



HAAGA-HELIA
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Exploring and comparing corporate culture and communication in British and Italian business environment

Satenik Gevorkyan

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Author Satenik Gevorkyan	
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<p>As businesses are going global, it is inevitable to enter new markets. That means that the companies should be ready to perform business in different counties, which can bring misunderstanding due to diverse specifics of cultures. Hence, it will bring more understanding if one starts to analyze and compare corporate cultures and communication.</p> <p>The main goals of this thesis are to explore Italian and British corporate cultures and to compare types of their societies in order to recognize the ways of doing business in these countries.</p> <p>In order to get basic understanding of chosen cultures and be able to compare them, books, scientific magazines, blogs, articles and statistics have been used. Then, Fons Trompenaars' (organizational theorist) and Geert Hofstede's (social psychologist) cross-cultural statistics and works have been taken for survey in order to realize how these two cultures influence business performance.</p> <p>Furthermore, interviews with Italian and British workers have been conducted. The results provide us with updated information concerning chosen topic of the thesis.</p> <p>The results based on literature and interviews show how important to know differences between cultures. Updated information mostly matches authors' ideas. Even though chosen cultures live relatively close to each other, cultural specific still affects on communication and has its own impact.</p> <p>Thesis results can be used as guidance for businessmen who are planning to enter British and/or Italian market. This thesis provides with the following knowledge of Italian and British cultures: verbal and non- verbal communication, corporate communication and the models of behavior, organizational structure, importance and scope of business meetings, negotiations and decision making as well as the meaning of corporate teambuilding.</p>	
Keywords Cultures, intercultural communication, leadership, organisational structure	

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1. Introduction

"Italian culture is so deeply soaked in an appreciation of the good things in life."

Mariska Hargitay, American actress, producer, and director.

"The British nation is unique in this respect: they are the only people who like to be told how bad things are, who are ready to be told the worst."

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 1940 - 1945 and 1951 - 1955.

1.1 Background

Globalization is a process, which gets people together from different nations, races, and religions of the world into a single community, which is linked by the wide network of communication technologies. Unfortunately, cultures have the tendency to change slowly, but individuals, who mentally prepared to accept changes and face with differences, can successfully adapt to cultures completely different from their own.

Nowadays more and more companies go global and expand their businesses all over the world in many countries and cultures. Digital environment helps to fasten the flow of information from one region to another. And within this fast and tremendous process of exchanging information, services and goods, cultures remain, suffer and face misunderstanding in many ways.

Since the beginning of time, communication was the tool by which cultural beliefs and values are evolved, shared, and passed from one generation to the next. Culture and communication are accordingly dependent.

Efficient communication between international businesses demands more than just being able to speak the language. Understanding the language is only the top of iceberg. Understanding and consenting the behaviors and points of view of other cultures while cooperating globally is necessarily required to bring harmony and success in the worldwide business.

1.2 Thesis objectives

I have chosen this area of knowledge out of my personal interest. In order to observe intercultural communication differences, I took two counties Italy and Great Britain. Communication is the main tool for surviving in society and it is one of the core tools of developing business abroad, which is popular nowadays.

The objectives of this thesis are to provide with update information about specifics of doing business in Italy and Great Britain, analyzing the ways of communication in companies, comparing these two cultures using Hofstede's dimensions as well as Trompenaars'.

I will focus on the following aspects, which will bring some deep understanding of these two cultures: styles of communication, corporate cultures, organizational structures, leadership statuses, hierarchy and how it influences on workflow.

In order to get updated information, moreover, I will organize, proceed and analyze two interviews with Italian and British workers who have working experience in Italian and British companies.

The main questions to be solved in this thesis go as follows:

- What types of cultures Italian and British people have?
- How do these two cultures do business?
- What are the main features of doing successful business in Italy and Great Britain?

1.3 Thesis structure

I will start by discussing communication in general, to provide general knowledge and considering on what styles of communication people use in business life. I will also examine intercultural communication on nowadays business landscape. I will continue by providing and analyzing corporate communication aspects of Italian and British cultures. I will define what actual features of specific communication modes are. I will also evaluate these two cultures by Hofstede's and Trompenaars' dimensions in order to get deeper understanding of them.

After reviewing which is mentioned above, I will direct my research towards interviews. By interviewing Italian and British workers who worked in their countries, I will compare the results with each other; define some differences and similarities between two cultures. Finally, I will compare the results with the literature studies previously.

2. Definition of communication

In 1972 American communication professors Frank Dance and Carl Larson surveyed and examined the field for definitions of the word “communication”. The results were tremendous. They had found 126 different definitions of the word. Definitely, it is hard to summarize and define such complicated phenomenon as a communication. There are many paths to view on this process and each of them provides different aspects of it. Several definitions were chosen in order to illustrate the main features of communication.

S. S. Stevens (1950, 25) defines the communication as the following, “Communication is the discriminatory response of an organism to a stimulus”.

“Communication is an effort after meaning, a creative act initiated by man in which he seeks to discriminate and organize cues so as to orient himself in his environment and satisfy his changing needs” (Dean Barnlund, 1968, 6).

“Speech communication is a human process through which we make sense out of the world and share that sense with others” (John T. Masterson, 1983, 5).

“Communication: the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc. by the use of symbols...” (Bernard Berelson & Gary A. Steiner, 1964, 527).

Each of these definitions concentrates on different parts of this phenomenon. The first definition is very generous. This definition draws the attention on the part the receiver plays in communication and gives no attention to the second part, a part played by the sender. And the second definition is more definite. It emphasizes on communication between human beings and the reasons people communicate. While the third one gives another feature, that is sharing. It is the transmission of information from one human being to another. And finally the last one also support the idea of transmission but at the same time adds further limitation: messages or a flow of information consists of symbols. Each definition tells us something about communication as well as leaves something out. One can consider a communication as a process, collective activity and creative aspiration.

2.1 Intercultural communication

Let us define the phrase “intercultural communication” as a combination of concepts of the following words: culture, communication and business.

According to Kevin Gore (Networking Cultural Knowledge, 2007, 12) there are 5 features of intercultural communication:

1. Intercultural communication affirms the application of cultural knowledge in specific situations; hence it is applicable for training programs.
2. Intercultural communication targets not only to improve the communication between people of different nationalities but only people with different personalities, habits, point of view etc.
3. There were two spheres, which founded intercultural communication as a phrase. They were anthropology and linguistics. But nowadays it evolves into a specialty field in communication.
4. Non - verbal communication as well as verbal one is a part of intercultural communication.
5. The key composing of intercultural communication is experimental learning. "One must experience intercultural communication if one is really going to understand it"(Kevin Gore, 2007,12).

Nowadays companies and corporations are performing business not only in the countries of their origin, but also abroad which brings a need to communicate with different cultures and moreover to do it successfully.

In order to understand how the communication is accomplished, we need to describe communication as an exchange of meaning. In that case communication consists of "the sender" and "the receiver" of information. And the message, which "the sender" directs to "the receiver", can be understood differently. Figure 1 shows the process of communication starting from the sending information and ending by receiving and responding on it. One should keep in mind that non-verbal communication also takes place in this process.

Let us examine Figure 1 deeply. The idea comes from the sender, so called "the source". "The sender" encodes the feeling or idea, which is needed to express. This process calls "encoding". By encoding we produce "a message", which is passed on through "the channel" to "the receiver". For instance, writing can be an example of the channel. After that, there is the process of "decoding" the message by the receiver. After decoding the message, "the receiver" responds on it by giving "the feedback". We can also observe "the noise" in this process. It can be anything, which distorts the message.

Effective communication, both verbal and non verbal, means that sending and examining the information between two or more people is understood, interpreted and responded in some way. Any factor that causes a barrier the information transaction is called as a communication interference (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 44). Let us enumerate what kinds of interferences can exist:

- Social interference. It includes behavioral manners, which vary from country to country such as dress code, business etiquette etc.
- Organizational interference. Ideas being discussed lack sequence and hardly can be followed.
- Psychological interference. Emotions (both negative and positive) can be a factor, which distort the true meaning of flowing information while communicating.
- Environmental interference such as thunder, blinding sun, people talking loudly, music etc.
- Semantic interference. For instance body language, which is different from culture to culture can be understood differently as well as meaning of the word.
- Physiological interference. For example loss of hearing or illness.
- Syntactic interference. Grammatical mistakes as well as syntactic (placing words in different order in the sentence).

A human being cannot take under control the weather and exclude environmental interferences but what one can do is to become informed about the customs and culture. Get all possible information in advance in order to communicate successfully in another country.

