




CULTURAL PROFILE




Profile Comparison: Gerry Broennimann vs. Morocco

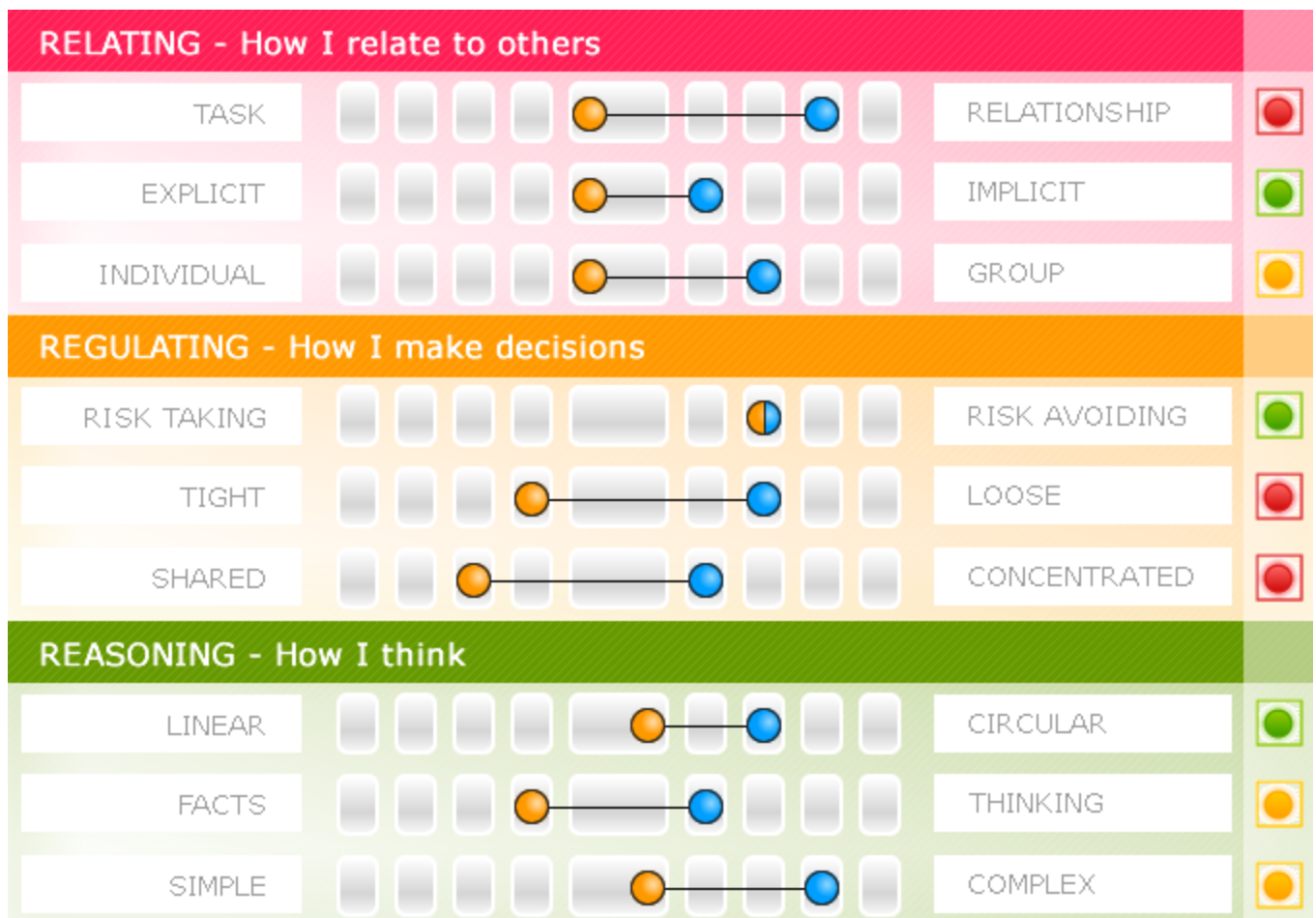
Gerry Broennimann's Profile Comparison: Morocco

