Just so you can’t say nobody warned you: culturally, this book is more ‘German’ than ‘American.’ This is to say that with lots of detailed information and lengthy explanations, it is not exactly casual reading. Some readers may find its style a bit dry and stilted. Nevertheless, Understanding American and German Business Cultures, also available in German as “Die amerikanische und die deutsche Wirtschaftskultur im Vergleich”, is a useful publication for those about to cross the boundaries between these cultures. Its author, Patrick Schmidt, is an American-born cultural business consultant who has lived in Germany for several decades. He has also worked in or with people from several other cultures.

After briefly summarizing important findings from intercultural researchers such as Geert Hofstede and Edward Hall, the author presents “psychological characteristics of Germans and Americans.” He bases them on precise and astute observations, contrasting orderliness with self-confidence, formal politeness with casual attitudes towards etiquette, effectiveness with efficiency, risk adversity with risk happiness. Other aspects covered in this chapter include different expectations of friendship, contrarian views of the role of time, and an analysis of how both sides define achievement orientation quite differently.

Most of the other chapters of Understanding American and German Business Cultures are dedicated to specific business subjects, from management styles and worker attitudes to business meetings, language and communication styles, legal and ethical considerations, and more. Each of them concludes with a summary contrasting key practices of the two cultures against each other.

Last updated and augmented with a new epilogue in 2003, this slim booklet of only a little more than 100 pages is nevertheless a valuable reference guide. It allows profound insights into the two countries’ business styles and cultural practices. Many specific examples and short stories, as well as an appendix analyzing several “cross-cultural case studies” serve to illustrate the concepts presented by the book and further enhance the learning experience.
Doing business in Germany and understanding German business culture is essential to succeed in Europe's biggest economy. Learn more…

Doing Business in Germany, What Will You Learn? Business is done with direct communication. Something that Dutch, Americans, and Chinese are not necessarily good at. Setting clear-cut goals is important as much as it is to come up with a plan on how to execute this. If you disagree with your German project leader, you can freely do so. American business culture is such that it is relatively easy to fire somebody, while Germans are heavily protected by unions. Debt. Germany is still more of a cash society than other west European countries. Diverse teams really do bring a competitive advantage to an organisation but cultural awareness and understanding is required in order to overcome the gaps cultural differences create. It is imperative that diverse organisations support an inclusive culture where cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity are paramount. Contact us for more information on how we can support your organisation to overcome cultural differences and turn diversity into your competitive advantage. About the Author. Sue Bryant. The German understanding of the professional. 1. The German understanding of the professional. Most participants in cross-cultural trainings on German culture usually ask one question, which goes like this: "What business qualities do German partners value the most?" Or, formulated somewhat differently: "What do Germans look for in a foreign partner?" On the face of it, the an