

ERIN MEYER'S CULTURE MAP

**YOUR CULTURAL BACKGROUND
SHAPES WHAT YOU PERCEIVE AS
NORMAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND
RESPECTFUL - AND YOU DON'T
NOTICE IT, BECAUSE IT JUST FEELS
LIKE REALITY.**

**COUNTRIES: UK,
GERMANY, RUSSIA**



How the Culture Map works

Each scale runs between two poles. Where your culture sits determines what feels normal to you.

SCALE	← ONE END	THE OTHER END →
🗨️ Communicating	Low-context – say it explicitly	High-context – read between the lines
📝 Evaluating	Direct negative feedback	Indirect negative feedback
🧠 Persuading	Principles-first – prove the why	Applications-first – bottom line first
👑 Leading	Egalitarian – boss is one of the team	Hierarchical – clear authority structure
✅ Deciding	Consensual – everyone gets a vote	Top-down – leader decides
🤝 Trusting	Task-based – deliver and I trust you	Relationship-based – know me first
⚡ Disagreeing	Confrontational – debate is healthy	Avoids confrontation – harmony first
🕒 Scheduling	Linear-time – plans are commitments	Flexible-time – adapt as you go

**NO SCALE POSITION IS BETTER OR WORSE.
THEY'RE JUST DIFFERENT – UNTIL YOU'RE IN A
ROOM WHERE SOMEONE'S ASSUMPTIONS ARE
THE DEFAULT AND YOURS AREN'T.**





RUSSIA — Natalia

She already decided. She's waiting for you to catch up.

FROM THE BOOK

Meyer notes Russia and Israel share three scales: both relationship-based in trust, both confrontational in disagreement, and both flexible in scheduling. The gap is leading — Russia is strongly hierarchical while Israel is egalitarian. Russian business culture is principles-first in persuasion, placing it alongside France and Belgium.

THE 8 SCALES

COMMUNICATING

High-context. Leaves much unsaid. Expects you to read the room.

EVALUATING

Very direct. Criticism is professional respect. No compliment sandwich.

PERSUADING

Principles-first (alongside France and Belgium per Meyer). Needs the 'why' before the 'what'.

LEADING

Strongly hierarchical. The biggest gap with Israeli culture on the whole map.

DECIDING

Top-down and fast. Decides early, adjusts privately.

TRUSTING

Relationship-based. Shared meals and real conversations before real commitment.

DISAGREEING

Confrontational. Open pushback is healthy. Silence is the warning sign.

SCHEDULING

Flexible. Shares this with Israel — both value adaptability over rigid timelines.

CHARACTER PROFILE

STRENGTHS

- Decisive
- Loyal to her inner circle
- Reads subtext others miss
- Intense in the best way

QUIRKS

- Proposes dinner when she actually wants to negotiate
- Goes quiet when she's most unhappy
- Builds trust through shared hardship, not icebreakers

BLIND SPOTS

- Assumes silence from others means agreement
- Reads as aggressive when she's being efficient
- Underestimates how much Westerners need explicit positive feedback

IN ACTION

In a VC pitch

Opens with numbers. No warm-up. Gets impatient with slides that explain what she already understands.

In a team

Takes charge naturally. Will question the agenda before the meeting starts.

In a layoff

Names the bluff out loud. Slides the folder back. Sends HR away to come back with a better offer.



GERMANY — Erik

He sent a 4-page pre-read. Did you read it? He knows you didn't.

FROM THE BOOK

Meyer uses Germany as the primary example for the Scheduling scale — Germans sit at the linear extreme. On disagreement, Meyer groups Germans with the Dutch and Danish as strongly confrontational despite being less emotionally expressive than many cultures. Germany is principles-first and builds trust through competence.

THE 8 SCALES

COMMUNICATING

Low-context. Says exactly what he means. Precision is a professional value.

EVALUATING

Very direct. Per Meyer, Germans belong firmly on the confrontational side despite stoic appearances.

PERSUADING

Strongly principles-first. Must prove the theorem before he'll accept the formula.

LEADING

Moderately hierarchical. Expertise commands authority more than title.

DECIDING

Consensual despite hierarchy — more so than Americans. Once decided, no U-turns.

TRUSTING

Task-based. Deliver consistently and reliably. That's the whole equation.

DISAGREEING

Confrontational. Meyer notes Germans surprise people when controversy arises — they go there.

SCHEDULING

Very linear. Meyer uses Germany as the benchmark for structured, organized time management.

CHARACTER PROFILE

STRENGTHS

- Precise
- Reliable
- Deeply prepared
- Respects expertise over seniority

QUIRKS

- Arrives at the exact agreed time — never early, never late
- Will correct a factual error mid-presentation without apology
- Considers 14 minutes a reasonable answer to 'why will you win?'

BLIND SPOTS

- Comes across as cold when he's just being efficient
- Underestimates small talk as trust-building
- Mistakes American warmth for actual alignment

IN ACTION

In a VC pitch

Brings technical documentation. Corrects the investor's TAM calculation. Makes the strongest case in the room.

In a team

Owns his domain completely. Delivers on time. Expects the same.

In a layoff

Asks for the legal basis. Requests selection criteria in writing. Corrects the severance formula. Leaves to call a lawyer.



UK — James

He said 'quite interesting.' He meant 'this is a disaster.'