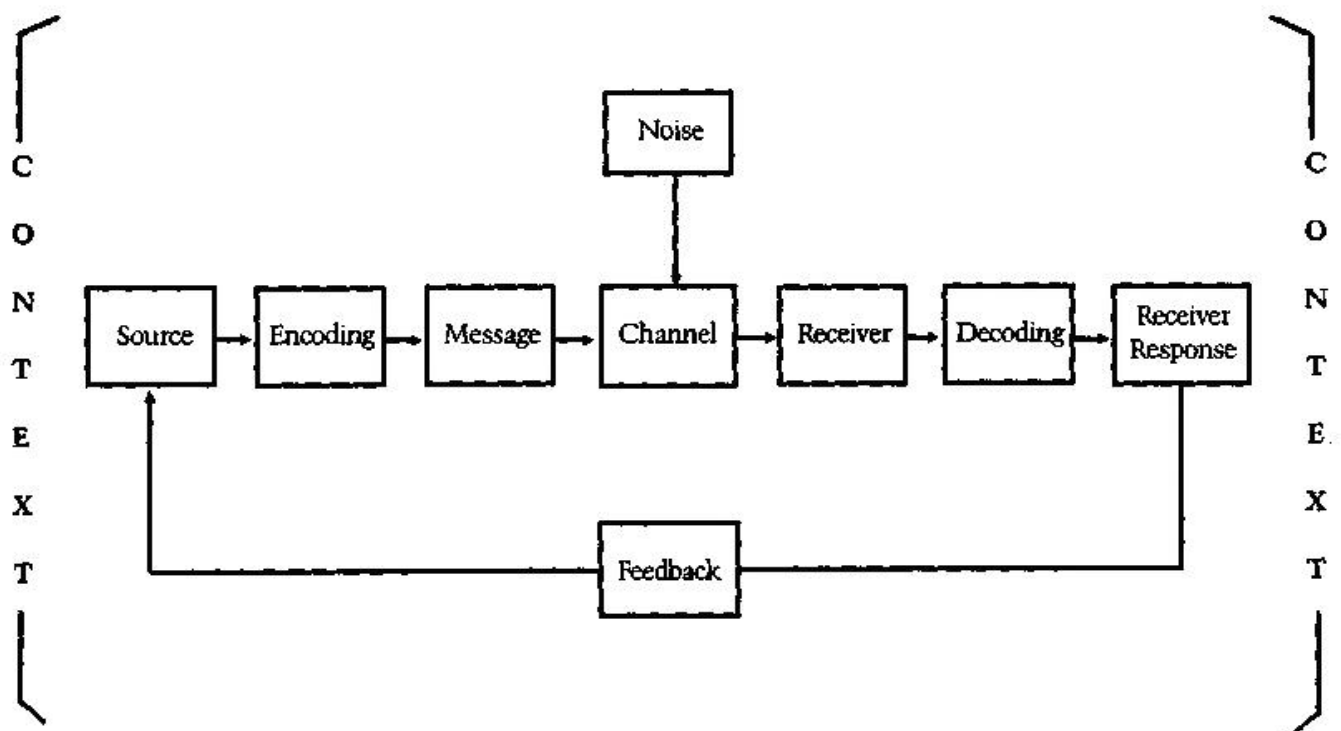


Figure 1 Communication model

Let's take an example of intercultural communication where the sender and the receiver have different cultural backgrounds. In that case the communication can be pretty tough

and difficult to implement. And if there is too much “cultural noise”, it can break down completely.

However, to succeed in communication with the person from different background does not mean to succeed in business on world market. Simply bringing together a diverse group of people does not naturally result in learning from one another. Special learning tools and a specific structure are needed to introduce the culture within every single member of the group. (Kevin Gore, 2007, 18). Moreover, the true objective of intercultural communication is to learn about one’s own culture and styles of communication. So, learning intercultural communication starts with oneself. Edward Hall has been quoted as saying:

“The real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own. I am also convinced that all that one ever gets from studying foreign culture is a token understanding. The ultimate reason for such study is to learn more about how one’s own system works. The best reason for exposing oneself to foreign ways is to generate a sense of vitality and awareness – an interest in life that can come only when one lives through the shock of contrast and difference” (oral communication, 1997).

By learning how to understand our own ways of thinking, behaving and communicating, we will know the practical approach which should be used in order to learn about such things in others. And business can be our initial motivation to start analyzing ourselves, our culture and our own style of communication.

2.2 Style of communication

Let us observe what communication styles these two cultures use by taking the following aspects such as ways of discussions/negotiations, emotiveness, ambiguity of behaviour and performances of arguments.

The British have traditionally had a constrained style although the new generation is becoming more active. They don’t seem to be optimistic in every single issue. They are ready to build a relationship where the other party is friendly and attentive but does not get extremely private and close or show the willingness to know the others business. The British are fairly haughty at work. They strongly believe in sense of privacy. Though, as stated by Kevin Gore (2007, 59), “that the further north you go, the friendlier they are and the more readily they accept strangers”.

Traditionally the British have not like theoretical thinking, but have preferred tradition, precedent, and common sense. Unlike Italians, they like the useful and practical rather than being creative and innovative. One can say that they even avoid something new in

business: new approach to work or completely different method of thinking. It comes from the fact that they are an island nation hence consumer choices have been always limited. So it has been more challenging to launch and distribute new product/service. British people are used to believe that choices should be limited. They feel more comfortable when they know what is expected. They are the representatives on a nation of fixed habits and dislike offhand because of a fear of something unknown. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 12)

These people prefer an objective, consequential, and calm approach in discussions and do not like emotiveness and high- pressure or hard – sell methods. The British tend toward accustomed attitude. They are not initiators in improvising or taking risks. Being very pragmatic which can sometimes lead them to become cynical and skeptical is a common behavior. Moreover, they don't tend to be an optimistic people. Obstacles are often seen as measure and they have a great fear of showing ignorance. It can be hard to get them to try something new. However, under conditions of truly great adversity, they respond well. (Peggy Kenna, 1995,15)

The public in general tends to believe that British people often avoid conclusive statements. A polite request in business may be an appeal or a way of telling co-workers to redo/rewrite some tasks. When someone says “sorry” it can mean anything from an apology to expressing displeasure or exasperation.

Unlike Italians, they also avoid direct confrontation and argument. The British convey displeasure very ably. Statements such as “Have you really done this?” or “I am so frustrated that....” indicate that they disapprove of your way of doing business. If the senior manager comments subordinate's paper work “it is ok”, it can mean a lot from “I like it! Well done!” to “well, it is at least passably”. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 17)

Let us also define what kind of people Italians are in business and how they communicate. Italians would like to have a business with people who present their ideas clearly, logically and who are very confident. Usually Italians come to a common idea through arguing. It can easily confuse a speaker and get him/her off the track. It generates a strong emotional impact on the meeting.

While the British show less emotiveness, Italians like to show their esprit, sense of humor and good spirits. This is crucial for communication after business meeting. Let us draw the attention that for Italian people socializing after business is vital to future success. One can compare Italians' speech with an actor speech/performance on the stage. They can tell you “no” in so charming way, that you do not realize that they refuse your ideas or offers. For Italian people it is important to have a meal and some drinks before the

negotiation or business meeting when they talk about their families with pride. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 14)

One should keep his/her wits about Italian words. Their words seldom mean what they really seem to mean. You should activate the ability “read between the lines”. Crucial thing is to ensure that Italians understand any agreement the same way you do. And what is more important is the understanding of consequences of non-performance. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 14)

If there is a stressful negotiation Italians usually become loud and emotional. They may show disappointment if conclusions, which they planned to see, are not made. These people tend to be unsettled and gesticulate wildly. To unprepared negotiators Italians may behave like the pot is already boiled over, but in reality they probably having an effective conversation.

2.3 Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication including body language, eye contact, touch and body distance plays an enormous role in the success (or failure) of a meeting.

Anthropologists suppose that speech developed to make body language more obvious, and that as the former became more sophisticated, and gestures became less necessary. But one should admit that it is not that simple as it sounds. In spite of the incredible precocity, “delicacy” and flexibility of speech, it seems that some people still rely basically on body language to convey what they really mean, especially where intense feelings are concerned. Italians definitely are such people (Richard Lewis, 2006, 158).

But let us first of all go through all types of non-verbal communication and only after that define which ones are common in Italy and Britain.

1. Body language (kinesics) includes body movements, position and facial expression as well as dress.
2. Eye contact (oculistics). The length of time period to look into someone’s eyes can be different from culture to culture. In some cultures such gesture can be counted as a sign of honesty and interest, whereas in others this can be a sign of disrespect or sexual connotation.
3. Body distance (proxemics) or in other words personal space. The accepted distance between one person to another can vary from country to country. For instance, Italian people can stay very close to each other and it is absolutely normal while standing too close to British man can cause huge embarrassment.
4. Paralanguage. It is not only about words, which we use in communication, but also the speed of speech and tone of it. As stated by Robert Gibson (2010, 31), “What

is one culture sounds like a hysterical argument, in another would be considered to be the norm for a reasonable discussions”.

5. Touch can also vary from country to country. Even in business world there are large variations.

2.3.1 Gesture in Great Britain and Italy

Starting from Italy we are going to observe which gestures are acceptable among Italians.

Non - verbal gestures are a common part of the Italians communication style. They are very demonstrative when talking. And the format of conversation, whether it is formal at work or informal at home, does not matter. They like lots of physical contacts. Italians tend to use close physical distance, talk loudly and poke the other person on the shoulder when conversing. An up-and-down nod of the head (chin placed high) and the eyes closed means “no”. One should take great care using gestures in Italy; they can mean something other than what one intends. In Italy it is not considered rude to push or shove slightly in crowded public places. Italian male friends often hug as a sign of close friendship. And usually they kiss cheeks while greeting a person they know (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 43). So, all types of non – verbal communication should be analyzed carefully when one deals with Italians.

Now let us observe how British people perform non – verbal communication. The British use hand gestures very poorly, even during presentations. They also use few facial expressions. It is the sign of impoliteness when one shows his/her anger, frustration, incredulity or amazement. There is no place for emotions in conversations with British people. Rude sign is to keep hands into pockets while speaking. Physical touching to draw someone’s attention on something is not appropriate action to do. The British are very sensitive to privacy. They do appreciate their own private space and do not seem like they are ready to see guests there. The “V” for victory sign is only done with the palm facing outward; otherwise it is an obscene gesture. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 40)

3. Leadership status

Here are the consideration of leadership status components and the performance of them within Italian and British companies by taking some factors such as leading performance, level of trust, teambuilding, executing and some others.

