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# ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

## THE FRENCH TOUCH

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# Language



# Conversation



# Food



# Company Cultures





# Language



## How many words exist in the French language?

- The French are very protective about their language, with English words excluded where possible, although less so by young people.
- Speak French if at all possible, especially in social situations. The French see a foreigner speaking their language as a sign of appreciation of their culture.
- Learn to love words. The French are passionate about language, talking and debating, complaining or joking. Some cultures see this free-flowing verbal confrontation as intimidating, but it is not intended to be.
- Expect the French to be passionate about intellectual argument and logic.
- Listen for subtleties - what isn't being said. To do that you will need to ask open-ended questions.
- Recognize that you could be evaluated on your eloquence to present an argument as well as your content.



# Food



## How many cheeses exist in France?

- Business lunches used to be long and drawn out but there is a trend nowadays to stick to two courses and get down to business quicker. Dinners, however, are more relaxed, when the food should be appreciated and the conversation should flow until the host introduces the business topic to be discussed, some time around dessert.
- Smoking is more common in France than in some other cultures but is now banned in most restaurants and cafes. In a private home, smoking is usually delayed until the end of the meal although your host may light up between courses.
- Aperitifs will be served before a meal. Wine is served with dinner, and not usually as an aperitif unless it's kir (white wine with cassis liqueur) or kir royale (champagne with cassis). Different wines may be served with each course. The French toast is 'à votre santé' – 'to your health'.



# Food



## When do you put the napkin on your lap?

- Wine is supposed to be savoured and appreciated as something to complement food, not to replace it. It is unusual to sit in a bar drinking a glass of wine, for example.
- You will impress your French associates if you are knowledgeable about wines, especially French wines. Otherwise, this is their area of expertise and it's best to ask questions and show appreciation of their knowledge on the subject.
- The French rarely ever show signs of over-drinking and to get falling-down drunk or loose-tongued at a business function would be a huge social gaffe.
- In France, food is practically sacred. The belief is that a little of everything is good for mind and body. Chocolate, bread, cheese and wine are all regularly consumed, but only of the highest quality and in small portions. The level of obesity in France is half that of the United Kingdom and about one third of that of the USA. French people can't understand the obsession with junk food, huge portions and low quality.



# Food



## Who tests the wine?

- Dinner usually consists of an appetizer, main course, cheese, dessert and coffee and often, there's an extra course called an 'amuse-gueule' – a taste of a speciality from the chef.
- Do not cut your bread – break it apart with your hands instead.
- For the cheese course, choose a couple of cheeses from the plate and eat them with a knife and fork; don't spread it on crackers.
- Coffee is usually served black. Café crème, or café au lait in a large cup, is more of a breakfast drink. You can, of course, ask for cream or milk but ordering a large latte after dinner may cause eyebrows to be raised.
- Eat slowly; meals in France are appreciated and you are not expected to rush, or to get impatient with the often snooty waiters.
- Do not cut but fold your salad!



# Conversation



## How long is the philosophy exam to conclude school education in France?

- Be sociable, get to know the right people and show an understanding of French business culture.
- Join the conversation. Longer debate is reserved for friends but the French love small talk, passing the time of day, grumbling about their situation and empathizing with others.
- Dress conservatively but with style; the French are fashionable and well groomed - you will be judged on your appearance.
- Do not be too loud or boastful. Excessive displays are seen as vulgar.
- Respect people's space and time; the French will not have deadlines forced on them easily and people strive to achieve a work-life balance. Privacy is highly valued.

# Conversation



## What topics are sensitive & should be avoided?

- Expect meetings to start with small talk; it is deemed rude to launch straight into business talk.
- Be aware that meetings do not always have a specific goal and are often called to exchange ideas and debate and listen; decisions are usually made after the meeting.
- Be prepared for an unstructured meeting with interruptions, calls being taken, and off subject discussions; the French like to give everyone a chance to contribute and see how arguments are presented.
- As discussions can go off topic it is important to have a minute taker.
- Follow up afterwards with a summary, as conclusions may be lost in the chaotic nature of the meeting.



