

# Money talks

## A few hints

Discussing personal finances is acceptable in some countries, but it is taboo in others and can create social discomfort. Business will flow better if you understand the differences.

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### ENGLAND

#### Don't ask, don't tell

Money is considered to be the number one conversation killer in England. Therefore, friends and colleagues prefer to work on a "don't ask, don't tell" basis. This means that you shouldn't discuss your personal finances, such as salaries and net worth, when doing business or when socializing.

✔ **Do:** respect personal spaces both in terms of physical contacts and data privacy.

✘ **Don't:** discuss your paycheck with friends or colleagues; it can be interpreted as arrogant self-promotion.

### QATAR

#### Bargaining benefits

Although Qatar is the world's wealthiest country, money is considered an embarrassing and potentially degrading topic that shouldn't be discussed. It is very impolite to bring up private matters such as finances to colleagues. However, **haggling** being an essential aspect of life, it can be acceptable to bargain your contract, within reason, before starting a new job.

✔ **Do:** make sure you can deliver on anything you promise since verbal agreements are very important and part of the local code of honour.

✘ **Don't:** be greedy. Bargaining beyond the "best price" is deemed insulting.

### VENEZUELA

#### Show and tell

Venezuela has a defined class system, and showing status is important as it helps people judge how seriously to take each other. Accordingly, even the hotel and the means of transportation visitors select can play a role in how much respect they are given. Let your Venezuelan contacts determine the subject of discussions and don't be surprised if it turns to money. It is considered quite normal to talk directly about it.

✔ **Do:** show respect to people of a higher status than you.

✘ **Don't:** be afraid to indicate your status by using services such as porters in hotels.

### AUSTRALIA

#### Money is greed

In Australia, discussing money is taboo. It is believed that if you bring up the topic of wealth in the conversation, you are **picking a fight** or wanting an argument. This is because money is considered to be the representation of greed, **pompousness** and pride. Therefore if you do discuss your paycheck during

small talk, some may think that you are **bragging**.

✔ **Do:** use humor if you are confronted with a conversation about money or financial matters. It will make the conversation less **awkward** and more bearable for your Australian coworkers.

✘ **Don't:** self-promote during business deals. Australians prefer directness before diplomacy, but there is a fine line between being direct and being **obnoxious**.

### CHINA

#### Salaries are no secret

Within Chinese companies, discussing income is not at all considered taboo or impolite. Instead, it is seen as a good way to get to know another person and to build a relationship. Most Chinese people genuinely like to talk about wages, bank accounts and the cost of their possessions. They think that once you know how much people earn, you can better grasp the life they live. This makes money an ideal conversation starter.

✔ **Do:** build a relationship with your local partners or clients. The Chinese don't like

doing business with companies they don't know.

✘ **Don't:** be informal. Treating an executive informally, especially when you are in front of others, can ruin a potential deal.

### CROATIA

#### The weakness of man

In Croatia, revealing intimate aspects of one's life is considered to be a sign of a weak character. If you bring up money troubles during business deals or conversations, companies will assume that you cannot overcome personal or financial problems. Discussing personal tragedies and money problems are **frowned upon** and are considered extremely disrespectful as it may make your Croatian colleagues feel very uneasy and depressed.

✔ **Do:** show respect towards every person you meet, including those you don't know. Croatians are often friendly with strangers.

✘ **Don't:** bring up the subject of wages when discussing work and career unless you are asking indirect questions related to a position's average salary. ●

## GLOSSARY

Hint: indice, piste, **Don't ask, don't tell** = ne demandez rien, ne dites rien, **haggling** = marchandage, **greedy** = cupide, **to pick a fight** = chercher des noises, **pompousness** = prétention, **to brag** = se vanter, **awkward** = gênant, délicat, **obnoxious** = odieux, **to frown upon** = voir d'un mauvais œil, désapprouver.