The scale positions are indicated as follows:

 = Your position  = Overlapping position  = The Moroccan position

The traffic light colours indicate how closely the scores match:

 = Maximum difference  = Moderate difference  = Minimal difference



RELATING - How I relate to others

TASK



RELATIONSHIP



My Position

Although you have a bias that, in most cases, business should be transactional, you prefer to react to each specific situation that may arise and not to apply 'a- one-size-fits-all' approach. Your default position is that a legal contract is a fixed agreement that should not be changed unless circumstances change considerably, and that trust should be based on consistency. You prefer to react to each specific situation that may arise and not to apply 'a- one-size-fits-all' approach. However, you do believe that some flexibility should be built in to allow for changing circumstances that may inevitably arise.

The Moroccan Position

Moroccans work to live rather than living to work. The family plays a significant role in a Moroccan's life, and leisure time is often spent with family meals, visits, and celebrating. Family bonds are tightly knit which makes it more difficult for outsiders to form relationships. For Moroccans, relationships, trust, and loyalty are important factors for conducting business. Be prepared for questions about your own associations: who you know, who you respect or trust, or who you have done business with in the past.

Expect to be involved in dialogue and activities that all relate to building trust when first forming relationships. A lot of initial meetings are designed for getting to know one another, establishing rapport, and setting implicit expectations. Business executives expecting to meet quickly with high-ranking members of the government or big business officials who quickly make decisions will be frustrated by the slower pace. Personal visits and entertaining are important ways to establish trust and develop understanding. Moroccans enjoy spending time together, eating and listening to music. The coastline is a popular destination for getting away. Enjoy the atmosphere provided by your hosts and try to participate if asked. Refusing an offer of hospitality can be offensive. Moroccans are gracious hosts and will extend to you many courtesies if you are open and receptive.

Religion also plays an important role in society. The majority of Moroccans are Sunni Muslim. Even if you are not part of the Muslim faith, you are still expected to adhere to the moral teachings of the faith while living or working in the country. Moroccans will not expect you to fully adhere to their traditions, so long as they feel they are respected. For example, planning meetings during religious holidays will invite suspicion. Wearing jewellery or other outward signs that promote your own religious faith or heritage may signal that you are foreign and unwilling to show respect. Moroccans are an eclectic mix of ancient Berber, Jewish, and Arab (with additional French and Spanish influences). Hence, they are more tolerant than many Muslim countries, but are still conservative in their overall world view.

RELATING - How I relate to others

EXPLICIT



IMPLICIT



My Position

You tend to believe in open and direct communication. Getting straight to the point can be helpful and occasionally you will speak your mind if you consider it to be the right way to avoid confusion. However, when circumstances do not suit a direct style, you can be careful and considerate in your communication with others. You are able to pick up signals from non-verbal behaviour and context to interpret the message.

The Moroccan Position

Moroccans are generally implicit communicators, so more context is required in order to understand both words and gestures. In order to save face (both their own and yours), Moroccans may not say things directly, but will imply great meaning through their chosen words and actions. They will also hold you accountable for what you say, so choose your words and gestures carefully. Interpreters offer much more value than simply translating words or phrases. Having an interpreter who is comfortable speaking Arabic, and who understands Moroccan conventions of communication (for example, tone, body language, and other non-verbal cues) can be helpful in understanding the deeper complexities of their logic and reasoning.

Arabic (in a distinctive Moroccan dialect) is spoken widely, as is Spanish and French in the larger cities like Casablanca, the capital city of Rabat, or the port city of Tangier. In the rural areas, you may hear Berber being spoken. English is becoming more popular, especially with increased European trade. Still, it is best to have an interpreter who can help with the entire context (non-verbal and verbal), unless you have many years of experience working in Morocco. Learning a few words in Arabic is useful, and Moroccans will appreciate this. Business cards, presentations, and other materials should all be translated into Arabic.

