



CULTURAL INSIGHTS



a culture crash course every other month, sent right to your inbox!

QUICK FACTS

Group Orientation & Cooperation

In France, group orientation is evident in the collective mindset and emphasis on communal living, strong family and social connections, adherence to social etiquette. Sharing individual ideas is encouraged and leads to better cooperation. Cooperation rather than competition is the most effective way to achieve goals.

Relationship Orientation

France is a network culture built on connections in the family, community and workplace. Customer relations are based largely on long-standing relationships, or the perceived desire to enter into such relationships. Clients become part of the extended network where quality of services and relationships are more important than price.

Hierarchy

Following democratic ideals France has a large middle class and a long tradition of freedom to question authority. However, need for authority is recognized and respected. French leaders may be autocratic, expecting loyalty and respect. To earn that, subordinates expect supervisors to have a high degree of technical competence as well as charismatic leadership skills. Employees may share opinions, but it is difficult to question expertise of a supervisor.

Need for Certainty with Preference for Exceptions

French work well with processes, flow charts, order, and a lot of details. They typically accept change only after careful examination and consideration. People tend to prefer loose application of rules based on broad consideration of context. But once the logic behind the rules is explained the French will follow them, particularly when everything is set in writing.

Fluid Time

In France, setting time and agendas is necessary, but it is also important to recognize that there is an expectation of flexibility as priorities can change leading to altered schedules and agendas.

FUN FACTS

France is one of the founding members of the European Union, the largest country in the EU and Europe's third-largest economy after Germany and the UK.

A tradition that began back in 1903, Tour de France is the world's most famous cycling race that happens every year, cyclists cover over 3,200 kilometers during the race.

France welcomes some 89 million visitors annually; Spain comes in second place with some 82 million visitors, while the USA comes in third with 78 million.

WATCH OUT!

Do not confuse debate and discussion with conflict. Debate is seen as a way to clarify ideas and is frequently a preferred way of communication.



COMMUNICATION IN FRANCE

INDIRECT

French communication style often feels direct as people argue for their positions and share their opinions freely. The message itself, however, may not be expressed directly in words which may be seen as insufficient. Thus, the message is implied or suggested, and the focus tends to be on how something is said. Giving many compliments and using superlatives may be regarded disingenuous and manipulative. At the same time, pointing out mistakes should be done with discretion.



HIGH CONTEXT

In France the way a message is communicated may be determined by relationship, rank, status and position of the individuals. The way someone speaks, dresses and behaves also communicates who that person is. French tend to expect and share a lot of background information to provide context for decoding the message.



FORMAL

Use of title is the norm until a relationship has developed. New acquaintances address each other with "vous" until it is agreed to switch to the familiar "tu." Younger generation tends to be more informal; however, it is still prominent in traditional business or government settings. Reserved office behavior may be perceived as a lack of interest or commitment. Respect and trust are earned by sharing opinions, and demonstrating a passionate, well-presented position.



THE DETAILS FRANCE CULTURAL PROFILE