3.1 Decision making in Great Britain and Italy

Cultural background of decision makers plays role in manner of making decisions, time period and how final decisions are.

One of the main features of successful business is an ability of making decisions. Let us observe how both Italian and British companies perform it. Starting with Italians, we can state that finding a decision maker can be difficult. Because a lot is built on personal relationships at higher level of management. Moreover, a decision maker may not be a part of the organizational structure. Being a leader in Italian environment means being responsible for control and implementation. Decision making and planning usually go separately from the list of responsibilities of the leader. Position of a decision maker can be even remote one, though must approve any final decision/agreement. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 17) Executives tend to be autocratic and domineering in Italians companies. On one hand this structure is workable and good for the companies' success but on the other we can observe that there is not much feedback between superior members (leaders, executives, decision makers) and inferior ones (subordinates), even at management level. It may happen that executive has subjective decisions based on their own opinion and impressions rather than on collecting facts and opinions among their managers (workers). We can observe such situation in smaller and mid-sized companies.

In British companies, the situation is a bit different and complicated. It comes from the idea that changes happen very seldom and with biased attitude in British society as well as in British business. It comes from the experience of taking risks. So, it can take a long time to come to a decision. Decision-making is "an exclusive privilege" of senior management, which is the most unwanted duty among others. British prefer to avoid taking the initiative. Leader's job is to build consent and set up good relationships between management and workers. Instructions are usually dissembled as demanding requests. British do not like taking control and lead (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 16). They tend to be cautious and discreet about making any decisions at work. Fear of a failure or loss of a management job is a measure personal stigma. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 17) It confirms the

idea that many British avoid taking control and leading because of high level of responsibility.

3.2 Trust at work

To ensure an easy - running team based on reciprocal trust, it is perhaps best to follow and implement a set of basic trust-building strategies, which Richard D. Lewis offers in his book "When cultures collide":

- Set clear, transparent aims and goals
- Prepare clear instructions
- Communicate them effectively
- Insist on an information-sharing policy
- Provide practical, user-friendly tools
- Set up time-efficient processes
- Recognize contributions
- Back up the "team"
- Act on the team's recommendations
- Work toward transparency (Richard Lewis, 2006,141-142)

And now let us concentrate on the fact how these two nationalities deal with trust at work and how deeply they share the information and details of companies' papers with the parties. Starting with Italians, it is crucial for them to find a balance/ compromise between two or more parties. To achieve double win situation (where each party has its own benefits) is important. As we already discovered that Italians tend to ignore rules and some regulations, there are some principles, which as Italians think are just and useful such as trust.

As Nasir "Nas" Jones, a world-wide artist, says, " Get it right, you only have one first chance to make one first impression that lasts a lifetime". This statement fits Italians' state of mind about trust. To show your high status at work, you need to gain trust of your coworkers over time.

One of the essential features, which are obligatory in order to do business with this hot emotional nation, is gaining the trust. By saying, "gaining the trust," we mean building a personal relationship, which of course takes time. Italians are open to do business with people they know well. They can place their trust on some individuals, which means that a lot depends on the respect of business colleagues.

So, on one hand Italians are ready to exchange information flow and let new people enter into circle trust but on the other, it is not an easy task to become a member whom Italians can rely on. Writer and professor Francis Fukuyama shares out all types of societies into low-trust and high-trust societies. Let us have a look on Figure 2 which shows several cultures divided into these two categories and plus middle stage.



Figure 2 Low and high trust countries

Members of high-trust societies normally have a ready trust for their compatriots and business colleagues. While members of low-trust cultural groups are initially suspicious of fellow nationals—they are often multi-actives or reactive who have a more flexible adherence to rules, regulations and laws. (Francis Fukuyama, 1996, 70)

According to Fukuyama's distribution, British society is a middle trust nation. Information is distributed within a company but the British tend to be very reticent about business matters with outsiders. Hence, becoming members within "company's circle of trust" is crucial. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 18)

Coming back to Italians, we should keep in mind that primary trust goes to the family. Here are some results from online analysis of world values survey. Figure 3 shows the percentage of trust in Great Britain and Italy.

	TOTAL	Country/Region	
		Italy	United Kingdom
Most people can be trusted	28.7%	27.5%	30.0%
Need to be very careful	67.5%	66.7%	68.3%
No answer	1.5%	2.8%	0.2%
Don't know	2.3%	3.1%	1.5%

Figure 3 Level of trust in Italy and Great Britain

From this table we can see that both nations have nearly the same percentage of trusting people (27,5% and 30%). One should draw the attention on the fact that very high percentage in both cases goes to the section “need to be very careful” (66,7% and 68,3%). This supports Francis Fukuyama's concept as well as Peggy Kenna's. One needs to gain the trust in both countries and only after that British and Italians can trust that person. (Online Data Analysis World Value Survey 2005)

3.3 Teambuilding

“Teambuilding is philosophy of job design in which employees are viewed as members of interdependent teams instead of as individual workers” (English business dictionary).

Team building at workplace helps to encourage and open better communication between employees themselves as well as between employees and the higher management. It contributes a lot in improving professional relations, co-operation, and this is reflected in the quality of work done. Team building in the workplace significantly brings more sense and reasons to employee to be motivated and build trust among colleagues, thus ensuring better productivity of work. Building a team, a common unit and improving work between its members is one of the important goals to be achieved on the way to success. Activities directed at team building can naturally play a part in the success of a short – term or even long-term goals.

Below one can find some information how Italians and British business people treat teambuilding at workplaces.

On one hand one can say that being passive in leadership can be counted as a drawback in doing business among British, but on the other hand feeling equal and creating a good teambuilding environment can be seen as an advantage of successful work. That is why the British like teamwork. They want and need the agreement of a team behind them. But British nation has also some features from individualistic type of society as well. That is why we can observe a strong feeling of an individual liability in implementation of work.

When something goes wrong, workers start to identify whose fault it was. A strong sense of fair play always takes place in British business. (Peggy Kenna 1995, 17). The performance of these people at work from teambuilding point of view is worth to be encouraged but still there is plenty space to improve and grow in this field.

Controversial perception arises about Italians performing teamwork. Type of their society is collectivistic, which proves existence of good teambuilding factors at work. But vivid characteristic peculiarities of native Italians can be shown through the initiative to deal with work individually. Sometimes it is important to show one's own ability to deal with issues without help of colleagues even when it not is required

4. Organizational structure

When it comes to organizational structure one should notice that these two nations have very clear and strong top down hierarchy. Business connections or as some people call it “network” have a solid influential impact on one’s business career.

As we previously defined boards of directors tend to be the principal decision – making units. For both nations it is more valuable to have experience and character rather than science and skill. Let us consider some pros and cons of it. On one hand, higher- level executives still usually have a good educational and social background. Lower – and middle – level managers are more likely to have come up through the ranks. While on the other, there is a serious shortage of professionally educated managers. Hence all levels of management have been sent to specific courses on decision-making.

Finally, it would not be fair not to mention the importance of hierarchy from the authoritarian point of view. The hierarchy of authority in a company or an organization is arranged to profit the company as a whole and its employees. The company is supposed to develop and expand with the strength of a competent managerial staff, and workers look to management to provide career improvement.

A hierarchy is also a good way of reaching managerial integrity. For instance, when one becomes a manager, he/she has to prove to be competent; otherwise he/she will face with employee turnover. As George N. Root states, “the hierarchy of authority in an organization is important to the sustained success of the company”. (Business models and organizational structure, 2015)

5. Workflow planning

Many people think that planning and making some business arrangements in advance are the keys to building successful business relationships, whereas others do not consider these segments as the key ones.

Lisa McQuerry (Business Planning Process, 2012) defines management planning as the following, "Management planning is the process of assessing an organization's goals and creating a realistic, detailed plan of action for meeting those goals". Indeed, planning is an important strategy tool for any company and it takes into consideration short as well as long-term strategies for reaching corporate goals. And the essential steps in this process comprises organizing and setting up so called road map that define every single task that the organization or the company has to accomplish to meet its overall objectives. There are some basic steps which one should follow to create management plan. First of all, establishing goals is necessary action. Secondly, identifying resources and establishing goal related tasks. Thirdly, prioritizing goals/tasks and creating timeline. And finally, establishing evaluation method. It is important to draw the attention on the last step. A planning process should also include the evaluation system, which will help to identify the level of performance comparing with set objectives. (Business Planning Process, 2012)

Let us discover how British and Italian companies perform their planning within organizations. The British engage in much national economic planning, but at the company level planning can be shaky and uncertain. They prefer practicality to theory and opportunism over planning. Moreover, final decisions tend to be made at the top. And by cause of nonstop changing economic and political situation, their attitude is mostly short term. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 20)

One of the most striking reasons of such undetermined planning performance is that typically the British are not risk takers. They are accustomed to look at past performance as a guide rather than look at accounting projections on the success of new ways and act manners. As Lisa McQuerry notices in her article "The Basic Steps in the management Planning Process", any managerial planning within an organization is aim to maintain both short and long term goals. One cannot deny that British companies also pay attention on long-term goals but from another perspective. They are declined to be interested in any change, originality, or innovation than in continuity, stability and durability. The British can have the position that it is better not to try something new so you don't risk failure. Good but new ideas may not always get a hearing on the meetings. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 21) In general, we can conclude that British have strong antipathy to work within a rational and systematic framework; they prefer to go slow, get by, and manage somehow.

While British people are trying to be punctual and prepare documents and presentations in advance, Italians rarely have a strategic plan, which is written and approved by senior managers beforehand. Here we observe a phenomenon of Italian charisma and bravery in any business performance. One can say: “absence of any rational management plan may bring to innumerable problems for future of the company”. But not for these people.