Arabic has numerous words and phrases that can have multiple meanings (like the English word 'love'). This is why it is important not to rely on literal translations. Seek clarification by asking follow up questions. Look for visual cues to confirm your understanding. Expect your interpreter to provide you with the full context of the discussion, and not just a translation of the words. Even if you do not understand the language, look for non-verbal cues and ask your interpreter about the meaning behind these cues. This underscores the importance of face-to-face meetings, especially at the beginning.

During negotiations or business planning, take time to understand the deeper context of an issue. Be open and friendly in your communication. Get comfortable with the pace of the dialogue, without rushing or forcing things. Meeting in person is strongly encouraged in order to communicate high context. Though Morocco is a technically-enabled society, emails and web meetings are very low context, and are less valued by Moroccans. Younger Moroccans who have grown up with satellite TV will be more open to these Western influences and technologies.

RELATING - How I relate to others

INDIVIDUAL



GROUP



My Position

You have a bias towards relying upon your own efforts and resources. You tend to believe that the individual should take the blame for his/her own mistakes, but should also receive personal praise and reward when his/her constructive effort brings benefits to the group or team. When problem solving, you tend to weigh up carefully the consequences of allowing extra time to gain consensus versus the need for decisive, individual action.

The Moroccan Position

Moroccans prefer to work and play in groups. People find value, meaning, and significance in their affiliations. Family ties and kinship are important to Moroccan status, position, and seniority. These factors may be more important than the performance of an individual. Leadership involves a strict hierarchy with the leader (usually a male) making the decisions. The Moroccan leader commands respect and initiative at lower levels is not encouraged.

Moroccans work well together in teams, especially when the team is measured by team performance (not individual performance) and the tasks are fully owned by local leaders. A tone of cooperation is better than competition among team members to get the best results. Courtesy and respect are extremely important at all times in Morocco. Try not to single team members for either negative or positive feedback, as it may only cause embarrassment. Worse, in the case of praise, the individual might intentionally decrease performance in the future, in order to avoid being recognized.

Moroccans work hard, but team members may be reluctant to take individual initiative and responsibility, preferring instead to wait for direction and guidance from leaders. For this reason, close supervision of workers is needed, and nothing can be taken for granted regarding deliverables or timelines. When working with Moroccan managers, asking clarifying questions in a positive way will yield better results. For example, instead of asking, "Is your team going to meet the quality standards?" (which might be answered 'yes' only as a courtesy), you should ask more broadly "What barriers can we solve together to ensure that the quality standards are met?"

In Morocco, the strong religious affiliation of Islam affects group dynamics. Many laws are built upon the moral teachings of the Muslim faith. Even if you are not a Muslim, you are expected to abide by these moral codes while living or travelling in Morocco. For example, taking time during the day for ritual prayers, or taking off from work for religious observances is common. Women play a lesser role in the business world, as opposed to Western cultures. Adhering to local standards and practices will help groups to feel more comfortable with the business climate. Setting policies in the office that are radically different from a Moroccan's home life will invite resistance and even hostility.

REGULATING - How I make decisions

RISK TAKING



RISK AVOIDING



My Position

You strive for consistent approaches that produce known results. You value what you have and would much rather stay with what you know rather than gamble on a future which is unpredictable.

You prefer to have a high level of regulation that gives you security.

You plan well in advance for a known outcome. You have great faith in higher levels of authority which are proven to be solid and dependable. You have a high respect for tradition and seek to learn from the experience of others.

The Moroccan Position

Moroccans (except for the younger entrepreneurial class) are risk averse. They may take a long time to make decisions, and are only comfortable after an extended period of building trust. For example, a Moroccan would rather do business with someone they considered a friend than with someone offering the lowest price, or promises of wealth in the future. Moroccans are not task focused, so they will not be impressed with action plans and spreadsheets. Adhering to local customs is not intended to create an environment of conformity; rather it is a sign of respect and a symbol of trust. If you are willing to show respect by adjusting to local standards, then you are more trustworthy in business dealings. This will carry more weight and credibility than fancy presentations and grandiose promises for the future.

