



England

Country Background

History

England was first brought into contact with the world when it was invaded by Rome in the first century B.C. Rome ruled much of England until its withdrawal in the fifth century A.D. Various tribes from Europe and Scandinavia—the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—invaded England after the Romans departed.

In 1066, the Normans invaded from France. This event, the Battle of Hastings, was the last successful invasion of England. The Normans transformed England, making it a feudal kingdom.

England was frequently at war with continental powers over the next several centuries. As an island, England had a tremendous defensive advantage. England realized it needed a strong navy to protect itself, and this navy made the British Empire possible.

Great Britain was the strongest of the European powers in the nineteenth century, with many territories abroad. The Industrial Revolution first manifested itself on British soil. In 1926 the United Kingdom granted autonomy to New Zealand, Australia, and Canada; later in this century, it granted independence to India, Egypt, and its African colonies.

Type of Government

England is a constitutional monarchy. Its constitution is unwritten, and consists partly of statutes and partly of common law and practice. In the executive branch of government, the monarch is the chief of state, while the prime minister is the head of government. In practice, it is the cabinet (selected from Parliament by the prime minister) that has power, rather than the monarch. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons. The Parliament consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, with the Commons having more real power. The Commons is elected by universal suffrage every five years, although the prime minister may ask the monarch to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. Unlike the U.S. Supreme Court, the English judiciary cannot review the constitutionality of legislation.

After World War II, many sectors of the British economy were nationalized, but in the 1980s, privatization of industry was encouraged.

Education

England's educational system is quite good, and boasts some of the finest educational institutions in the world. A large part of tax revenues is spent on the educational system.

Schooling is free and compulsory from age five to age sixteen. Literacy is 99 percent, and school attendance is almost 100 percent. There are over forty universities in the United Kingdom, and many professional schools.

Religion

England has an official religion, the Anglican church, or Church of England. Most English belong to this church, which was founded when England split from the Roman Catholic church during the reign of King Henry VIII. The church no longer has political power. Other religions represented in England are Roman Catholicism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, and Judaism. Religion is considered to be a very private subject.

Demographics

The population of the United Kingdom is 57 million. London, the capital, has about 6.7 million in its metropolitan area. England is an urbanized and suburbanized nation, and has one of the highest population densities in the world.

Cultural Orientation

Cognitive Styles: How the English Organize and Process Information

The English are generally closed to outside information on most issues. They will participate in debate but are not easily moved from their perspective. They are quite analytical and process information in an abstractive manner. They will appeal to laws or rules rather than looking at problems in a subjective manner. Company policy is followed regardless of who is doing the negotiating.

Negotiation Strategies: What the English Accept as Evidence

Objective facts are the only valid source of truth. Little credence is given to the feelings one has about an issue. Faith in few if any ideologies will influence decisions. They are the masters of understatement.

Value Systems: The Basis for Behavior

The usefulness of a monarchy is being questioned more seriously because of the expense of financing it. The following three sections identify the Value Systems in the predominant culture-their methods of dividing right from wrong, good from evil, and so forth.

Locus of Decision Making

The English are highly individualistic, taking responsibility for their decisions, but always within the framework of the family, group, or organization. Individual initiative and achievement are emphasized, resulting in strong individual leadership. They do not find it difficult to say "no." The individual has a right to his or her private life, and this should not be discussed in business negotiations. Friendships are few and specific.

Sources of Anxiety Reduction

There are established rules for everything, and this gives a sense of stability to life. Well-entrenched external structures (law, government, organizations) help to insulate them from life. They are very time-oriented, and anxiety is developed over deadlines

and results. Emotions are not to be shown in public; the phrase "keep a stiff upper lip" is a good example of their demeanor.

