

Englische Seite

"HOW SHOULD I ADDRESS YOU?"

Socialising in another language is not easy. There is often more focus on using the right language rather than in business discussions. The situations of relationship building take different forms and demand particular expressions – in other words: small talk. But to refer to it as "small" undervalues its importance. Starting a conversation even when you think you have nothing to say, can make you feel uncomfortable and nervous. Therefore, it is of great importance to know what phrases and expressions are needed to establish a trusting relationship in order to win over a potential business partner.

When meeting their English speaking business partners, many Germans often feel confused about how to address people properly. Using first names in business can be refreshing but many German speakers may be unsure about what it means or how to react. Using first names in English is not necessarily the same as the German "Du"-relationship. In a business situation, it is normally comparable to a relationship in which Germans say "Sie". As we Germans draw a clear line between acquaintances and friends, in other words between people we meet at work and mostly address each other as "Sie" although we have been working together in the same office for years and those we meet in private and with whom we are on a "DU"-basis. For the mostly easygoing, just-call-me-Bob Americans this can be one of the most difficult situations to manage when they are meeting their German colleagues. In many American companies it's even normal practice to call your boss by her or his first name.

The British people, on the other hand, rather keep distance when greeting their colleagues or cli-

ents. In general, people in the UK prefer relationships that are friendly, but not too close. Anything that takes a business relationship to a slightly more personal level, can make them feel uncomfortable. Although it is common courtesy to shake hands, this is mainly used for first encounters only. When I once explained to a group of British business people that in Germany it is quite customary to shake hands with their bosses and business partners at the beginning and at the end of each day, they were almost bewildered.

When establishing relations with Asians, you have to take into account that culture and manner is something highly regarded. As it is said that when two American or European business people meet, they are there to do a deal, but in Asia they are there to first establish a relationship. Asians want to know more about their guests and business partners, about their background and their contacts before going ahead and doing business. Although increased cross-cultural interaction brings about changes in customs and many Asian business people have accommodated to the Western

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handshaking tradition, in most situations bowing is still the only polite move to make – especially to the Japanese. When bowing to people from Japan, the hands should slide down toward the knees or remain at side and the person in the inferior position always bows longer and lower.

TIP 1: How to introduce yourself

When meeting someone for the first time, shake hands and agree in advance whether you will use first or family names. The phrase "How do you do" is a formal first greeting and not a question. And the reply is actually "How do you do" or "Nice to meet you" or "I'm very pleased to meet you".

- *Good morning.*
- *Let me introduce myself.*
- *My name is Michael Taylor.*
- *How do you do?*

- *Good morning, Mr Taylor.*
- *Nice to meet you.*
- *Oh, please call me Peter.*

TIP 2: How to greet someone you know

When you greet someone you've met before, it's a more informal situation and you always start the conversation by asking "How are you?" or "How are you doing?" This greeting requires an answer. The most common reply is "Fine, thanks. And you?"

- *Hello, John.*
- *How are you?*

- *Hey, Sue. Great, thank you. How about you?*
- *I'm fine too.*

TIP 3: How to use titles

It is very unusual for people in English speaking countries to use the title "Dr" and "Professor", unless they are medical doctors or they work at universities. In this case, you address the person by "Hello, Dr (Brown)" in speaking as well as in writing. The general titles "Sir" or "Madam" are often used as polite forms when talking to customers or clients in service situations.

- *Can I help you, madam?*
- *Yes, thank you, sir. That's very kind of you.*

Vocabulary:

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| relationship building | - | Aufbau von Beziehungen |
| to undervalue the importance | - | die Wichtigkeit unterschätzen |
| to establish a trusting relationship | - | eine vertrauensvolle Beziehung aufbauen |
| to feel confused | - | sich verunsichert fühlen |
| to address sb. | - | jemand ansprechen |
| an acquaintance | - | ein/-e Bekannte/-r |
| common courtesy | - | allgemein übliche Höflichkeit |
| first encounter | - | erste Begegnung |
| to be bewildered | - | verblüfft/erstaunt sein |
| to take into account | - | in Betracht ziehen/beachten |
| to bow | - | sich verbeugen |