



**Working In English
by Doing Business In English™**

PEACHES AND COCONUTS

Peaches and Coconuts

The method of communication of every culture is distinct, attention is often paid to the differences in languages but there are also very important differences in communication. Subtle variations exist between nations and also occasionally within specific regions of a single nation, particularly within geographically vast countries such as China, India, Russia and USA. Each country's unique communication style is a result of these variations. When communication styles of individuals in specific regions or countries are assessed professionals can try to identify whether the region or country has a "Peach" or a "Coconut" culture.

Knowing the cross-cultural communication differences between the Peach and Coconut cultures is significantly more useful when a professional understands their own communication culture. By identifying their own culture professionals are able to remove barriers and develop their own communication skills when working with others of another country.

The Dutch organizational theorist, Fons Trompenaars made this idea popular, through his work he asserted that each culture sees their value system as being logical, while the other cultures can appear to be irrational.

The Communication Style of a Peach Culture

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

Peach people are likeable and approachable to new people but their inner defenses are often difficult to penetrate. With these people it takes a lot of time to cultivate deep and trusting friendships. They are seen as 'soft' on the outside, this is shown in the way they are quickly friendly with people they have just met, frequently smiling at strangers, quickly start conversations, share personal information and insights. Peaches quickly and comfortably share personal information, in addition they ask personal questions and freely engage in small talk.

Peach professionals are seen as making friends quickly and are effective at small talk which helps them become part of teams and workplaces relatively quickly. However, after the initial friendliness a more private side of the individual emerges, this is normally kept for a more limited and select group of people. This characteristic is seen as the peach's hard stone. Other people often find it confusing and difficult to understand why it is so easy to interact with Peaches initially in a friendly manner but much more difficult to create real friendships. This can lead to people believing that Peaches are false, misleading, dishonest and not genuine.

The Communication Style of a Coconut Culture

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

Coconuts are seen as more reserved and formal in their behaviour with new people, they have an exterior that is hard for others to get through. Building friendships takes time and work, trust and openness is very important, but friendships once formed are commonly long lasting.

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, open, 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 and initiate topics of conversation and ask about topics that help make further conversation, keep the conversation going, be expressive and actively listen showing interest.

With Coconut Culture People

- Slow down, appreciate formality and be patient, it is going to take time to build connections, trust and friendships. Try to consistently show a genuine interest in others.
- Try to watch others and see which topics are most popular and acceptable. Avoid over-familiarity, delay asking personal questions until Coconuts open up the topics.
- Respect personal boundaries and expect relationships to take longer to develop, be patient and do not be offended that trust will grow slowly.