



Living in Australia – A day at the office.

What about work? What about it?

Recent research has discovered: Australians work more hours than Germans. Still life seems much more relaxed down under. One reason is that the laid back life style is not dismissed from the workplace. It is part of the Aussie lifestyle.

What does that mean for your daily work? Let's have a look at an average day at the office.

This Info letter will give you a little insight of everyday situations related to workplace interactions.

Rescheduling appointments

A working day might be nine-to-five or different. Fact is everybody has a schedule. So making appointments is essential for working together and getting things done.

Talking on the phone to a contractor: "Today in the afternoon or tomorrow first thing in the morning." means: Don't come in today and let's talk tomorrow to schedule it for some other time.

If you don't mind

Australians are quite dismissive when being told what to do. But there are situations when people have to be told what to do, every day. And there is an Aussie way of doing that:

"₁) Could you please do me a favour ₂) go over to Paula and get yesterday's sign off documents; ₃) if you don't mind? ₄) That would be really great ₅) if you could do that for me. ₆) I'd really appreciate that. ₇) Thanks!"

- 1) is the polite introduction for a request.
- 2) states the core facts.
- 3) pretends consideration of the other's needs.
- 4) makes it sound nice.
- 5) emphasises on the relation/hierarchy.
- 6) high lights where the request/order is coming from.
- 7) shows the involvement in decision making on the other side.

The concept behind this wording is not to tell people what to do but to make it sound like asking a favour; even if a person is in the position to tell someone what to do.

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Follow up

You are working on a document which requires approval. Content and structure are result of a team meeting. But not everything is defined yet.

When the person responsible says: "I'll come back to you about this." It does not necessarily imply that there will be a follow up or further discussions. Don't wait for anything to happen. And don't expect anyone to be offended by you proceeding with what you were planning on doing.

People will appreciate your initiative. They will surely apologise for not coming back to you mentioning various excuses. And if there is something they wanted to be different they might change it themselves later or explain a reason which happened to appear just then.

Giving advice

In Germany it is common to share knowledge in order to improve processes and results. For that reason around the world Germans are known for their sense of efficiency and for being upfront. In Australia giving advice can easily be understood as an offence.

Before you might be able to give somebody your opinion you need to earn reputation. But there is a faster way. Put the suggestion into a story in which you present yourself facing the same problem and not knowing how to deal with it.

Bring in an expert offering you a solution. Explain that because he showed you how it works you're doing it that way ever since. Give your colleague the chance to respond to your story. It is finally up to him/her what to do and how to do it.

Adaptation is the key

Australians are not used to being upfront. So don't be. The more consideration you have for your Australian colleagues and team members the easier it will be to achieve your goals.

This might sound absolutely logical and make perfectly sense. But remember that the behaviour is not. Advice, expectation and commitment need to be adjusted to be effective.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Attif Gharbi".