



An OAD LLC Article

Leadership & Communication Styles - U.S. versus Western Europe

Over the past decade OAD has accumulated OAD Survey results of 3909 senior executives in the U.S., Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, and Sweden. An “eyeball” analysis of these Surveys has shown differences in their Traits and Perceived Job Behaviors, so we decided to do a formal study to determine if there are statistically significant differences among senior level executives in these countries.

We sorted Surveys by country, job classification, and gender and using chi-square analysis we compared these groupings against their OAD Survey’s seven personality traits and perceived job behaviors measures. We found several significant differences.

Compared to American executives the –

- **English** executives are **Higher EC** (Emotional Control) in both their Traits and Perceived Behaviors. The “stiff upper lip” stereotype has some validity. By basic temperament and when at work English executives are less emotional and more stoical. They are comparatively less able and willing to “share their feelings” or “feel your pain”. This does not mean that they don’t necessarily understand or sympathize with the emotional side of the human element, but empathy or getting wrapped up in an emotional atmosphere of a situation is not their forte.
- **French** executives, on the other hand, are **Lower EC**. Feeling and expressing emotions are part of their Trait composition and they bring these qualities to the office. Sharing feelings as well as facts about a situation is important to many French executives. To some degree the French inter-mix assertive or venturesome job behaviors (Higher A) with influencing others (Higher E) by addressing emotional considerations. Simply employing cold logic does not carry the day.
- **German, Swedish, and Irish** executives by temperament are comparatively more structured, detail-oriented, and cautious (**Higher D**) than their American and French counterparts. Data, policies, and organization hierarchy are relatively more important and practiced. We say relatively - if Americans count to five before making the leap, the others count to eight.
- **Irish** executives exhibit more **Higher A = Higher D** Perceived Job Behaviors. This group perceives the need to pull back or tone down their levels of assertiveness and be more accommodating with others and defer to policies and structure.

OAD Surveys sorted by occupation categories –

- **All nationalities** exhibited **Higher D/Lower E** traits and job behaviors in what we call “technically-oriented” jobs – finance, accounting, IT, production.... We couldn’t find any statistically significant differences because they were all the same.
- **Americans** differ than their European counterparts in sales or what we call “socially-oriented” jobs. By traits and job behaviors American sales executives are comparatively more **Higher E/Lower D** creatures – open, outgoing, and gregarious. The Germans, in particular, employ more of a Lower E sales approach and direct, to-the-point selling styles.

By gender –

- As a generalization women of **all nationalities** perceive the need in their work (Job Behaviors) to be relatively more **Higher P/Lower A** than their male counterparts – more deferential and patient. We didn’t see any differences by job category and I’m guessing that gender stereotyping is the cause.

So, an American, Englishman, Irishman, Frenchman, German, and a Swede walk into a bar....