Despite being risk-averse, there are signs of entrepreneurship among younger Moroccans, who will use their social connections to form small businesses. There may also be local 'fixers' who act as consultants or representatives for small and medium sized companies from overseas. Moroccans enjoy political and economic stability, though the more recent threats of terrorism and radical religious influences in certain parts of the country have brought a heightened state of alert. Opportunities must be certain and very practical, and the results tangible. Moroccans are experienced negotiators and are not afraid to wait you out, believing that time is on their side. When costs and the terms of a deal are being negotiated, Moroccans will demonstrate a surprising resilience at the table. Showing impatience or frustration will put you in a position of weakness.

Moroccans share a fatalistic world view and believe that outcomes (whether business or personal) are determined by Allah (god). For this reason, Moroccans are less likely to take risks and put themselves or especially their families in jeopardy on a business deal that might not work to their favour. This is one of the reasons they are slow to make decisions, because they believe that god will show them the way eventually. It also underscores the importance of relationships, which take a long time to form and strengthen. Moroccans will look for signs in everyday life that signal to them how they should proceed. What may appear as a completely coincidental or unrelated event to an outsider may be viewed as a sign from god for a Moroccan.

REGULATING - How I make decisions

TIGHT



LOOSE



My Position

You generally believe that time is an expendable commodity to be valued. Since time is money, you try hard to respect deadlines and keep to schedules. You believe other people's time must be equally valuable to them. You strive to make the best use of time and have been taught to avoid wasting it.

Interruptions are not welcome. When dealing with complex issues, you always try to break them down into bite-sized pieces and tackle one at a time, sequentially. If you are running late for a meeting, you will phone ahead to apologize if at all possible. Generally you will always try to make an appointment in advance to arrange to see someone.

The Moroccan Position

Moroccans have a very loose sense of time. This has some roots in the fatalistic belief that all outcomes are controlled by Allah (god), thus 'why rush things?' Adhering to a strict schedule of meetings and appointments will not work, because the future cannot be known for certain. Genuine hospitality and getting to know people has no time limit. When visiting Morocco, plan to spend several days, and even weeks. Keep in mind, people work to live rather than live to work. Time spent discussing your family, your status within your home country, your own personal wealth, where you live, your position in your company, your educational background, and your personal achievement are considered time well spent by Moroccans, who are evaluating your thoughts, attitudes, experience, status, and priorities.

Trying to cut a meeting short because of "another appointment" would be unexpected and considered rude. It would cause your host to lose face and would damage the sensitive relationship you are trying to nurture. It is best to find a local representative who can act as a mediator and make introductions when setting up appointments. Moroccans have complex social networks, so it might be easier than you think to locate someone who is familiar with the individuals you are interested in meeting.

Even if a meeting is scheduled, that is no guarantee that your host will be available. Other meetings may run over time, or traffic delays may prevent attendance. Consider the confirmation of an appointment more like a suggestion. If you show up and your host has been unexpectedly call away, be sure to leave a letter and request another time. Growing frustrated and irritated will not cause Moroccans to alter their behaviour, but your patience and tolerance for their way of life will be noted. As the outsider, you are expected to be punctual (especially meeting with more senior individuals). Do not bother with an agenda; let the Moroccans set the pace of the meeting. Expect a lot of interruptions during a meeting as well, a lot of side conversations, people coming and going, mobile phone conversations, and a lot of seemingly irrelevant dialogue. Breaks during the workday for daily prayers and other religious practices occur multiple times a day. Workdays for Moroccans are also very irregular, so ensure that your meeting time does not conflict with holy days or other Muslim traditions.

REGULATING - How I make decisions

SHARED



CONCENTRATED



My Position

You generally believe that all people should have equal rights. This means that decisions should be made by all involved, regardless of rank. You prefer your superiors to conduct an "open door policy". You think that the people best suited to giving advice and taking decisions are those who do the work. Given a choice, you would prefer to work in a flat organisational structure. Your style is likely to be informal and very casual. You generally believe that rules and regulations hinder creativity and independent action. You feel less comfortable in formal situations.