Italian businessmen prefer to identify and accomplish on spot without waiting and arranging an in-depth analysis. So, improvised management decisions are usually made without much preparation or even research. And good thing about improvisation is that such style of doing business gives them much freedom, which makes them be more creative and viable.

It is undeniable that Italians are always looking for new ways of doing business such as avoiding the existing rules and creating a new approach. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 22) One can say that it makes them appear to be pretty chaotic and disorganized at times.

Furthermore we should not forget that, one needs to gain Italians' respect in order to cooperate with. Indeed, a contractual relationship, which is a common thing in many European and not only countries, is not enough. Italians are ready to invest their time and commitment only after building relationships based on honor in which every single party visibly profits. It is very clear from these observations that they can be highly competitive and argumentative if the other party does not set the very type of relationships.

6. Punctuality

Being late for a date or a holiday party might be somehow acceptable, but it is absolutely not a good manner for the workplace. Moreover, punctuality is peculiarly important if the employment includes shift or teamwork. Punctuality reassures an employer that the workers take their jobs seriously and work attentively to meet customer demands as well as corporate objectives.

It is a sign of a high professionalism. Being punctual helps to set up a good reputation as a consistent and reliable organization on the worldwide market. (Career and higher education. Work life, 2014)

British people are very strict when it comes to punctuality. In Britain people make a great effort to arrive on time, so it is considered impolite to be late, even with by few minutes. (Cultural and social etiquette in the United Kingdom, 2013)

One should keep in mind that punctuality is one of the main features of British people and it goes the same with work life. While Italians see time fairly fluid. For instance, if the meeting is running over it is impolite and senseless to disrupt it. Standing by the schedule is uncommon in Italy and vice versa in Great Britain. Hence, dealing with Italians, it is advisable to make appointments well in advance.

Punctuality is not a priority for Italians. Be patient and be prepared for some delay when one starts working with a new Italian partner. In other words, it is advisable not to take a small delay as a sign of lack of respect. (Richard D. Lewis, 2006, 207)

7. Business meetings

Despite the flow of internal e-mails and calls, meetings are still one of the most effective ways where workers can share the information, get some feedback, collaborate and make important decisions for their organizations. Meetings are constant activities since they are an important tool for managers to arrange consents.

7.1 Beginning of the meeting

Meetings do not start one and the same way. They differ from country to country. Some of them are opened officially right after arriving of all members, while other begin with small chitchat and coffee. Figure 4 gives some examples of different kinds of starts in several different countries.

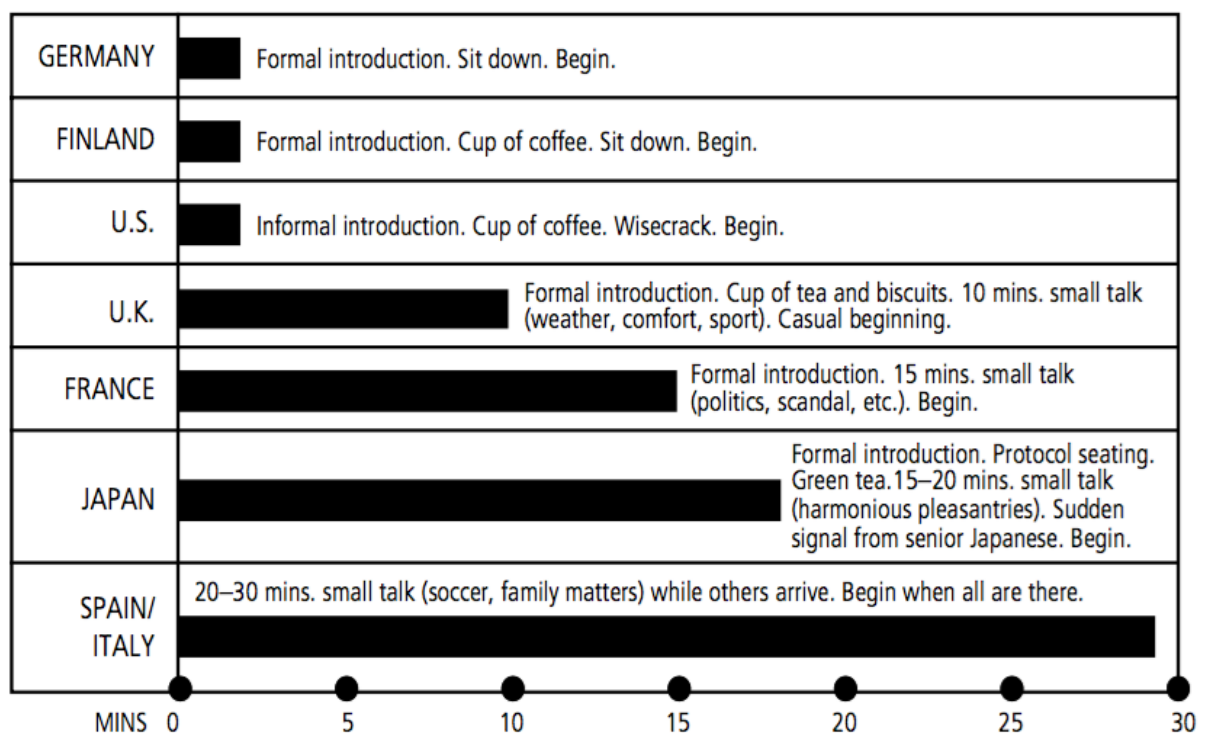


Figure 4 Beginning a meeting

From this chart we can see that British businesspeople spend approximately ten minutes to begin the meeting. First of all they introduce themselves to others, have a cup of traditional British tea with some sweets and keep up a small conversation about the weather (traditional British topic) or sport. After that they feel comfortable to begin the meeting officially and go through agenda.

The chart shows that Italian style differs a lot from British one. One should be very patient having a meeting with Italians. During half an hour after appointed time for the meeting, people will arrive. So the meeting will start at least 30 minutes later or even more! The chairman will wait until last person arrives and only after that the meeting can start. During 30 minutes, businesspeople talk a lot to build relationships with each other by sharing news about their families, life, sport etc. If for the British a small talk before a meeting is an indicator of politeness, then for Italians it is a good possibility to exchange emotions and share information. It is vital for them, so there is a big probability of forthcoming lively and loud discussions before the official meeting starts.

7.2 Meetings in Great Britain and Italy

As mentioned above, no special pre meeting arrangements (except a cup of tea and a small chat) are needed for the British, so they get down to business quickly and prefer to have an agenda. During the meeting, every participant can express his/her own opinion about this or that question and all points of view are taken into consideration. But seniority gives extra weight. Building passive consensus is very important. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 26)

Almost all decisions are constituted, discussed, accepted, confirmed, communicated and fulfilled at a meeting. A meeting considers failed if there is no concrete results at the end of it.

Let us observe how Italians are used to lead and participate on meetings. First and formal purpose of meetings is to estimate the mood of others and idea supporters by talking about the problems. Therefore, side meetings aren't uncommon in Italy. Usually negotiators see the meetings as a chance to show their expressiveness, performance, and their status at work place and to identify how far they can influence the final decision. And the weight given to an idea may be resolved by the importance of the person at work offering it. The hierarchy at work may be more important than the idea. Italians also tend to be vague from time to time as a negotiating tactic for indicating a sense of urgency that plays into their hands. Perhaps we should point out the fact that participants mostly want to get a general idea of what it is going on and where things are going whereas Italians are taking the floor and perform, showing their charismatic negotiation and presentation skills. From this paragraph we can conclude that Italian meetings have a tendency to be unstructured and informal. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 26)

7.3 Presentations

There is not any commonly confirmed type of presentation, which can be used in every country on every meeting. The style and type of presentation will depend on several factors, those include not only cultural background of the speaker and nationalities of the audience, but also corporate and professional culture. There are different aims and structures of presentations depending on the topic of it. For instance, sales presentation is different from technical one presenting by the engineer. Some presentations focus more on the presenting information (it can be statistics, some charts, results of a questionnaire) while others focus on assuring the audience. (Robert Gibson, 2010,71)

A Belgian professor in Business Communication writes about presentation style:

A presentation should be a logical progression, based on large philosophical or ideological ideas. The importance of what is being said – the content – lies in the way it is presented: one's objective is not to be clear and simple, but to be creative and provoking, to make the audience think and reason. (Claes, M. – T., in Bennett et al. 1998: 126-127)

There are substantial differences between monochronic and polychronic presentations as well as in low and high content cultures. Figure 5 shows some differences.

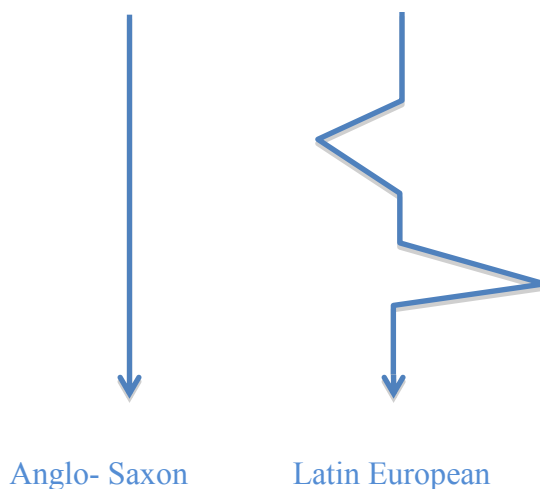


Figure 5 Structures of a presentation (Claes, 2000)

Let us observe the left part of the Figure 5. British people who are descendants of Anglo – Saxons have a static orientation of presentations. Their presentations are matter – of – fact, audience – oriented and well structured. The speaker does not involve his/her personality while presenting. Mode of reasoning is direct, which involves rationality, centered confrontation and practical empiricism. And the other part of the Figure 5 shows the implementation of presentations among Latin European countries (in our case we will take Italy as the representative of Latin European countries/nations). The orientation of

presentations is convincing and mobile. Unlike British style, presentations are speaker – oriented. The speaker uses his/her own intuition, often is involved and passionate about the topic, thus the structure of presentations is loose. Mode of reasoning is agreement – centered and indirect which includes intuitiveness as well as harmony.

