

Evaluating

Americans may be very explicit communicators, but they are in the middle of the spectrum when it comes to giving negative feedback — as anyone who has been to an American school knows.

Israelis, Russians, and Dutch are among the most direct when it comes to negative feedback.

Japanese are among the most indirect.

FIGURE 2.2. EVALUATING



Persuading

Some cultures, notably the French and Italians, tend toward deductive arguments, focusing on theories and complex concepts before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion. Others, notably Anglo-Saxon cultures, tend toward inductive arguments, starting with focusing first on practical application before moving to theory.

This trait shows up in everything from how people give presentations or lead meetings to how they write emails.

FIGURE 3.1. PERSUADING



Concept-first Individuals have been trained to first develop the theory or complex concept before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion. The preference is to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion. The conceptual principles underlying each situation are valued.

Application-first Individuals are trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and later add concepts to back up or explain the conclusion as necessary. The preference is to begin a message or report with an executive summary or bullet points. Discussions are approached in a practical, concrete manner. Theoretical or philosophical discussions are avoided in a business environment.

Leading

"In Denmark, it is understood that the managing director is one of the guys, just two small steps up from the janitor," a Danish executive told Meyer. This represents one extreme in attitudes toward leadership.

On the other side of the spectrum in countries like Japan and Korea, however, the ideal boss should stand far above the workers at the top of a hierarchy.

America's outlook on leadership falls somewhere in the middle.

FIGURE 4.1. LEADING



Egalitarian The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is low. The best boss is a facilitator among equals. Organizational structures are flat. Communication often skips hierarchical lines.

Hierarchical The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is high. The best boss is a strong director who leads from the front. Status is important. Organizational structures are multi-layered and fixed. Communication follows set hierarchical lines.

Deciding

How organizations make decisions relates closely to how they view leadership, but with some important differences. Notably, while Japan has a very hierarchical leadership system, it has a very consensual decision-making system. This is the famous ringi system, which involves building consensus at a lower level before bringing a proposal to a higher level, thus enabling broad corporate consensus.

FIGURE 5.3. DECIDING

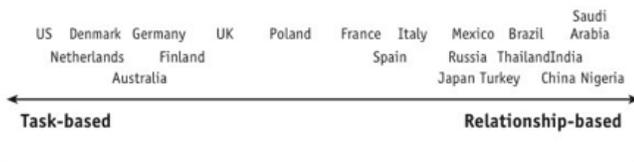


Trusting

In some cultures, notably America, people don't worry so much about trusting each other because they trust their legal system to enforce contracts, and so business negotiations focus on what's practical.

In others, including many emerging market economies but also to a lesser extent Western Europe, personal relationships are much more important, in part because people don't trust their legal system to enforce contracts.

FIGURE 6.1. TRUSTING



- Task-based** Trust is built through business-related activities. Work relationships are built and dropped easily, based on the practicality of the situation. You do good work consistently, you are reliable, I enjoy working with you, I trust you.
- Relationship-based** Trust is built through sharing meals, evening drinks, and visits at coffee machine. Work relationships build up slowly over the long term. I've seen who you are at a deep level, I've shared personal time with you, I know others well who trust you, I trust you.

Disagreeing

Some cultures embrace confrontation while others avoid it. This scale looks a lot like the scale showing the directness of negative feedback, though with some differences, such as Sweden being further to the left (direct) on negative feedback and further to the right (avoiding confrontation) on disagreeing.

FIGURE 7.1. DISAGREEING



- Confrontational** Disagreement and debate is positive for the team or organization. Open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact the relationship.
- Avoids confrontation** Disagreement and debate is negative for the team or organization. Open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony or negatively impact the relationship.

Scheduling

That different cultures treat time differently is one of the most

common observations for anyone working or even traveling abroad. On one extreme you've got the exceedingly precise Germans and Swiss; Americans fall relatively close to this end of the spectrum; Western Europeans and Latin Americans tend to be more flexible; Africa, the Middle East, and India are extremely flexible.

FIGURE 8.1. SCHEDULING



Thanks to Meyer for letting us publish these charts from "[The Culture Map](#)."