their value system as logical, while the other appears to be irrational.

Communication Style of a Peach Culture

Examples: USA, Canada, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Nigeria, Ghana, Australia and Japan

The individual is amiable and approachable toward strangers and acquaintances; however, the inner defenses are difficult to penetrate. It requires a significant amount of time to cultivate deep, trusting friendships. People from Peach cultures are perceived as "soft" on the outside: They are amiable with individuals they have just met, frequently smile at strangers, engage in conversation, share information (not necessarily profound conversation), and even share pictures. Sharing personal information and asking personal questions is a normal part of general conversation, small talk is common and involves the sharing of both interests and opinions.

In the workplace colleagues are often considered to be friends, small talk is required for career progression and team integration.

Nevertheless, once the initial warmth is dispelled, a highly private side of the individual emerges, which is reserved for a small number of individuals. "That is the peach's hard pit in the center." The most frequently heard complaint is that they are amicable when you first meet them, but it is challenging to establish genuine friendships. Furthermore, this may result in the assumption that individuals from a Peach culture are superficial, hypocritical, and deceptive.

Communication Style of a Coconut Culture

Examples: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Russia, Ethiopia, South Africa, Vietnam and China.

Reserved and formal when interacting with strangers and acquaintances. The outer exterior is difficult to penetrate; however, lasting friendships are built upon the foundation of trust and transparency.

People from Coconut cultures are depicted as "hard" on the outside: They rarely smile at strangers, do not engage in conversations readily, do not discuss personal information with strangers, and tend to remain isolated or with their close friends and family. For an extended period, these individuals may maintain a neutral stance toward you.

Nevertheless, if you are able to penetrate their outer shell, they are inclined to become devoted companions who will regard you as family. Standoffish, hostile, and inhospitable are all terms that may be used to describe individuals from a Coconut culture.

How to Handle Cross-Cultural Communication Differences

There is not a universally correct or incorrect approach to establishing relationships and addressing cross-cultural communication differences. The aim is to comprehend the unique communication styles of various cultures and attempt to adjust to match those of others appropriately when working together, leading others and reporting to others.

With Peach Culture People

- Enjoy their amiability and their readiness to extend a warm reception. Do not be offended if the conversation is not intimate and profound during the initial months.
- Respond to small talk inquiries in a manner that is polite, interesting and concise.
- Try to develop and practice engaging in casual conversation, however meaningless you might feel it is. Small conversation is a method of "breaking the ice" in a Peach culture.
- Find topics and ask about topics that help make further conversation, help keep the conversation going and actively listen showing interest.

With Coconut Culture People

- Slow down and be patient, it is going to take time to build connections, trust and friendships.
- Try to watch others and see which topics are most popular and acceptable. Delay asking personal questions until others who are Coconuts, open up the topics.

Expect relationships to take longer to develop, be patient and do not be offended that trust will grow slowly.