7.3.1 Manner of doing presentations in Great Britain and Italy

Presentation should be matter – of – fact, complete in technical or marketing detail, and understated. They should not be excessively demonstrative, enthusiastic, or vigorous. Brevity is the soul of wit. So it is best not to do most of the talking and to confine from using phrases such as “bottom line”, “As Soon As Possible”, etc. the British probably take some time to come to a common decision, so they apparently will not give any feedback right after presentation. They like to be provided with some material, which left behind to look at after meeting. British executives will pay attention to details and will want to analyze information thoroughly. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 28)

It is a common knowledge that presentation is a part of a meeting. Though formal presentations are not so common in Italian companies. Style defines the quality of a presentation. A polished and elegant presentation is very appreciated. Italians are also used to interrupting frequently. Emotional outbursts are accepted as commonplace business tactics in Italy. This can sometimes sound dictatorial and manipulative to foreigners. Italian businessmen have few formal rules of debate so meetings can seem like “free for all”.

7.4 Negotiations

Different cultures have different views on what should be the manager’s roles; hence every single culture has its own approach to negotiations. As Robert Gibson states, “Negotiation can be defined as the process of bargaining between two or more parties to reach a solution that is acceptable to all parties”(2010, 60).

7.4.1 Types of negotiations

Casse and Deol in their book called “Managing intercultural negotiations” (1985) classify three types of negotiations. They are negotiations based on compromise, negotiations based on synthesis (when all possible ideas are taken into account) and negotiations based on synergy (when the final result is greater than the sum of the parts). Let us discover a bit deeper pros and cons of each type and further examine which approach do British businessmen use and which approach do Italians confine.

1. Negotiations based on compromise can overcome problems and proceed faster. That is a great advantage of this type of negotiations. But every medal has its reverse. And the reverse here is the fact that the parties, which gave up something, may get frustrated. As an output it can lead to a lack of commitment on the final decision.
2. Negotiations based on synthesis try to combine all the ideas in the final decision. It brings good commitment and motivation. But on the other hand it might happen that some irrelevant ideas are included in the decision, which make the final agreement weak.
3. Negotiations based on synergy. It is a “win - win” situation and each party is satisfied. But such agreement requires lots of time, commitment and flexibility.
(Casse and Deol, 1985, 41)

7.4.2 Structure of negotiations

Negotiation is the process, which has several stages. And each stage can be influenced by different cultural factors. There are commonly identified stages:

- Relationship building
- Agreeing procedure
- Exchanging information
- Questioning
- Options
- Bidding
- Bargaining
- Settling and Concluding

(Robert Gibson, 2010,61)

Of course these parts of the process may come in different order or may not occur at all. Some cultures, such as Italian, surely will spend time on building relationships with their partners before coming to business, while others get down to business straight away, such as British. In some cultures there will be time schedule some each stage, which in others go on spot without setting time limits. More information will be exchanged in low- context cultures than in opposite ones. Not in every culture all members of meeting have power to make a decision. Even the conception of “final agreement” is understood differently in different cultures. For instance British prefer to put down all agreed points, sign the papers and make everything formal, while for Italians, oral agreement is enough to start to implement it. (Robert Gibson, 2010, 62)

7.4.3 Negotiations in Great Britain and Italy

Negotiations as well as presentations are the parts of business life. Some nations use special negotiating technics, some of them do everything on spot, other rely on their charisma like Italians do, and the rest use technics based on psychology of human behavior.

Let us define the manner of negotiations among British and Italian companies.

British function under a burden of contrary economic and political inquires likewise an abundance of restrictions and pressures coming from state unions. But they used to be tough, even brutal, negotiators. They remain solid at the bargaining table. Bargaining is not a fact from the daily routine for the British. While bargaining, it is best to leave some space for giving ground. In other words, to backtrack if the other party offers not so lucrative conditions of the bargain. British themselves never offer more than they can implement. They do not appreciate when the other party is trying to make them to sign an agreement immediately on the meeting. Instancy is the worst thing to show to British people on the meeting especially on the negotiations. British prefer to pay attention to formalities and protocol. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 28)

The tempo of negotiations is fairly fast but definitely slower in case of Italians. The British do not tend to bargain much, unless there is not any other option, but they do like to have official concessions. High pressures tactics are considered are negative. And if the other party shows its punctuality and patience, it can play into British' hands.

British negotiators do not think that exertion of energy will bring any results. Take-it-or-leave-it attitude fully describes their negotiating manner. They stick to formal and diplomatic approach.

To provide British people with answers on possible questions beforehand, gives a good chance for success. They treat skin – deep those people who came on negotiations with the translator. They assume everyone speaks English, as it is an international language. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 28)

British negotiators increasingly come from a technical background. Younger decision makers with skills of modern management trainings are much more active and aggressive than older negotiators. And this tendency brings only benefits to this nation. The results are more beneficial than it was before. Such negotiators never spend their time for building relationships with the other party before the meetings. They immediately get right down to business.

Unlike Italians, British are practical and prefer to discuss all possible details and the ways of implementation a proposal in term of long lasting picture. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 29)
One should keep in mind that the British never lay their cards on the table. They are not always direct and open. They do not like to say “no” or to give a negative answer. That is why they usually paraphrase negative marks into tentative sounding language. And also it is very important for them to provide all information in the written form so the person can have a look privately.

Any negotiation should end with an oral conclusion and handshake. They take such actions very seriously. Written agreement with details, due dates, signatures and stamps comes later.

So, British feel comfortable with the negotiations based on synthesis as well as negotiations based on compromise.

And now let us speak about Italians in negotiations.

Italian workers do not like detailed agreements and contracts with lots of rules and appendixes. They may discuss and agree some details of the document verbally (aurally) and may not include in written document based on agreements from the meetings. But this fact does not say that they play unfair. It is impossible not to mention the fact that Italians like to haggle. They take it as a must. They are less concerned about delivery and performance, although one should notice their skillfulness is generally high.

Negotiations should ideally be between decision makers of equivalent rank. Middle- level workers are used for introductory negotiations. The higher you are in the company’s hierarchy the later you enter the negotiation process in order to control and stress the importance of the business transaction. (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 27)

Management often accepts medium plans and strategies that are supposed to be modified several times or improved to the current situation. That is why sudden changes during negotiations are common things. One should be ready for such change of direction during the negotiations. (Business meeting etiquette, 2015)

A firm handshake with a smile is an absolute gesture of agreed conclusion. One should be ready to get a “cheek kiss” from Italian partners. It is a common thing in Italy and Italians do not hesitate to act like at home anywhere with anybody. Italians are aimed to get “win - win” results due to their resolute confidence.

8. Country comparison based on Hofstede's 6 cultural dimensions

To analyze the cultural diversity, Hofstede (1996) proposed six cultural dimensions to estimate the values, which characterize certain patterns. The six dimensions in Hofstede's study are power distance, collectivism versus individualism, masculinity and femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence versus restraint.

Let us define what do all six dimensions mean:

Power Distance

This dimension shows the facts that people are not equal in societies. It signifies the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst people. Power Distance is defined as the measure to which the less powerful members of organizations within one country anticipate and accept that power is distributed unequally (Michael Minkov, 2013, 10).

Individualism

The basic question addressed by this type of dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It defines whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We".

For instance, in Individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only (Finland, Sweden). In contrast, collectivist societies people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty (Armenia, Georgia).

Masculinity

A high score (Masculine) on this type of dimension points out that the society will be driven by success, competition and achievement, with success being defined by the winner / best in sphere. Such value system starts in school and continues throughout organizational behaviour.

A low score (Feminine) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A Feminine society is one where quality of life is the index of success and standing out from the crowd is not remarkable. The fundamental issue here is what makes people be motivated, whether to desire of being the best (Masculine) or liking what you do (Feminine) (Michael Minkov, 2013, 10-11).

Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension has to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should people try to control the future or just let it happen? This uncertainty brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety differently. The degree to which people of one and the same culture feel threatened by

ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs is reflected in the score on Uncertainty Avoidance (Michael Minkov, 2013, 11).

Long Term Orientation

This dimension describes how every single society has to retain links with its own past meanwhile treating with the challenges of both the present and future. Societies, which score low on this dimension, prefer to endorse time-honoured traditions while viewing societal change with shade of distrust. The other cultures, which scores high, on the other hand, have a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and endeavour in education as a way to be prepared for the future (Michael Minkov, 2013, 12).

Indulgence

One issue that resists humanity, now and in the past, is the degree to which children are socialized. One cannot be “a human” without socialization. This dimension is defined as the extent to which people try to control their wishes and impulses, which is based on the way they were raised. Weak control is called “Indulgence” while strong one is called “Restraint”. Cultures can, therefore, be described as Indulgent or Restrained (Michael Minkov, 2013, 12).

8.1 Great Britain and Italy comparison based on Hofstede’s 6 cultural dimensions

In this subchapter we are going to analyze these two societies based on Hofstede’s dimensions. And moreover how these scores result on business life and performance. There is a Figure 6 below, which shows Great Britain and Italy cultural comparison.

