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Doing Business with France, tips for Women

By Tracey Wilen

"Let me give you an example of what life is like in Paris for foreigners. I was in Paris on business. I had my wallet in my jacket pocket, and my pocket was picked. Fortunately, I had some cash in the other pocket and my bank card from the U.S. I went to the bank that was aligned with my bank back home and put my ATM card into the machine. The card did not come out. It must have gotten caught or something. So I went inside and with my best French, I asked the bank to help me get back my ATM card from the machine. They asked me for ID. I said that I was robbed, so I did not have any ID on me. The bank teller said back to me in French then we cannot help you until you have ID. After some dialog and lots of frustration, I jumped into a taxi to get back to my hotel to get my passport so that I could get back to the bank and get cash before it was too late. I gave the taxi driver the name of my hotel, again in my best French, and he said, "Get out and walk, the drive is not long enough." After a lot of arguing, he took me to the hotel where I went to get my room key, which you have to leave at the front lobby on your way out. The front lobby manager said to me, "Where is your ID for your key?" I was very frustrated by now, but said in my best French that the ID was in my room as my wallet was stolen. After a lot of arguing, they took me to my room to watch me get my ID to prove who I was. I then returned to the bank. I showed the bank person my ID and again asked for my bank card. They gave it back to me and said, "We don't take bank cards here. "I said why didn't you tell me that before, and they said, "But we did not know who you were." Very frustrating. Only in Paris will you find this absolute arrogance! (Atherton)

French Culture

The French as a people are determined to retain their heritage of the arts, culture, and history. They are very proud of their culture, and Americans many times interpret this pride as arrogance and attitude. Most French believe that they value their history, their culture, and their language more so than any other country in Europe. For many centuries, they were the dominant culture and language in Europe, and they still see themselves as a class above. The French and the Americans are often both described as individualistic cultures. However, our views of individualism are quite different. For the French, it is the uniqueness and competence of the individuals that sets them apart. A French person is very comfortable working and competing with colleagues. For the most part, the labor laws protect the employee who is openly expressive, so it is not as much of an issue as it would be in the

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U.S. The French are less likely to collaborate on working teams. For Americans, individualism is viewed as self-sufficiency which is achieved by the individuals hard work, personal achievements, and accomplishments. An American may view herself as an individuals because she accomplished her goals " her way." In a corporate environment, this may mean that she needs to work on teams to achieve her individual goals, and she will become a team player, if necessary. She may be less likely than her French counterpart to express her individuality in the work setting.

The French are a friendly culture; however, their humor tends to be more sarcastic than Americans are used to. Some women say that the French are almost sardonic or cutting at times. Americans in general prefer to make friends and to be liked by the people with whom they come into contact, as it paves the way for a good business relationship. The French do not. It is not important to them. Americans like to have people agree and cooperate, as that is how we gain recognition in our workplace. The French almost prefer to disagree because it is far more interesting, and perhaps that is how they get recognized. Where the Americans prefer consistency and predictability, the French do not

mind contradictions. It is a challenge.

Americans are very achievement-oriented. We observe titles, look at accomplishments, and tend to tell others what we have accomplished because it is important to our society. We tend to measure each other in this way as well. The French are not so accepting of titles, achievements, etc. They look at the person in terms of the personality, integrity, character, and search for intrinsic qualities, as they view these as much deeper character traits. The French are more formal than Americans and appear to be more reserved. They are much more sensitive about their culture than we are about ours. They are obsessive about preserving their identity, whereas Americans are more accepting of differences, coming from a melting-pot society. They are particularly obsessive about preserving the French language, and if your pronunciation is not good, they may not respond. The French are far more argumentative and tenacious than Americans when deliberating a point.

Parlez-Vous France?

"I was offered an opportunity by my U.S. firm to assist with financial operations in our European offices. I had a choice of either locating to Paris or to Brussels, so I went to Europe to see where I wanted to stay. I initially thought that I would want to stay in Paris. I had hopes of learning the language, seeing the museums, and absorbing the culture. Paris was more enticing than Brussels. When I attended a business meeting in Paris, however, I felt very uncomfortable for the most part because I did not speak French. Now this was a recent offer, and I was certainly planning to take language classes as soon as I was settled on where I was going. However, despite the fact that this was a subsidiary of a U.S. firm, all the meetings and hallway dialogue was in French. That was fine, except that I was supposed to be an active part of the meeting. From time to time, someone would notice me sitting there with a blank look on my face, and then they would summarize what was being said in English for me. It was obvious that they were not very happy about it. Later that week I went on to Brussels. The overall reception was much warmer, and people always spoke English on my behalf. They included me in all discussions. So in the end I decided to live in Brussels and to visit Paris on weekends."
(Expatriate living in Brussels)

Women in Management

In 1991, the proportion of women in the work force was 43%, with 72% percent of these women between the ages 25½49. In 1988, 52% of working women were employed in services, 35% in agriculture and 24% in industry. The unemployment rate in March, 1992 was 8% for men, 13% for all women, and 26% for women between the ages of 15½24. The pivotal point of change for working women in France was in 1968, following the cultural revolution. Young women began to assert that they wanted

careers like men. The majority of French women have full-time jobs. At 24%, France has the lowest rate of part-time workers in Western Europe. (1)

French women state that they have come a long way in being treated equally in business, but they are not as far along as women in the U.S. French men say American women are hypersensitive about gender and sexual harassment and wonder what all the fuss is about.

