



No Such Thing as Small Talk: 7 Keys to Understanding German Business Culture

Melissa Lamson

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Many business leaders, when they begin to work overseas or interact professionally with teams abroad, are surprised by how much they thought they knew about the other culture, but how little it counts for on the ground. The reality is that communication is multi-dimensional, and simply knowing a foreign language doesn't mean one automatically understands the culture that goes with it. Idiom, psychological factors and cultural nuance all come into play. To grasp a culture, and communicate meaningfully to it, you need familiarity with language, of course, but also with non-verbal communication, customs, perceived values, and concepts of time and space.

Melissa Lamson, with years of experience in creating and nurturing high-performing global teams, understands how "It's not enough to know the language!" In her book, *No Such Thing as Small Talk*, she focuses on Germany, a major business partner for the United States, and the country in which she has lived and worked for over a decade.

Business leaders today expect to face cultural differences when they do business with, for example, China or Brazil. But with a Western, industrialized country like Germany, one that displays a business etiquette and work ethic similar to the United States, it is easy to overlook the differences simply because so much appears, on the surface, to be the same. The differences are not in your face but subtle. And these small, yet critical, differences are exactly what Melissa's book will help you identify, respect and bridge.

Melissa succinctly presents what she calls seven keys, or principles, to unlocking the German business mind. Her principles, whether they relate to process, punctuality, discipline or email communication, are insightful, personal and compelling. Not only does she clearly lay out the differences, but she also offers a cultural perspective that is rich with personal narrative.

If you plan to be in any way professionally engaged with Germany--whether you wish to participate in trade fairs, carry out negotiations with partners or colleagues, discuss schedules or terms with customers, or even apply for a job in Germany--the appropriate cultural understanding, as this book describes, will create mutual trust and will quite likely be the key to your business success.

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