

# Cultural Dimensions in China



## Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: China vs. World Average

**Power Distance Index PDI (China 80 vs. World Average 56.5)**



NOTE: China is one of the highest PDI countries.

Some tips to for the high PDI workplace...

- Greetings are done in order of age—always greet the eldest member of a group first
- As status is recognized by age, university degree and profession, use of a person's title is important. Address someone as Dr. or Professor whenever possible. Do not call someone by their first name until they ask you to
- Put your university degree or any accreditations on your business card
- Deploy senior staff members to communicate and make announcements to general staff
- Be prepared for answers like “we will see,” or “let us think about it” which in the non-confrontational Chinese society actually mean “no”

**Individualism IDV (China 20 vs. World Average 40)**

China's IDV ranks lower than any other Asian country. This can be attributed primarily to the Communist rule and teachings of Confucius: stresses loyalty, respect for age and seniority, emphasis on harmony, etc. Harmony is achieved by giving “face” to others and avoiding losing your own “face.”



The concept of “face” or “Mianzi” is especially important in the Chinese culture. “Face” can be loosely translated as “honor,” “good reputation” or “respect.” How we are perceived by others is critical in every circumstance—one’s age, position, status, family reputation, network, educational level and accomplishments contribute to the level of “face” one expects to receive from others.

Chinese people tend to “give face” to others by being overly polite at times, while they expect others to reciprocate the level of “face” they give. Declining a request, offer or invitation directly may be considered as not giving face to others. Likewise, losing your temper, confronting someone, putting someone on the spot, arrogant behavior or failing to accord proper respect to a person can cause a loss of face.

Some tips for the low IDV workplace...

- Aim to build lasting relationships
- Try working through an individual or an organization who introduces you formally—Chinese like to work with people they know
- Avoid asking pointed questions
- Do not expect decisions to be made at meetings as meetings are merely forums for exchange of information
- Allow time in meetings for team members to consent and consult

Uncertainty Avoidance Index UAI (China 30 vs. World Average 65)



Some tips for the low UAI workplace...

- Present a bottom line and an objective, then build your case around questions
- Expect frequent rescheduling of meetings. It is a good idea to set up appointments a few weeks in advance and reconfirm 1-2 days before the scheduled meeting