

## **International Communication Tips for Credit Professionals**

Personal relationships are an important part of business dealings in Latin America, where punctuality is a variable commodity and business meetings often start and end late. In France, a bright line separates a person's work life and their home life. Business people in certain Arab countries sometimes use the word "yes" in order to delay a decision, rather than to make one.

Every culture has its standards and mores, and recognizing them, or, at the very least, not running afoul of them, is a vital part of any credit and risk professional's international development. Here are some tips:

### **Know Before You Go**

Do your research on the culture of the country that you're exporting to before you export to them. If possible, get in touch with your own company's human resources in that country in order to practice and prepare before getting in touch with your newest international customer.

### **Recognize High Context vs. Low Context Communication Styles**

High context cultures like those in Asia or the Middle East communicate in a way that leaves many more things open to interpretation and relies on the strength of the business relationship to fill in information gaps. Low context cultures like those in the United States, Canada, Australia and Germany leave little to the imagination and expectations are less inferred than explicitly laid out. Knowing the difference between these styles and which countries are high versus low context can prevent a lot of misunderstandings or miscommunications.

### **Keep It Simple**

Some communication techniques never go out of style: consider your audience, listen effectively, speak slowly, repeat yourself, avoid slang and technical terms, use closed-ended questions. Also be careful with humor, as it isn't always welcome in every culture and in front of every audience. Opening up a presentation with a small joke could be considered too casual to be professional, and using words like "fantastic" or "amazing" could be viewed as childish or immature.

### **Build a Network**

A credit professional's ability to adapt their behavior to suit a particular culture is greatly enhanced by a diverse network of professionals. Leveraging the knowledge and experiences of your colleagues can greatly increase your chances of successfully gaining the trust of your international customers.