The Moroccan Position

Power is largely concentrated in a few individuals, and Moroccans are mostly hierarchical in their thinking, decision-making, and authority. This is a combination of strict family loyalty, and fatalistic attitudes and beliefs. Businesses in Morocco are usually headed by a powerful male member from a large family. Family members can be found at many levels of management, as nepotism is a way of life. Decisions are made from the top, so power and information are shared sparingly with lower management or their subordinates. When meeting with a group of Moroccan officials, you should send senior members of your team. Sending junior members of management will be insulting, even if those individuals have decision-making authority.

If managing from afar, forge strong relationships with leaders on the ground in Morocco, who can articulate corporate expectations in a way that will motivate a diverse workforce. Delegating and supervising in Morocco can be complex to a manager inexperienced in the local culture. Most of the supervision of workers will come from local managers, who already have the respect and trust, and who can navigate the cultural complexities. Local managers have greater insight into the motivating factors in the workplace, and are attuned to the local customs and practices that will affect the workday.

When forming business alliances in Morocco, it is important to understand who is in charge, and who holds the keys to opportunity. Leadership status may be achieved on merit, but seniority, wealth and connections also play a role. Try to understand as much as possible about the individuals you are dealing with, making very few assumptions until you have a clear picture of what is going on. If considering new opportunities in the region, ask open ended questions with your contacts in Morocco to ascertain who controls the power. Use questions like, "who traditionally makes decisions on matters such as these, who should I meet with and get to know, who should we present this opportunity to in order to ensure we are not wasting anyone's time." Maintain a positive disposition and a sense of humour when conducting business to put your Moroccan colleagues at ease. Building coalitions is not as important as spending a lot of time with the right senior leaders who control the business enterprise, and opening yourself up to their evaluation.

REASONING - How I think

LINEAR



CIRCULAR

My Position

In basic problem-solving, you tend to take a direct line of reasoning, moving in a step-by-step process to reach your target efficiently. With more complex issues, you are likely to take a more circular route to problem-solving, exploring the issue from multiple perspectives before deciding how to move forward. You probably feel that without some understanding of the context, the situation cannot be resolved adequately. You are comfortable working within a broad framework but do not like to be pushed towards a deadline, and would find a very strict linear process of problem-solving to be too restrictive.

The Moroccan Position

Moroccans are typically circular in their thinking and reason. That means logical arguments based on facts or financial bottom lines will not have much weight. Moroccans do not overly concern themselves with the future since there is a pervasive feeling that Allah (god) ultimately controls everyone's destiny. Their belief is that hasty decisions and aggressive tactics are largely pointless. As time passes, Allah will make things clear, and the proper paths will unfold.

Avoid conflict. Instead, seek to focus on harmony and mutual understanding. Don't try to force a timetable, let the process unfold naturally. Sometimes Western executives have the feeling that deals or negotiations in a Muslim country like Morocco "aren't going anywhere." However, Moroccans might be willing to agree to terms very quickly if the time and opportunity are right. Be patient when waiting for that day to come and watchful of signs that may indicate a shift in position.

It is important to focus on the relationships involved, significant achievements from the past, and on the long-term outlook. Show respect for local traditions and culture, and build trust over time. Use opportunities to build trust and take each opportunity seriously, no matter how small the situation might be to you. Use broad terms and meaningful language. Say things like, "We look ahead toward a long future together as friends" rather than saying "Let's sign these papers today and beat the competition." This kind of arrogance will not work as god will ultimately determine success and failure.

When presenting, be sure to use an interpreter who can convey deeper context and meaning. Decisions involve many overlapping concerns and cannot be simplified in bullet points. For example, Western thought places a lot of emphasis on action and on using written agreements to drive that action. Circular reasoning might say, "Why should we sign this written agreement with people we hardly know, when things will change over time and god's will takes us in a different direction? It is better that we spend our time getting to know and understand each other. Then we won't need these agreements, but can change as circumstances change." This type of circular reasoning is fundamentally different from Western linear culture and it must be considered in order to be successful.

REASONING - How I think

FACTS



THINKING



My Position

You generally believe that an argument can be won by presenting the factual evidence. You are likely to structure your projects so that they have measurable outcomes. You are skilful in gathering the right evidence and interpreting it correctly. You generally prefer to work from the specific to the general.

