



E-Business

Dutch expressions about work

- Een goed begin is het halve werk
- Vele handen maken licht werk
- Werken als een paard
- Ergens werk van maken
- De kost gaat voor de baat
- Monnikenwerk
- Kunst- en vliegwerk
- Nattevingerwerk



Doing business in The Netherlands

Organizational structure

Hierarchies at workplaces in the Netherlands are often flat compared to other countries. It is common to address managers and high-level staff by their first names. The Dutch are proud people and do not like to be looked down upon, so a smart boss will bear this in mind and act respectfully towards staff at all levels. However, one should not be surprised to be criticized by the boss publicly as it is a part of the Dutch directness.

Meetings and negotiations

Dutch workplaces revolve around meetings. Meetings are mostly informal yet fixed to times and agendas. The Dutch enjoy expressing their opinion, and the attitude is that each individual may hold information that is valuable to the company. As a result, meetings can involve staff members of various levels of seniority.

Join the debate

Negotiations are usually lengthy as people seek consensus, with the most senior staff member seen as the strategist of plans, and the general staff as the implementers. Try to prepare yourself, as you will likely be expected to contribute to the discussion at some point.

Concept of time

In the Netherlands, time is money. You are expected to be punctual as being late may 'damage' your image. If you do find yourself running late, you should contact the relevant person and make them aware of this. Frequent lateness will affect your standing with the individual or company concerned, as a lack of time management is considered to be a trait of an unreliable worker.

Small talk

During business meetings, small talk is usually kept short. Avoid controversial topics and getting too personal too quickly. A short exchange about the weather will do just fine!

Planning ahead

The Dutch tend to plan for the long term, so schedules (both socially and professionally) are often set weeks or even months in advance.

Business behavior

When conducting business in the Netherlands, unceremonious yet respectful behavior is the norm. The Dutch are rarely very formal, but when greeting older business partners and those of a higher business rank, they will use the formal 'u', 'meneer' and 'mevrouw' until the senior person adopts a more informal tone.

Let's shake hands

Handshakes are used in all situations and it is good practice to shake hands with every person in the room (although in a group of more than 20 people, this might become inconvenient!). It is recommended to maintain eye contact when you greet someone as it signals trustworthiness.

Business cards are also exchanged frequently during business meetings, usually with those with whom you have had contact directly and with whom you have a shared business interest. They are not usually handed out for no reason.

Dress for the occasion

Dress codes can vary greatly between companies: some may require at least semi-formal wear, even for a typical day in the office, while others allow you to 'dress as you please' within sensible boundaries. Suits and ties are standard attire in certain business sectors and government agencies.

For interviews, it is best to lean towards a more formal style with a simple dark suit, white shirt/blouse and smart shoes, for both women and men. However, our top tip is to visit the company's website to try and find clues about their dress code.

Communication styles

The stereotypes of Dutch business communication are often those of straight-talking directness, with to-the-point discussions. This is mostly true; the Dutch do like to know where they stand, and if they have something to say, they will usually say it. This direct way of speaking eliminates the chances of ambiguity; if a Dutch person tells you are doing a good job, then you definitely are!

Global traders

The Dutch have a long history of doing business around the world, ever since their 'Golden Age' (roughly corresponding with the 17th century). Hence, international experiences and multilingual skills are more than welcome.

A friendly bunch

Dutch people will mostly try to understand your cultural background. It results in an interesting clash between directness and understanding: each individual will handle this differently.

So when preparing for the Dutch labor market, know that there are individuals who will do their best to understand cultural differences and will try to assist you, but also people who will strike you with their boldness with little regard for your cultural background.

Source: Expertise in Labor Mobility

Book your session!

www.flowently.com