Issues of Equality / Inequality

There is an inherent trust in the roles people play (but not necessarily in the people) within the social or business system, and a strong feeling of the interdependency of these roles. There are necessarily inequalities in these roles, but the people are supposed to be guaranteed equality under the law. There is some bias against ethnic groups. There is a high need for success, and decisions are made slowly and deliberately. Women have a great deal of equality in both pay and power.

cultural note

England is one section of the entity known as "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland." Most of the U.K.'s international business is conducted through England. Nevertheless, it is useful to know the following nomenclature:

- Britain refers to the island on which England, Wales, and Scotland are located. Although the English are in the habit of referring to all natives of the Britain as "Brits," this term is not appreciated by many Welsh and Scots.
- Northern Ireland shares the island of Eire with the Republic of Ireland. It is both incorrect and insulting to call someone from Eire a "Brit."

Each of the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) has a distinct history, culture, and ancestral language. There are also separatist pressures pulling each of these regions apart from each other.

Business Practices

Appointments



punctuality

Always be punctual. In London, traffic can make this difficult, so allow plenty of time to get to your appointments.

- Schedule your visits at least a few days ahead of time, then confirm your appointment upon your arrival in England.
- The workweek is 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.m., Monday through Friday, although government offices close from 1:00 to 2:00 P.m. and stay open until 5:30 P.M.
- Executives leave their offices by about 5:30 P.M.



Negotiating

- The best way to make contact with English business people is through a third party
- It is not appropriate to have this same third party intervene later.
- If you do not have a contact, write to the company rather than to an individual or a department.
- The hierarchy in business is as follows: the managing director (CEO in the United States), the deputy (corporate vice president to U.S. executives), the divisional officers, the deputy directors, and, finally, the managers.

- Normally, a secretary will introduce you to the executive; otherwise, introduce yourself.
- The English are normally more interested in short-term results than in the longterm future.
- Change is not necessarily a good thing to the English.
- After a meeting, be sure to leave detailed data with your English partners.
- The English do not often reveal excitement or other emotions; try to keep yours restrained as well. They also traditionally underplay dangerous situations.
- Similarly, the English refrain from extravagant claims about products or plans.
- Some English stereotype U.S. business people as condescending; to be safe, make every effort to avoid this impression.
- Avoid the hard sell.
- Decision making is slower in England than in the United States.
- Don't rush the English toward a decision.
- Allow the English executive to suggest that the meeting has finished, then do not prolong your leave taking.
- While U.S. executives are known for being direct, the English are even more so. Don't be offended if there's no hedging about whether your suggestion is good or not.
- It is best for a company to send older executives to England, as they are more respected and usually more restrained in conduct.

cultural note

an oral agreement is considered binding, followed by written confirmation; only major agreements will require legal procedures.

Be discreet when you suggest contacting an attorney (called a solicitor in England).

- Exchanging business cards is not essential, but if your name is unusual, you should give out your card.

cultural note

although U.S. business people may consider everyone in the United Kingdom "British" or a "English", the Scots, Welsh, and Irish are not called English. Use the terminology of the people you are with.

- The English do not consider themselves European. This is vital when discussing issues regarding the European Union.
- Don't ask the typical U.S. conversation starter "What do you do?" as the English feel it is too personal. Avoid other personal questions as well, even "What part of England are you from?"
- Avoid controversial topics such as politics or religion, and do not discuss the English work ethic.
- Speak in complete sentences. Many U.S. executives have a habit of starting a sentence and then allowing it to trail off without ever completing the thought. This can be annoying to the English.
- While the English are often self-critical, visitors should avoid criticizing the ways of the people; similarly, if they share their complaints with you, do not participate.

- The English apologize often, for even small inconveniences (as do many people in the United States).
- The English usually enjoy talking about animals.
- Do not make jokes about the royal family.
- It is not good form to discuss one's genealogy.