The Moroccan Position

While Western cultures are largely driven by facts and statistics, this kind of information is not as valued in Morocco as relationships. Moroccans take the facts of a deal as a given ("if the facts were not positive we would not be here"), relying much more heavily on the underlying ideals and long-term vision and values. A simple way to demonstrate your willingness to accommodate to the culture is your use of time. The longer you spend with Moroccan colleagues, both formally and informally, the more you will earn their respect. Use your conversations to learn and to explore the deeper facets of the relationship. If you feel that the facts you prepared are still important, look for opportunities to discuss them as part of the overall working relationship. If materials are needed, make sure they are translated into Arabic before handing them out. This will ensure that your meaning is properly conveyed, and it also shows respect for your Moroccan friends.

Moroccans are also interested in the context of a situation. This type of context often demands face-to-face contact. Companies that seek to do business with Moroccans by relying on emails, phones, and text messages will end up frustrated. These activities convey low context (tasks), therefore they are not useful and are mainly viewed as a distraction. Work with local contacts to understand how to present information in a meaningful way, and to convey your thoughts and beliefs in a way that will have the most impact. Share stories, photographs, important papers, and articles about your company to help explain your past successes in business.

Showing a genuine respect for the culture and for the success of leaders carries more weight than statistical tables and productivity charts. Use your time together to connect informally, to give and receive hospitality, to talk about your family, and your values. Be sensitive to cultural norms. For example, avoid alcohol in most situations. When reclining, be careful not to expose the sole of your shoe to your host. Do not reach out or extend your left hand (considered unclean). Do not make physical contact with females, especially if you are a single male. Remember, these are not just adherences to the practices of a local culture in order to "fit in." These are demonstrations of your loyalty, your attentiveness to what is important, and your respect for the laws that govern the land. If you respect the laws around cleanliness, then you will respect the broader, higher-level ethical principles, and you will honour the subtleties inherent in a working relationship.

REASONING - How I think

SIMPLE



COMPLEX



My Position

You like to deliver results in a time-efficient, yet comprehensive manner, whenever possible. In order to this, you are able to reduce complex issues to manageable portions but at the same time recognising the impact of context and supporting data. As a result, you enjoy exploring a problem in detail and presenting your ideas in a way that takes multiple angles into consideration.

The Moroccan Position

Moroccans will reveal complex thought processes when calculating risk and considering new opportunities. Adhering to "god's will", family concerns, political circumstances, saving face, respecting moral laws and culture, and being successful financially are just some of the factors that feed a Moroccan's decision-making process. It is important to be patient and helpful during this process, even if that means answering questions that do not seem relevant. Moroccans pride themselves on their traditions, knowing that companies and global leaders must work to pursue them and understand them in order to transact business. Reducing your own logic to simple conclusions or covering things at a high level will only invite more suspicion and follow up inquiries.

Patience, openness, honesty, a genuine learning attitude, and respect for tradition are key principles when operating in Morocco. Dealing with complex reasoning takes time. Be willing to wait to let the process unfold naturally without forcing the issues or applying arbitrary pressures. Maintain a positive attitude and a willingness to respond with action to support your words when the time is right. This is time well spent. Tolerance and understanding are important to project a willingness to truly deal with the deeper issues. Recognize that decisions and answers may not come for a long time and that those in power need to balance many different elements of life in order for the decision to feel right and good.

When listening to gain understanding expect a lot of different ideas to be woven together with no clear logical framework. Reflect statements back and ask more open ended questions to drill deeper into the thought processes. For example, a Moroccan might push back on shipping an order during Ramadan. Rather than saying, "We don't believe this will be an issue", choose an open-ended approach like, "What is your concern regarding the shipping?" If the approach is genuine, Moroccans will feel that you are truly listening and responding to their complexity and not trying to minimize the importance of the situation. This logic makes sense in a high context environment. It is not necessary for you to pretend to be something you are not, simply focus on being yourself. Moroccans are not looking for conformity, only for respect.