***QUESTIONS***

* **Are the following pieces of advice about the English-speaking business world are true or false? Read the article and decide:**

In the English-speaking business world, people use first names, even with people they do not know very well. But if you aren’t sure, use Mr. and their surname for men, and Mrs. or Miss and their surname for women, depending on whether they are married or not. Ms. often replaces Mrs. and Miss.

1. It’s possible to introduce yourself by saying your surname then your first name.

2. It’s possible to use Mr., Mrs. or Miss on its own, or with a first name.

3. You can always use someone’s first name to talk to them, even if you don’t know them very well.

4. Ms. is being used more and more as a title for women.

* **Which of the following points support the opinions expressed in the article?**

1. In meetings the French tend to be more aggressive than the Germans.

2. The Arabs have nothing in common with the Japanese.

3. The French generally don’t appreciate the British sense of humour.

4. The Spanish are rarely hesitant in cross-cultural meetings.

5. The Americans and Scandinavians value a methodical approach.

6. The Germans want quality at any price.

7. The British tend to be more individualistic in business than the Germans.

8. In business the Italians are more or less like the Spanish.

**BOARDROOM CULTURE CLASH**

**An Unpredictable Affair**

Try to put pressure on a Japanese in a negotiation and you will be met with stony silence. Hold an informal fact-finding meeting with a German and you can expect a battery of searching questions. Disagree with the French on even a minor point and they will take great pleasure in engaging in verbal combat. Doing business across culture can be an un-predictable affair.

**Cultural Awareness**

Most of us prefer to do business with people we like. It should come as no surprise that the people we like tend to be like us. It is generally agreed that good business relationships are built on cultural awareness.

**The US Perspective**

Most Americans will insist on the hard sell. It’s not enough that you want to buy their products, you must let them sell them to you. They have to report back to superiors who will be as interested in how the deal was struck as the result. Systems and procedures matter to Americans.

**The Spaniards Trust You**

The Spanish are unimpressed by the best prepared meeting and pay much more attention to people. In this they are more like the Arabs or the Japanese. In the Middle and Far East business is built on trust over a long period of time. Spaniards may come to a decision about whether they trust you a little sooner.

**Animated Italians**

Italians tend to feel that the main purpose of meetings is to assess the mood of those present and reinforce team-spirit. There may be a lot of animated discussion at a meeting in Italy, but the majority of decisions will be made elsewhere and in secret.

**Scandinavians want results**

Scandinavians are rather like Americans. They value efficiency, novelty, systems and technology. They are firmly profit-oriented. They want results yesterday.

**Succeed with the Germans**

Germans want to be convinced you are as efficient and quality-conscious as they are. They will be cautious about giving you too much business until you have proved yourself. They will demand prompt delivery. Succeed and you will enjoy a long-term business relation-ship.

**Adversarial Meetings**

The French will give you their business much more readily, but they will withdraw it just as fast if you fail to come up with the goods. Meetings in France tend to be adversarial as heated discussion is all part of the game. Germans will be shocked to hear you question their carefully prepared arguments. The Spanish will offer no opinion unless sure of them-selves, for fear of losing face. But French executives prefer to meet disagreement head on, and the British tendency to diffuse tension with humour doesn’t go down too well.

**Prisoners of our culture**

Ask yourself whether meetings are opportunities to network or get results. Is it more important to stick to the agenda or generate new ideas? Is the main aim of a meeting to transmit or pool information? It all depends on where in the world you hold your meeting and whether you belong to an individualistic business culture like the French, Germans and Americans or to a collective one like the British, Japanese and Greeks.

* **After reading the article, can you complete the following sentences, using the words in the brackets?**

(market, price, profit, quality, client, cost, technology)

1. We’re a firmly ……….-oriented company, so the bottom-line for us is not how big our market share is, but how much money we’re going to make.

2. Even at low prices, inferior products won’t sell in such a ……….-conscious market.

3. The market’s far too ……….-sensitive to stand an increase in service charges.

4. We’re constantly forced to respond both to changing customer needs and to what our main competitors are doing in a ……….-driven business such as this.

5. The customer always comes first. We’re a very ……….-centred company.

6. In a ……….-led business, such as ours, it’s vital to plough profits back into R&D.

7. If the price of materials goes up any more, production will no longer be ……….- effective.

**Are you able to express yourself diplomatically (make your point firmly but politely)? Match what you think with what you say:**

WHAT YOU THINK

1. We are unhappy with this offer.

2. We are dissatisfied.

3. We can’t accept it.

4. You said there would be a discount.

5. Don’t forget your obligations.

6. We want a guarantee.

7. We won’t agree to this.

8. We’re shocked you expect us to cover the costs.

9. That’s wrong.

10. We want a bigger rebate.

11. We must finalize the deal today.

12. You obviously don’t understand.

WHAT YOU SAY

a. Unfortunately, we would be unable to accept that.

b. With respect, that’s not quite correct.

c. I’m sure we don’t need to remind you of your contractual obligations.

d. We’re rather surprised you expect us to cover the costs.

e. We would find this somewhat difficult to agree to.

f. We were rather hoping to finalize the deal today.

g. I’m sorry but we’re not very happy with this offer.

h. Actually, we were hoping for a slightly more substantial rebate.

i. I’m afraid you don’t seem to understand.

j. We understood there would be a discount.