Business Entertaining

- Business breakfasts are not commonplace in England.
- Breakfasts in hotels are very large.
- Lunch is between noon and 2:00 P.m.
- A business lunch will often be conducted in a pub and will be a light meal.
- With senior executives, lunch will be taken in the best restaurants or in the executive dining room.
- Dinner is from 7:00 to 11:00 P.m. in most restaurants.
- When you go out after work, do not bring up the subject of work unless your English associates do, otherwise, you will be considered a bore.
- Most business entertaining is done in restaurants and pubs rather than at home.
- To call the waiter over, simply raise your hand.
- If you smoke, always offer the cigarettes around to others before taking one for yourself.
- It is not polite to toast those who are older or more senior than you.
- If you are the guest, you must initiate your departure, as your hosts will not indicate that they wish the evening to come to an end.
- Do not invite a business associate out until you know him or her fairly well.
- When inviting the English out, it is best to include people of the same background and professional level in the invitation.
- When you are the host, be sure to offer the seat of honor to the most senior person. He or she may decline, offering it to you as host; accept it graciously.
- While U.S. citizens hold the fork in the right hand, or switch from left to right, the English hold it in the left hand.
- When passing items around the table, always pass them to the left.
- Always keep your hands above the table (but no elbows on the table!).
- The knife above your plate is used for butter.
- When dining out, it is not considered polite to inquire about the food you see around you.
- Likewise, you should not ask to sample the dishes of others.
- In general, maintain very proper manners.
- The English still respect the tradition of men holding doors open for women and rising when women enter the room.
- The English are only beginning to be concerned about diet and health; don't press your views on this matter. However, vegetarianism is popular, especially among women.

Time

- The English are on Greenwich Mean Time, which is five hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Standard Time (E.S.T. + 5).

Protocol



Greetings

- A handshake is standard for business occasions and when visiting a home.
- Women do not necessarily shake hands.
- A woman may extend her hand; men should wait for women to do so.
- When introduced, say "How do you do?" instead of "Nice to meet you." The question is rhetorical.



Titles / Forms of Address

- Business titles are not used in conversation.
- Find out the honorary titles of anyone you will be in contact with, and use them no matter how familiar you are with the person.
- Doctors, clergy, and so forth are addressed by title plus last name; however, surgeons are addressed as Mr., Mrs., or Miss.
- Rather than "sir," you should use the title of the person you are addressing (i.e., "Yes, Minister", and not "Yes, sir").
- The English are beginning to use first names as is done in the United States. However, you should do so only at the initiative of your hosts.
- Avoid repeating the other person's name during the conversation.



Gestures

- It is considered impolite to talk with one's hands in one's pockets.
- The British often do not look at the other person while they talk.
- In business, a light handshake is standard.
- When visiting a home, a handshake is proper; however, a handshake is not always correct at social occasions. Observe what others do.
- Don't point with your fingers, but instead indicate something with your head.
- Sitting with your ankle resting on your knee may be seen as impolite.
- If you give the "victory" sign (a "W" with two fingers), do so with the palm facing outward.
- Tapping your nose means confidentiality, or a secret.
- It is inappropriate to touch others in public; even backslapping or putting an arm around the shoulders of another can make the English uncomfortable.
- In addition, the English maintain a wide physical space between conversation partners.

- Avoid excessive hand gestures when speaking.
- Men give their seats to women on crowded public transportation.



Gifts

- Gifts are not part of doing business in England.
- Rather than giving gifts, it is preferable to invite your hosts out for a meal or a show.
- When you are invited to a English home, you may bring flowers (not white lilies, which signify death), liquor or champagne, and chocolates. Send a brief, handwritten thank-you note promptly afterwards, preferably by messenger rather than by mail.
- When bringing flowers, consult with the florist about the appropriate type and number.
- Be cautious in making purchases, as there is usually no refund or exchange policy.



Dress

- Conservative dress is very important.
- Men should wear laced shoes, not loafers.
- Men's shirts should not have pockets; if they do, the pockets should be empty. w
Men should not wear striped ties; the British "regimentals" are striped, and yours may look like an imitation.
- Men's clothes should be of excellent quality, but they do not necessarily have to look new. Well-broken-in clothes are acceptable.
- Women should also dress conservatively.