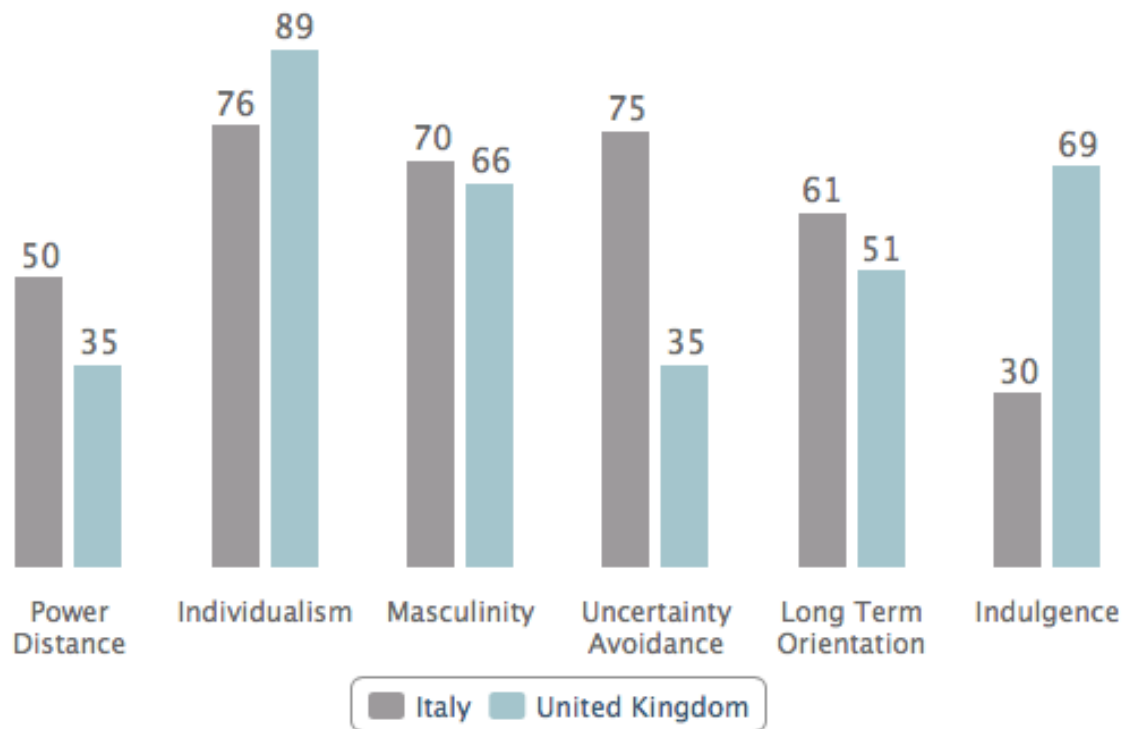


Figure 6 Cultural comparisons by Hofstede's dimensions

Power Distance

British score in this dimension is 35, which is fairly low. British people are trying to have equal rights and opportunities among all citizens, which is a positive aspect of this society. Inequalities should be minimized. Keep in mind that research shows this index lower among the higher class in Britain than among the lower classes (for instance workers). 35 score at first seems irreconcilable with the well established and historical British class system and its displays one of the immanent tensions in the British society – on one hand it is an importance of rank when one was born and the idea that anyone can travel how far he/she wants regardless from where that person was born on the other. A sense of fair play drives a belief that everyone should be treated equally.

With a score of 50, Italy (mainly Northern part) prefers equality and a decentralization of power at work and decision-making. Control and oversight is usually disliked among the younger generation, who is by the way demonstrate precedence for teamwork and an open management style, which includes lots of discussions and consideration with opinions of all group members.

If we go ahead a bit and have a look on the second dimension, which is called individualism vs. collectivism, we can see that even the high score on individualism emphasizes the antipathy of being controlled and told what to do.

Individualism

Generally in Individualist societies people tend to look after themselves first and their direct family members only. While in collectivist societies people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

Score of 89 in Great Britain is a very high level if we take into consideration the fact that any human being cannot survive without society and we are sociable beings. British people are extremely individualists and private people. From the childhood, parents are teaching their infants to have an independent opinion, to define their own purpose in life and how they can become useful members of society by bringing unique contribution. Parents teach that the key to happiness lies in the fundamental concept of personal fulfillment.

Italy has the score of 76 here, which is lower than in Britain. The concept of individualist culture, ("me" centered culture), occurs especially in the big and rich cities where people can feel alone even in the middle of a big and busy crowd. So family and friends creates controversial associations to this feeling. Let us draw the attention on the word "friend" which has different meaning in business life: someone that you know and can be useful for introducing you to the important or powerful people.

To conclude, for Italians having their own personal ideas and objectives in life is very motivating and the route to happiness lies through personal fulfillment as in British societies. But this conclusion varies from North region of Italy to South. People tend to be more collectivists in South.

Masculinity

Britain has score of 66, which says that this society is a masculine one – highly success oriented and driven. For one's information, there is a fine line between observing masculine society and specific features of this culture. And a key aspect of confusion lies in the apparent contradiction between the British culture of modesty and understatement, which is at odds with the basic success driven value system in the culture. As mentioned by Peggy Kenna, "Critical to understanding the British is being able to "read between the lines": what is said is not always what is meant"(1995, 16). In comparison to feminine cultures such as Finland (with 35 score), people in Great Britain as well as in Italy live in order to work and have clear performance ambitions.

Italy is also a masculine society with the score of 70 – highly success oriented and driven too. Children are taught from an early age that competition (healthy mental competition

without any malice and envy) is good and to be a winner is important in one's life. Italians define someone's success by seeing expensive cars, classy mentions, yachts and travels to exotic countries. All these life aspects are very important to have and show. And as the working environment is the place where every Italian can reach his/her success, competition among colleagues for making a career can be very strong.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Unlike Peggy Kenna explains in her book "Business in Great Britain" saying that British people try to perform due to their past experience in order not to have an unexpected results, events, conclusions etc., surprisingly British society has fairly low score (35) on uncertainty avoidance. This means that as a single nation they are quite happy not to know what the day brings and they are happy to 'make it up as they go along' changing plans as new information comes into present reality. As a low uncertainty avoidance score country the British are comfortable in uncertain and double situations - the term 'muddling through' suits to the British way of explaining this. There are not too many rules in British society, but those that are there are stuck to (for instance British love of queuing, which is a good example of fair play).

In work terms such low score in this dimension shows on the final goal, which is set up while the process of reaching it still remains flexible to perform differently. Planning horizons will also be much shorter. More important in the combination of a pretty high individualist and so-called nosey nation is a high level of creativity and strong necessity for innovations. What is new and different might be attractive.

Comparing with British society, Italian has obviously very high score on uncertainty avoidance. This says that as a nation Italians are not comfortable in ambiguous, indefinite and uncertain situations. Formality in this society is important. Obvious contradiction between all norms, rules and procedures and the fact that Italians don't always comply with them might be surprising fact for any people from different countries. Peggy Kenna has the same opinion about it. But let us keep in our minds that Italy is a very bureaucratic country and one should be able to identify the importance of one set of rules and norms and the others, which can be sometimes neglected and ignored. In work terms high uncertainty avoidance results in large amounts of detailed planning. Such approach (where the planning process can be flexible to changing environment) can be very stressful for Italians.

The unification of two dimensions (high masculinity and high uncertainty avoidance) can make life very difficult and stressful. Very often Italians need some time to release during working days. Enjoying a long meal with family members or frequent coffee breaks (which

are very popular in Scandinavian countries) can be moment when they can completely relax and forget for a moment about daily routines. Due to high score in this dimension Italians are passionate and emotive people. Sometimes emotions are so strong that individuals cannot keep them inside and must express them to others, especially with the use of body language (or any other ways of non-verbal communication).

Long Term Orientation

With an intermediate score of 51 in this dimension, a dominant preference in British culture cannot be determined at all. But let us consider from the following point of view: some people in this society are long term oriented while the others prefer set up short term goals and only after reaching them, they continue setting up new goals. In business life a lot depends on the style of performing. There are some big British corporations, which feel confident on British market. Such organizations tend to be long term oriented while small companies usually prefer to have short-term goals in order to have a guarantee of not losing the assets.

Italy has the score of 61 on this dimension, which says that Italians people are pragmatic. If the society is pragmatic oriented, it means that people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show a capacity to adapt traditions easily to changed conditions, a strong tendency to save and invest, frugality, and perseverance in achieving results.

Indulgence

A high score of 69 defines that the British culture is one that is classified as indulgent. People in societies classified by a high score in indulgence usually exponent alacrity to realize their impulses and wishes with regard to enjoying life and having fun. They have a positive attitude and a tendency to optimism. Additionally, they place high degree of importance on leisure time, act as they please and spend money as they wish.

A low score of 30 defines that Italian culture is one of what we call restraint. Societies with a low score in this dimension have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. Unlike indulgent societies, restrained ones do not put much effort on leisure time and control the satisfaction of their desires. People with such orientation have the reception that their daily deeds and actions are restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong.

9. Trompenaars' cultural dimensions

Dutch writer in the sphere of cross- cultural communication Fons Trompenaars and British management philosopher Charles Hampden-Turner identified the seven dimensions of culture. In 1997 their model was first published in book called, "Riding the Waves of Culture".

During long ten years Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner had been developing the model by researching the preferences and values of people in many different cultures around the world. One part of this research included questionnaires of more than 46,000 managers in 40 countries.