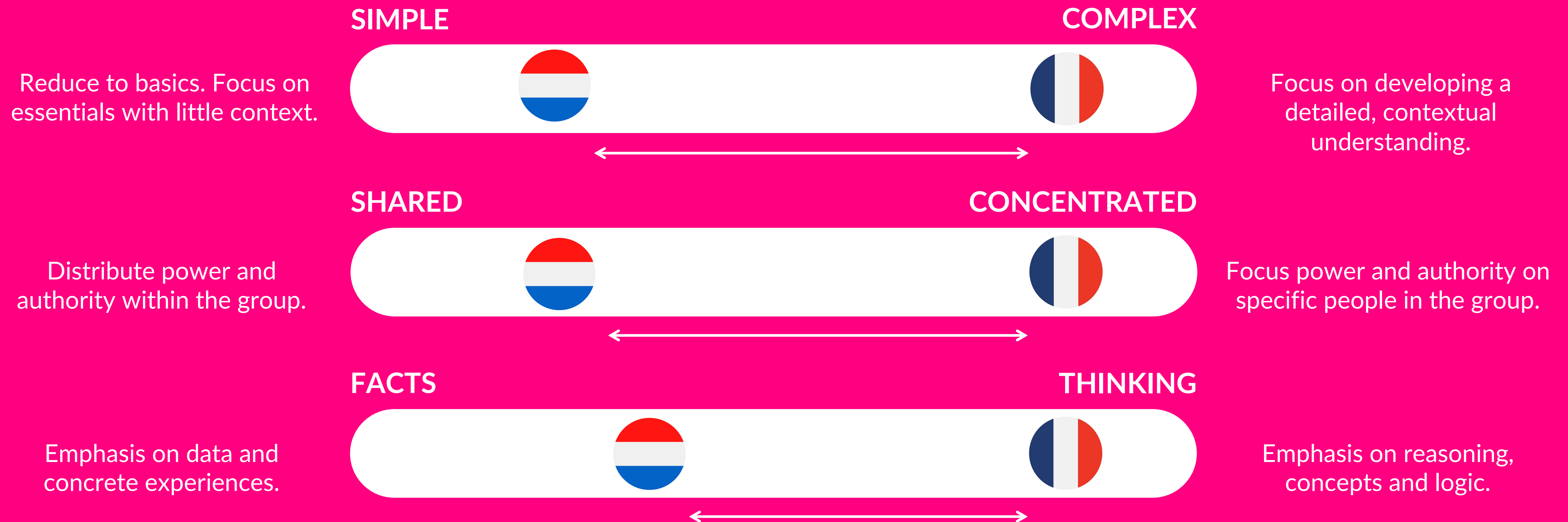
# Company Cultures



- Your requests for information may need to go up the chain of command. Expect information flow to be slow.
- Do not assume that all decisions will be filtered down from higher management.
- In France information is power; do not always expect openness and a free sharing of ideas.
- Use networks and build strong relationships with colleagues to share information.
- Diplomatically communicate who you know, the schools you attended, and your qualifications. The French value connections and education.



# Dutch vs French - Cultural Profiles

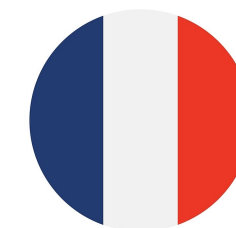




# Dutch vs French - Cultural Profiles

Impersonal. Let's get down to business. Rules before relationship. Things get done when the right plans and processes are in place.

**TASK**



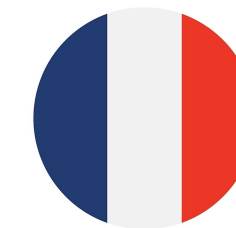
**RELATIONSHIP**

Can I trust you? Are you loyal? Things get done when the right relationships are in place.



**RISK TAKING**

Make change happen, act decisively. New is good.



**RISK AVOIDING**

Avoid change. Steady, but sure. Stress continuity.





# THANK YOU



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