FROM THE BOOK

Meyer uses the UK as the prime example of indirect feedback — more indirect even than the US, which surprises Americans. The Dutch-UK comparison is the book's key illustration of scale relativity: Dutch people feel direct, British people feel polite, but to a Dutch person the British are evasive and to a British person the Dutch are rude.

THE 8 SCALES

COMMUNICATING

Middle-high context. The understatement is the message.

EVALUATING

Very indirect. Meyer positions the UK as more indirect in feedback than even the US — the scale's subtlest communicators.

PERSUADING

Applications-first with British reserve. Gets to the point but never seems like he's trying.

LEADING

Middle — more egalitarian than most of Europe, but background quietly matters.

DECIDING

Consultative but not endlessly so.

TRUSTING

Task-based with a long warm-up. Reliability and shared history build trust.

DISAGREEING

Avoids open confrontation. Irony and understatement carry the message.

SCHEDULING

Linear. Punctual. He respects the agenda.

CHARACTER PROFILE

STRENGTHS

- Dry wit
- Understated
- Deeply polite on the surface
- Has very strong opinions he'll never state directly

QUIRKS

- 'That's one way of looking at it' means you're completely wrong
- 'Quite good' is high praise
- Meyer: Dutch people find British feedback evasive; British find Dutch feedback offensive

BLIND SPOTS

- His indirectness is invisible to direct cultures — they think he agreed
- The irony doesn't translate internationally
- Mistaken for easygoing when he has strong views

IN ACTION

In a VC pitch

Polished, understated, leaves the investor feeling good without knowing why.

In a team

The diplomat. Smooths things over. Sometimes too much.

In a layoff

Says 'right, yes, I see' throughout. Goes home and calls a solicitor.

1.COMMUNICATING

ERIK SAYS EXACTLY WHAT HE THINKS. NATALIA SAYS LESS THAN SHE MEANS AND EXPECTS YOU TO READ IT. JAMES SAYS SOMETHING THAT SOUNDS POSITIVE BUT ISN'T.

ALL THREE THINK THEY'RE BEING CLEAR. NONE OF THEM ARE READING EACH OTHER CORRECTLY.



2.EVALUATING

**NATALIA TELLS YOU WHAT'S
WRONG. ERIK TELLS YOU WHAT'S
WRONG WITH SUPPORTING
EVIDENCE. JAMES TELLS YOU IT
WAS "QUITE GOOD OVERALL" AND
BURIES THE PROBLEM IN A
SUBORDINATE CLAUSE YOU'D ONLY
CATCH IF YOU WERE LISTENING
FOR IT.**



3.PERSUADING

**RUSSIA AND GERMANY BOTH WANT
THE REASONING BEFORE THE
CONCLUSION - PRINCIPLES-FIRST,
PROVE THE WHY. JAMES WANTS THE
BOTTOM LINE FIRST AND WILL ASK
FOR THE THEORY ONLY IF HE NEEDS
IT.**



4.LEADING

**NATALIA IN CHARGE: DECIDES FAST,
EXPECTS EXECUTION. ERIK IN
CHARGE: CONSULTS WIDELY, BUILDS
CONSENSUS, THEN DECIDES. JAMES
IN CHARGE: APPEARS COLLEGIAL
AND OPEN, BUT HAS ALREADY
DECIDED AND IS MANAGING
EVERYONE TOWARD THAT
CONCLUSION WITHOUT ANYONE
QUITE REALIZING IT.**



5.DECIDING

**ERIK GENUINELY WANTS
EVERYONE'S INPUT BEFORE
COMMITTING. NATALIA FINDS THIS
EXHAUSTING - SHE'S ALREADY
DECIDED, WHY ARE WE STILL
TALKING? JAMES GOES THROUGH
THE MOTIONS OF CONSULTATION
BUT HIS MIND WAS MADE UP
EARLIER.**



6. TRUSTING

**NATALIA THINKS BOTH ERIK AND
JAMES ARE COLD AND
TRANSACTIONAL. ERIK THINKS
NATALIA IS UNPROFESSIONAL AND
JAMES IS INEFFICIENT. JAMES
THINKS ERIK IS CHARMLESS AND
NATALIA IS INTENSE.**



7.DISAGREEING

**RUSSIA AND GERMANY ARE BOTH
CONFRONTATIONAL - OPEN
PUSHBACK IS HEALTHY, DEBATE IS
NORMAL. JAMES HAS EQUALLY
STRONG OPINIONS BUT DELIVERS
THEM THROUGH IRONY,
QUESTIONS, AND A CAREFULLY
WORDDED EMAIL THREE DAYS
LATER.**



8.SCHEDULING

**ERIK HAS A PRE-READ OUT
THREE DAYS EARLY AND ARRIVES
AT THE EXACT AGREED MINUTE.
NATALIA TREATS THE AGENDA AS
A STARTING POINT. JAMES
ARRIVES TWO MINUTES LATE
WITH A COFFEE AND CONSIDERS
THE SMALL TALK NON-
NEGOTIABLE.**



SO-WHAT?

NONE OF THEM ARE WRONG.

**IT'S THAT EACH OF THEM IS
RUNNING ON A DIFFERENT
CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING.
THE GAP ISN'T VISIBLE UNTIL IT
IS. AND BY THEN SOMEONE'S
ALREADY BEEN LOGGED AS
UNRELIABLE, AGGRESSIVE, OR
EVASIVE - WITHOUT A SINGLE
BAD INTENTION IN THE ROOM.**