They found that people from different cultures aren't just haphazardly different from one another; they differ in very concrete, moreover predictable, ways. It comes from the idea that each culture has its own way of thinking, its own values and beliefs, and different preferences placed on a variety of different aspects (Trompenaars, F. & Hampden, 2007, 37).

Two authors concluded that what distinguishes people from one culture compared with another is where these preferences fall in one of the following seven dimensions:

1. Universalism versus particularism (What is important – relationships or rules?)
2. Individualism versus communitarianism (Do we function as individuals or as a group?)
3. Specific versus diffuse (Do we handle our relationships in specific and predefined ways, or do we see our relationships as changing and related to contextual settings?)
4. Neutral versus emotional (Do we hide our emotions and feelings or show them?)
5. Achievement versus ascription (Do we need to prove and receive status or the status given to us?)
6. Sequential time versus synchronous time (Do we do things one at a time or several things one and the same time?)
7. Internal direction versus outer direction (Do we believe that we are able to change the environment or the environment changes us?)

One can use Trompenaars model to understand people from different cultural backgrounds better, so that one can avert some misunderstandings and have a better working relationship with them. This is especially useful if you do business with people from different countries, religions, etc. (Luthans, Fred; Doh, Jonathan P., 2012, 123-125).

9.1 Great Britain and Italy comparison based on Trompenaars' dimensions

Let us identify what type of cultures are British and Italian due to Trompenaars dimensions.

Universalism vs. Particularism

Universalism is the belief that ideas and practices can be practiced everywhere without variation, while particularism is the belief that circumstances direct how ideas and practices should be applied.

When companies enter international market there is an almost inevitable move to universalist ways of thinking and acting as an impact coming from the first. After all, products and services are being offered to a wider and wider universe of people. Their promptitude and wish to buy is so-called "proof" of a universal appeal. It follows that the ways of producing the product, managing those who make it and distributing it to customers should also be universalized (Trompenaars, F. & Hampden, T, C., 2007,36).

We already defined that Italians do not care very much about rules/norms and believe that they can be broken or neglected. Then again, there is a determined tendency to have and respect rules in order to have guidelines. Thus, one can state that Italians are between those two dimensions with a tendency to using rules as guidelines, not universal truths (Blog archive: Italian culture, 2012)

Great Britain is a representative of universalistic culture, where people will believe that rules and values are more important than their own needs (Gannon M.J. and Newman, K.L., 2005, 71).

The results of research published by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner in 1997 display, that the British culture could be classified as universalistic. 91% of respondents selected a universalistic system. High number of percentage proves the steadiness and depth of chosen dimension in this category.

Agreements reached during negotiations with British businessmen should always be put in writing (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 33). Once one party has struck a deal with the British, they are unwilling to organize renegotiations at a later stage. Then, nowadays it becomes a common practice to introduce lawyers into the process of negotiations. All details should be discussed beforehand and one should be prepared for efficient, objective and professional arguments. Everything should be on time as schedule says (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 37).

Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism belongs to people concerning themselves as individuals, while communitarianism belongs to people regarding themselves as part of a group (Wikipedia, Trompenaars model of national cultural differences, 2015).

Italian people are rather individualistic ones as their family members are most important to them and they believe bonuses and personal goals help them perform their best. Notwithstanding, that they will try not to harm the community in order to achieve their own best positions and benefits (Blog archive: Italian culture, 2012).

The British nation can be reasonably described as individualist. This is so obvious in the more frequent use of the "I" form, rather than "we" form. They feel comfortable and confident by taking decisions on their own and do not hesitate to assume personal responsibilities (Peggy Kenna, 1995, 39). Since advising superiors (senior managers) and obtaining consensus is not considered necessary, the decision-making process is fairly short. (Gannon M.J. and Newman, K.L., 2005, 73). Individualistic cultures like Great Britain are more self-centered and emphasize mostly on their individual goals and aims (Rugman, 2000).

Neutral vs. Emotional

A neutral culture is a culture in which emotions are held back while an emotional culture is a culture in which emotions are expressed openly and naturally, additionally non-verbal ways of communication are also frequently used (Wikipedia, Trompenaars model of national cultural differences, 2015).

Italians are always finding ways to express their emotions, even spontaneously. In this culture, it's commonly accepted to show emotions. But on the other hand, in business life, they try to reduce such outbursts of emotional behavior in order to perform officially and create a serious atmosphere (Blog archive: Italian culture, 2012).

Great Britain is regarded as high neutral culture as they never show their emotions; they act socially and maintain their countenance (Cherunilam, 2007, 82-83). British make great efforts to control their feelings. Reason influences their actions far more than their feelings. They don't disclose what they're thinking or how they're feeling. They usually do not use body language and prefer stick to agenda on meetings (The seven dimensions of culture: understanding and managing cultural differences, 2015).

Specific vs. Diffuse

A specific culture is the culture in which people have a large public space and they willingly share with others; small private space guard closely and share with only close friends and family members. A diffuse culture is one in which public space and private space is similar in size and individuals guard their public space carefully, because entry into public space affords entry into private space as well. It looks on the level of keeping personal and public lives (Wikipedia, Trompenaars model of national cultural differences, 2015).

This dimension is not the easiest to find the answer. It seems like Italian people try to integrate work aspects in their private life in order to keep their family members informed about their working life, though they leave out their private factors out of business in order to stay professional at work. (Blog archive: Italian culture, 2012).

The British culture has been found to be very specific-oriented. Such cultures are usually the representatives of so - called low-context cultures. Due to their small areas of privacy clearly separated from public life, they do not take any issues personally therefore are not afraid of open criticism or losing face. Work and private life are precisely separated. As Peggy Kenna states (1995, 23), "During negotiations or presentations they get straight to the point and focus on specific, measurable objectives". While doing business with the British, it is recommendable to ensure that meetings are well structured (Cherunilam, 2007, 85).

Achievement vs. Ascription

In an achievement culture, people are coordinated status according how well they perform their functions. In an ascription culture, status is based on who/what a person is (Wikipedia, Trompenaars model of national cultural differences, 2015).

In Italy, performance matters a lot and will influence the manner people think about others. Hence, to be the manager of company's department or so, you need to have certain characteristics and strengths. On the other hand, there is still a strong effect of so-called network, where connections are the thing you need to be successful. Moreover, the style and clothes of a person also tells an Italian right away if he/she will like that person and make business with him/her or not. Italians evaluate on first impressions based on what they see (Blog archive: Italian culture, 2012).

And Great Britain is a highly achievement culture where social status is largely acquired from a one's achievements (Macduff, 2006).

While some societies give certain status to people based on their achievements, others impute it to them by age, social class, sex, education/degrees, etc. In Great Britain, usually people got used to judge about someone by taking into account what that person has done in his/her life, in other words what he/she have already accomplished. It is a common thing to get following question from British person on the first meeting: "What did you study?", not "Where did you study?". It comes from the ideology that academic titles are often considered irrelevant in business environment. In accordance with Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (1997), in Britain it may not be considered relevant for a consultant to have a PhD or master's degree, and if attention is made to it, the status claimed is not necessarily legitimate. During business meetings/negotiations with British businessmen it is necessary to have enough data, technical advisers and knowledgeable people, while in ascription-oriented cultures more importance is drawn on the seniority and formal position of team members (Cherunilam, 2007, 87).

Sequential time vs. Synchronous time

Italians should be placed in the group of synchronic time due to the fact that they do not value punctuality and have a tendency to follow flexible agenda. Moreover, they are usually capable of and willing to do several tasks at the same time, they are so – to – say multitaskers (Blog archive: Italian culture, 2012).

The British culture is an example of the sequential group, where time is presented through series of passing events. This type of analytical thinking gives only benefits to British culture from the negotiating point of view at work.

(Gannon M.J. and Newman, K.L. 2005, 90).

Internal direction vs. Outer direction

Italians never recognize the fact of adapting into an environment. That is why they will do their best to control their lives in order not to clash with surrounding reality. Italian culture stays true to its fundamental rules and principles. Improvisation is one of the main behavioral and communication tools for many Italians. Hence, Italian culture has an internal direction (Blog archive: Italian culture, 2012).

British culture has an opposite features from this perspective. These people believe that reality controls and provides with what they have. They need some resources, rules and regulations in order to build the workflow on them. British people fit in the reality and do their best to stay within these frames. British culture has an outer direction.

10. Culture comparison analysis based on interviews

I have organized and conducted two interviews. The first interviewee is from Italy, has Italian background and has been working in Italian company for five years. The area of business is B2B sales. The position, which an interviewee had, was sales manager. The second interviewee is from The UK (Britain), has British background and has been working in British organization for 3 years. The sphere of business is web development and design. British interviewee's position was supervisor of sales department.

10.1 Research methods

The main goal of the practical part of the thesis is to get feedback from two interviewees, with Italian and British business background, summarize results and compare them with authors' ideas which I set in the theoretical part.

The wished outcome of this study is bringing awareness of the importance of knowing specifics in business communication on intercultural arena.

10.2 Interview structure

As this study belongs to research-oriented thesis with qualitative methods, I would like to mention that narrative type of research has been used. Instead of questions, I have provided several topics to my interviewees for comments.

These interviews consist of six topics for discussion (see Appendix 1.). I have decided to narrow it down to this small amount, in order to keep attention on the main issues, and not to overload the interviewees.

We discussed different aspects of communication such as style of business communication at work with colleagues as well as with clients, leadership status at work, the ways of decision making, trust at work and the meaning of teambuilding with coworkers. I also questioned them about organizational structure, planning from long/short term point of view and punctuality. The structure of meetings and the way of presenting data have been also discussed.

