

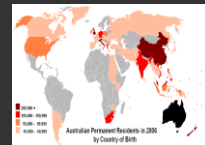


Australian Workplace Cultural Communications

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The Local Context

44% of Australians were either born overseas or had overseas born parent
5.6% identify as non-Christian.
18.7% identify as no religion



Over 200 Languages spoken in Australian homes

We have 20% of the world's poker machines, but only .33% of the world's population.



Australian culture

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Why focus on Australian workplace culture?

Globalisation has seen increased recognition of the importance of understanding links between culture and business success

Your increased understanding will assist you with:

- Transition into the Australian workplace
- Development of strategies to improve your effectiveness in the workplace
- Improving your employment prospects



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Employment challenges facing people from multicultural backgrounds can include:

- Understanding of Australian workplace culture
- Communication skills – verbal & written
- Limited Australian contacts and networks
- Visa restrictions
- Understanding Australian job search techniques
- Lack of local work experience
- Perception of returning home



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What is business culture?

- Business etiquette
- Organisational culture
- Policies and procedures
- Value and patterns of behaviour
- Ethics



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Discussion

What are some distinctive aspects of AUSTRALIAN social & business culture?

What are some distinctive aspects of other countries social & business culture?



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Cultural differences

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Australian Culture

- Less obvious hierarchy
- Appearance of friendly / relaxed
- Time – meeting deadlines
- Value initiative
- Team focussed
- Multicultural
- Workplace rights and laws
- Strong OHS emphasis
- Focus on policies & procedures
- Interest in environmental issues
- Work / life balance – in some orgzns.
- Coffee
- Sport / BBQs / holiday focussed
- Others?

International / Asian Culture

- More hierarchy – respect for managers/seniors – juniors keep quiet
- Less female equality?
- More individually focussed
- Time is more elastic
- More community spirit
- B2B relations have interpersonal focus
- Don't like to say no
- Concept of guanxi
- More community spirit o/s
- Others?

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Understanding culture in the work place is vital!

"We have a lot of international students in the workplace. Their technical skills are first class. But I often find I have to go around and fix up problems caused by differences in communication or lack of cultural understanding."

Senior Health Worker
Victorian Hospital

"I often see Australian employees taking the time to talk to the security guard, the cleaner and the tea lady, much more than you would in my country! Even top management will make sure they ask about families and get involved if there is an issue."

Indian Student

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The Australian workplace – we are different!

“At my work there is a lot of joking and laughter, which I find to be quite disruptive. But I realise the other staff members don't think it's a problem, so I have had to change my thinking a bit.”

Malaysian Migrant

“I was raised in India where it was unacceptable to question the directions of someone more senior. It was normal to follow directions without question. It's very different here.”

Indian Migrant

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The Australian workplace – we are different!

“I come from South Africa. It's always “Yes Sir” to the boss. At home people give orders and others accept. Australians don't like anything that sounds like an order. They don't give them and they certainly don't take them well. Its not that there isn't hierarchy in Australia, but it's less obvious.”

South African Migrant – Now Australian Manager

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Key differences between Australian and other workplaces

- Hierarchy and leadership styles
- Expectations of employees
- Communication styles
- Equal employment opportunity (EEO)
- Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S)
- Focus on policies & procedures



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Expectations of employees

Australian Government has identified 8 key employability skills:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving
- Initiative and Enterprise
- Planning and Organising
- Self-management
- Learning
- Technology



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Workplace communication tips

- Value sincerity and authenticity – don't like pretentiousness / showing off
- Try to be polite, relaxed and friendly
- Join in the jokes and laughs
- Join in social activities – eg Friday drinks
(you don't have to drink alcohol)
- Talk about what you did on the weekend
 - Aussie Rules football
 - Holidays
 - Cooking
 - Current events
 - Sport
 - Weather
 - Movies / TV

Language Variations

Accent

Can appear even with close geographic areas

Do Australians have much variation?

Dialect

Variations of a language specific to a culture.

Sometimes considered different languages entirely

Argot

- Private, particular to a group
- Lol, wtf, brb, atm, fml.

Slang

- Marking social or linguistic identity
- Slang evolves rapidly (as in "dude")

Branding

- Goes beyond ordinary linguistic boundaries.
- Reliant on global media.

Hand Gestures



Eye Contact

| Culture | Convention |
|----------------------|---|
| Arab | A lot of eye contact: too little could be disrespectful, but unrelated men and women may avoid eye contact with each other as this could be seen as flirtatious. |
| White British | The speaker makes eye contact but periodically looks away to avoid 'staring'; a speaker who does not make eye contact may be seen as untrustworthy. A listener is expected to look at the speaker: not to do so is seen as disrespectful, or implies the person is not listening. |
| South Asian | Direct eye contact can be seen as aggressive and disrespectful. |
| Japanese and Chinese | Direct eye contact for more than a couple of seconds is disrespectful, especially towards people seen as social 'superiors'. |
| Afro-Caribbean | The speaker looks at the listener and the listener looks away: looking at the speaker may imply challenge and disrespect. |

Touch



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Equal employment opportunity

Men and women are treated equally

Australia has laws protecting all people from discrimination and harassment in relation to:

- Race
- Religion
- Political beliefs
- Sexual preference
- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Carer or parental status
- Physical features



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Be aware of your own behaviour and your rights

Discrimination

- Unfair treatment based on prejudices

Sexual harassment

- Unwanted attention / sexual advances
- Sexual jokes, offensive phone calls and emails, displays of obscene or pornographic photos, pictures, posters, screen savers and internet sites
- Making promises or threats in return for sexual favours

Victimisation / bullying

- Repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward an employee

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Useful links

Fair Work Ombudsman

www.fairwork.gov.au

Job Watch

www.jobwatch.org.au

Fair Work Ombudsman 'You Tube' videos to understand workplace rights in 14 languages!

www.youtube.com/fairworkgovau



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Australian culture

Personal presentation**Office dress – esp. for job interviews**

- Wear business attire
- Men – preferably dark business suit and tie
- Women – business suit (jacket, skirt, pants) or conservative clothes with minor decoration
- Limited jewellery
- Take care with personal hygiene, ironed clothes
- Casual Fridays



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**Conclusion: Preparing for Intercultural Employment****On the CV:**

- Emphasise intercultural experience
- Identify what you can contribute.
- In the interview
 - Be conscious of cultural norms
 - Give examples of dealing with cultural conflict
 - Don't over-think it.



Questions and Comments?