BRITISH COUNCIL

INTERCULTURAL FLUENCY

GLOBAL SKILLS FOR BUSINESS

CULTURAL TOP TIPS FOR UK BUSINESSES WORKING WITH TURKEY



THESE 'TOP TIPS' HAVE BEEN PRODUCED BY OUR INTERCULTURAL PRACTITIONERS AT BRITISH COUNCIL TURKEY, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE TURKISH CITIZENS



REALITY CHECK

At British Council we believe that:

- individuals make a difference in any intercultural situation. All cultures have a wealth of diverse individuals. Many do not fit the generalisations that are made about the cultures which they are associated with
- there are more similarities and connections between cultures and individuals than differences
- effective intercultural practitioners are well-informed about the history, economics, conflicts and politics of the parts of the world they are interested in.

WHILE PROVIDING 'TOP TIPS' ABOUT WHAT IS TYPICAL ABOUT A PARTICULAR GROUP OF PEOPLE CAN BE USEFUL, IT IS NEVER ENOUGH.

Equally important are being aware:

- of the cultural behaviours and values that you bring to the mix and being able to adjust these to complement the situations you find yourself in. This does not mean disregarding the values that are important to you but being open to and respecting difference.
- of the intercultural expertise of the people that you are working with. You may be fortunate to be working with counterparts who have high levels of intercultural fluency who 'tune-in' to your cultural preferences and adjust to make you feel comfortable.
- that much depends on context. What is expected and appropriate will depend on:
  - the type of organisation you are dealing with
  - the locale (urban or rural)
  - the status, age and seniority of your contacts
  - whether you are meeting in public or in somebody's home
  - that in most countries there are many cultures and sub-cultures. Cities and regions and younger and older generations often have their own distinct characteristics.

We hope you find our cultural top tips a useful starting point for working in new cultural situations. British Council can support you in developing deeper cultural insights and in acquiring the skills for effective intercultural practice. **Contact us** (intercultural.fluency@britishcouncil.org) or see the **Intercultural Fluency webpage** for more details (www.britishcouncil.org /education/skills-employability/intercultural-fluency)

1 EARN TRUST BY BUILDING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

First meetings are often about getting to know you rather than talking business, as business relationships are also expected to be personal relationships.

Take the lead from your local counterpart about the balance between socialising and business. Prepare yourself for regular personal telephone calls, emails, friendship requests on social media, and even letters to follow up meetings and keep in touch.

Turkish society is well known for its hospitality. People like having business lunches, taking their guests to dinner and participating in social activities together.

Likewise, small gifts are also part of the business culture and are not intended as bribes. Your Turkish counterparts will take their time and try to take good care of their guests and potential business partners and it is frowned upon to refuse such social bonding activities.

Protocol means that your Turkish host will pay for entertainment. If you wish to reciprocate, prepare small gifts and arrange a meal at a restaurant of your choice, informing the restaurant in advance that you will be paying the bill.

WHAT ARE PEOPLE IN TURKEY LIKE?



Data from the British Council's 'Cultural Preferences Survey', carried out in Turkey in 2014. Survey respondents were asked to read a substantial list of words and phrases and decide which eight of these represent the characteristics of the people of Turkey. The size of each characteristic in the image corresponds to the percentage of participants who selected it.

2 BE PREPARED FOR HIERARCHICAL WAYS OF WORKING

Hierarchy is important in most Turkish organisations.

This can cause decision-making to be slow, as many activities need the approval of senior managers.

Questioning superiors is viewed negatively and feedback tends to be given by the senior to the junior, but not vice versa.

There is not much opportunity within Turkish organisations to discuss how things are done or to give constructive feedback.





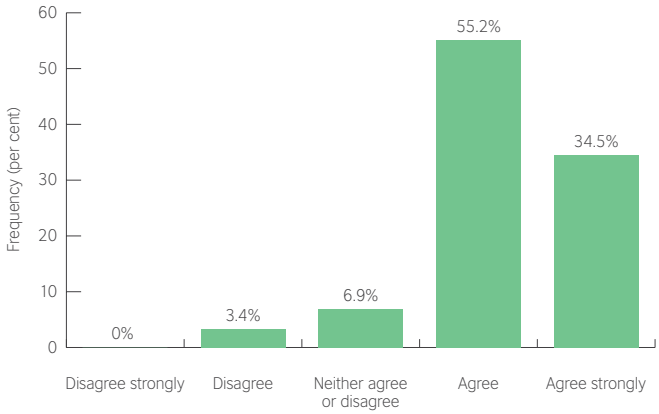
3 WORK WITH LOCALS AS A SHORT-CUT TO NEW BUSINESS

Personal recommendation is the best way to make new business contacts in Turkey.

When establishing new business contacts or when buying something, Turkish people tend to start by asking for recommendations.

Working through a local company or a respected third-party contact can be a short-cut into local networks. The Turkish Diaspora in the UK can provide good contacts.

Turkey: In order to succeed it is important to have the right connections.



Nearly 90 per cent of the participants in British Council's cultural preference survey in Turkey agreed or agreed strongly with the statement above the graph. Participants from the USA, Nigeria and Singapore showed similarly high levels of agreement with the statement. It seems that having the right connections is important in many places.



4 EXPECT TRADITIONAL VALUES TO BE REFLECTED IN BUSINESS PRACTICES

Turkish society remains a traditional, largely patriarchal society.

Culture, politics and business are largely male dominated and most family businesses are run by men. For example, there are only 34 women mayors in Turkey (less than 1% of the population).

However, there is gradual change and people are beginning to value more equal structures, with shared decision-making and improved opportunities for women in the workplace.

Patriotism is strong among some people in Turkey. However, people have a range of views about identity and nationality and this should be treated with caution, especially during early contact. It's a good idea to learn a bit about the culture and history of Turkey to help you.

Topics such as religion, history or politics can be sensitive. Families, the weather and football are safer and popular ice breaking topics.

5 ADJUST TO A MORE FLEXIBLE ATTITUTE TO TIME

In Turkey, things happen more slowly than in the UK, especially with new contacts so don't rush things.

Meeting times tend to be flexible – they begin late and finish late and people are often late for appointments. However, your local commercial counterparts will expect you to be punctual and arrive on time for business appointments.

As bureaucratic procedures are slow, planned activities and actions can take place at the very last minute. People need to be reminded about deadlines but be careful about using pressure tactics which force responses as this may result in a quick end to negotiations.



Meaningful and effective intercultural engagement is at the heart of the British Council's vision, mission, and values. We have 80 years of experience in cultivating cultural relations and we work on the ground in over 100 countries. These top tips have been produced by our intercultural practitioners at British Council Turkey, the majority of whom are Turkish citizens.



Variety of colourful shawls at street bazaar

PHOTOGRAPHY

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