The birth rate in France is low, at a rate of 1.8 children per family. (1) The French have a system of subsidized creches, or day care systems, and nursery schools, which helps allow continuous full-time employment. The school schedule is synchronized with work schedules. There is a 2-hour lunch from 11:30–1:30 so that the child can lunch with the family, or lunch can be arranged at the childcare center. There is also an after-hour baby-sitting service. There are not enough daycare centers to

provide services for all the working parents, so there is a parental leave of absence, which includes a choice of 2-year's leave or part-time work. Women are allowed 16–18 weeks of paid maternity leave with a guarantee of re-employment. An employer may not fire a woman on grounds of pregnancy.

Thus socialized medicine and protective company labor laws allow women to have children without loss of job seniority. For example, a company manager would get up to 2 years of fully paid leave following the birth of her baby, and she could go back to work part-time without loss of her job. No wonder French women seem to be more relaxed about motherhood compared to American women, who are part of dual-income families, and who might only get 4-weeks maternity leave. (Raleigh) Women account for about 20% of the students in the universities. Until recently, they were a minority in economics, scientific, technical, and other highly valued disciplines. Women account for 50% of the students in business schools. (1)

Since 1981, the French ministry has supported women's entry into nontraditional jobs. In 1987, only 37% of the participants were in technical training programs. In 1987, women earned on average 24% less than men. Between 1975 and 1984, Serdjenian observed the relationships between male and females experiences in similar positions in a high-tech firm. The study included 3500 women, of whom 350 were managers. The study indicated that while women were working for both financial and personal gains, they felt on the whole that their careers were more uncertain than those of men. The women reported disliking the remarks and compliments concerning their physical appearance and comments that concerned how their behavior differed from men's. Their preference was to be recognized for their abilities. The women also expressed dissatisfaction with men's comments stressing their maternal responsibilities, interpreting it as a method to remind them of their traditional place in the hierarchy. Highly skilled managers in the study commented that the legislative support for women's sick days to take care of children reinforces their unavailability and thus becomes a career inhibitor. The study indicated that women used two career strategies: serving as staff assistant to the male decision-maker or pursuing a more traditional male job. The study indicated that when women

elected the same career path as men, they rarely received the same career opportunities. The path to top management included moving up to eight times in a career, which created obstacles for families with two working parents. Short-term assignments were not promoted by the firm. Women found increased burdens internally from the firm when trying to establish their reputations as leaders. Women were not seen spontaneously as leaders and were not given access to the necessary information to make wise career decisions. (1)

Tracey Wilen is Author at

<http://www.globalwomen.biz/>

Délices de France, A Delicious Way Of Cooking, A Culinary Art

By Anne Garrett

Would you like to taste authentic French specialties gourmet food and recipes? Well, this is what Délices de France can do for you. Délices de France was founded in January of 2004 by Anne Garrett. I know all the fine dining of her country. Ingredients from the best French tables, used with a blend of spices, mushrooms, mustards and different ingredients, will please your delicate palate. Do you ever wanted to taste a real cheese fondue, a gourmet potato casserole or a roasted chicken au Reblochon? Yummm, it sounds delicious. Well it is. Add a different touch to your cooking by trying the French way of life, recipes from the best restaurants in France, recipes that she has made in her own kitchen with ingredients you cannot find anywhere else but over in France. Spices and scents that will embalm your kitchen and leave a delicious perfume of Provence. Discover this beautiful region, located in the South of France. The architecture and decors use a lot of colors, purple or yellow houses where you can smell the fresh morning dew. For miles, fields of lavender that will give to your soul a piece of quiet and "fraîcheur".

So, let's travel, visit Délices de France, you will find a lot of treasures, by adding a little French touch to your cooking and your house.

www.delicesdefrance.net

I was born in France in 1967. I have traveled many years before I returned to France. I have founded Délices de France in January of 2004.

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A Quick Guide To The South Of France
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How Nice Guys, Shy Guys and Good Guys Finish First!
The Ultimate guide to a Multi–Orgasmic Male
Hints for lovers
How to keep up the SPICE in your Love Life.
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