It is a common knowledge that communication can be two types: verbal and non-verbal. As I also point in my theoretical part non-verbal communication, I tried to observe gestures and movements of my interviewees in order to get some answers about this type of communication as well.

10.3 Interviews

We discussed the level and the meaning of trust at work within coworkers. And my first interviewee, Italian one, tells me that among Italian people trust is one of the essential parts of healthy relationships/communication. Every new worker does his/her best in order to gain trust from workers of higher rank. Once the worker gets it, he/she has powerful opinion about these or those business issues, which can be discussed on business meetings. Sometimes trust defines whose opinion is worthier.

The feedback, which I have gotten from my British interviewee, is a bit different. The level of trust combines with regulations at work. In some cases trust can be determined as a reasonable fact for making decisions, but on the other hand trust isn't enough in order to succeed within company. Sometimes regulations are more powerful than personal/trusting relationships between workers.

My second topic was about teambuilding at work, the meaning of it and the impact, which it has on workers of one and the same company/organization. Italian interviewee tells that teambuilding goes without saying in Italian companies. There are good teambuilding factors such as more direct communication, more discussions and business meetings on one and the same topic, more negotiations, more debates on topic, which proves that Italian workers approach any business with the team, not individually. If there is force majeure situation, no one is going to blame someone else. The whole team will sit and think together how to go through current situation.

British interviewee's comments are completely different from the first one. In British companies everyone does his/her own duties. They do not have collectivistic approach at all. Teambuilding is something to which British companies need to come soon or late in order to succeed not only on British market but also on international one.

The next aspect, which my interviewees and I discussed, was organizational structure in companies. Both of them share the idea that hierarchy exists and has clear top down frames. Vertical scheme of communication is relevant for both countries. Each department has supervisor who gives instructions for workers of that very department. And in return,

the supervisor reports to a manager who leads and supervises all departments of the company.

Long term/short term planning was the next point for discussion with my interviewees. Let us start with the British interviewee. Of course, planning exists in British companies, but it is quite uncertain feature. Short term planning is necessary to have and is usually updated on weekly business meetings. But long term planning is something which British companies try to avoid. The reason is simple: the British are not risk takers. The strategy states to work slowly and surely rather than to burn up the road break necked. British workers prefer to know all possible ways and options in near future. It brings more confident to them.

Italian interviewee reports me the following: short term planning is vital, while long term not. Spontaneity is a ground of not setting long-term goals. Decision maker can easily change the way of operating and strategy of actions on spot, which makes long term, plans senseless.

Another issue for comments with my interviewees was about business meetings and arrangements of them. British interviewee says that organizing a meeting is a big responsibility. Importance of a business meeting is high. It comes from regulation that each meeting should end up with some concrete results. British workers are punctual and it takes maximum ten minutes while every single seat gets occupied. On the meeting, everyone has voice to take the floor and speak out his/her own opinion. Discussions are mainly democratic and strictly follow the agenda.

Now let us move to Italian meetings. As Italian interviewee states, business meetings are show where workers demonstrate their talents and creative way of thinking. Beginning of the meeting can be delay for half an hour and this is something, which workers treat as a part of daily routine. Usually workers with higher position take the floor. Their voices and opinions are highly appreciated and the topic of discussion can be changed easily during the meeting.

And finally, the last topic, which I asked my interviewees to comment, was about the structure of negotiations. Negotiation is a slow process full of protocol and regulations. Usually British workers offer their deal to the other party instead of bargaining. Bargaining for British is an aspect that they usually avoid. They can come to it if there is no other way to agree. Nevertheless the British will negotiate and discuss one and the same topic until beneficial deal is not maintained.

Negotiations in Italian companies go in a very opposite way. Bargaining is the main tool of it. This is high time for workers with high positions to show their creativity and ability to get what is needed. Sometimes bargaining can expand and take few extra hours. Decisions can be made spontaneously.

10.4 Comparative analysis of results

In this sector I will provide comparative analyze based on the answers which I have gotten from the interviewees. I will start from defining the usage of non-verbal communication while conducting the interviews. I will define similarities and differences in ways of doing business in Italy and Great Britain. And finally, I will compare the results with the authors' ideas, which I set in the theoretical part.

10.4.1 Individual communication approach

Before I invited my guests on the interviews, I gave options to them whether to see the topics beforehand and come on meeting prepared, or to show them right on the meeting. Surprisingly for me, British interviewee immediately requested the questions/topics in advance while Italian interviewee felt pretty comfortable to show up on the interview without knowing them. It proves the theory of the author Peggy Kenna who states that British people feel much comfortable to be prepared for any type of meetings, presentations, interviews etc. While Italian people are more spontaneous and creative, they don't necessarily need to know agenda of the meeting in order to feel comfortable and confident.

While British interviewee went consequently from one topic to another, commented all aspects in given order, providing with full long answers, Italian one could easily go back to previous topic and add/comment something and then immediately jump on the very first one, add comments there as well. As Peggy Kenna and Richard Lewis stated in their writings, British people prefer an objective and calm approach in discussions while Italians rely on their feelings and ideas, which come and go to their minds so fast.

I would like also to draw the attention on the fact that British interviewee appeared on the meeting just in time. Italian interviewee was 15 minutes late of the time which we agreed before. Punctuality is one of the core aspects for British people, while for Italians it plays minor role.

10.4.2 Corporate communication features

Trust at work

Based on my results, we can observe the tendency of more objective approach in British companies and more subjective approach in Italian companies. The same ideas were presented in theoretical part based on Francis Fukuyama's, Richard Lewis' and Peggy Kenna's writings.

Teambuilding

My results match Hofstede's and Trompenaars' dimensions. Italian society is collectivistic, while British one is individualistic. Due to this fact we can observe strong teambuilding sense in Italian companies and very poor teambuilding perception in British companies. Even though Peggy Kenna writes that British companies use teambuilding in decision-making processes, it does not prove the fact that teambuilding has a strong value.

Organizational structure

From the feedback we can say that such organizational structure has its own pros and cons. On one hand hierarchy keeps work – flow and data structured and efficient, but on the other the lack of direct verbal communication between low level workers and high rank ones can bring misunderstanding which is called communication noise (see Figure 1 Communication Model).

Planning at work

We observe that both countries are avoiding long term planning. The reasons are different. In first case the British feel pressure and stress due to uncertainty of such long-term period. In the other case, Italian businessmen do not like to put themselves into long-term frames. Instead of it, they rely on their business instinct and are able to come up with idea and goal on spot by improvising.

Business meetings

From the comments of the interviewees we can say that British meetings are more formal, precise, well prepared and with specific agenda. While Italian meetings can be expressive, on spot, where the rank at work influence the final decision.

Negotiations

To sum up, British are not risk takers, that is why they are looking for compromised deals while Italians are looking for win-win deal and really to negotiate till the end.

11. Conclusion and suggestions for development

I looked through many books, scientific magazines, sites and dimensions, which are somehow connected with corporate culture and communication in Italy and Great Britain business environment and came to several conclusions.

- The relevant material used and it gave us a general view on styles of communication in Great Britain and Italy. The literature review has shown that, beyond the basic aspects of communication, negotiations, for instance, intercultural communication has become crucial to businesses. In very deed, people conduct businesses, and the future of any country will lie with people who can adequately think and act across ethnic, cultural and language barriers. People need to understand that the differences between nations and cultures are significant and thorough.
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- Trompenaars' and Hofstede's dimensions show us how different the cultures can be. For instance, Italy is very contrasted from Great Britain. Let us state that Italian culture is emotional, polychronic and collectivistic, while British culture is neutral, monochronic and individualistic. This field of research provides us with the fact that these cultures have completely different structures, from which we can conclude that their communication consists of diverse and different aspects.
-
- Authors' ideas and results of Hofstede's and Trompenaars' dimensions were not enough to identify the images of Italian and British corporate communications. Accordingly, in order to get update results, two interviews were organized with Italian and British workers. Feedback of them matches with the results, which have been gotten from books and dimensions.

I came up with some suggestions concerning Great Britain and Italy. In order to improve performance in business, British workers should start to use group approach instead of individual. The sense of teambuilding should be stronger than it is right now. In that case, segmentation of duties will make working process easier and more efficient. Moreover, as British feel under pressure to have a position of a decision maker, cooperative group implementation will reduce stress at work.

For Italian way of doing business, I would suggest to reconsider importance of rules and regulations at work. Personal relationships are very strong aspect in Italian companies and sometimes this fact blurs the scope what workers are competent to do and what not.

12. Self evaluation

The thesis process was positive and interesting, though it took more time than it was expected. Lived in many countries, I faced with the diversity of cultures from childhood. Due to this fact, the subject of my thesis acquired more interest for me. I became more and more curious once I found so much literature about this topic. But after analyzing information based on literature, I came to the idea that it was not enough for me in order to summarize them.

Moreover, the amount of information was too much and my aim was to narrow it as much as possible. For that purpose, I decided to go further and organized interviews with people who worked in those very societies, which I was interested in. I was lucky to find my interviewees, people from Italy and Great Britain, here in Helsinki. Network and business connections helped me to find them and I am grateful for those people who helped me to do so. I was very excited to have an opportunity to compare authors' ideas with people who are parts of societies, which I took.

Information which I have gotten from interviewees is very meaningful for me personally and valuable for thesis as well. To bottom the line, this survey brought more understanding of cultures for me as well as for any society.

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14. Appendix 1

The list of topics for interviewees to discuss and comment:

1. The level and the meaning of trust at work
2. Teambuilding aspects at work and the importance of it
3. Organizational structure of company (hierarchy)
4. Setting short/long term goals at work (planning)
5. Business meetings and their structure
6. Structure of negotiations