




CULTURAL PROFILE




Profile Comparison: Gerry Broennimann vs. Switzerland

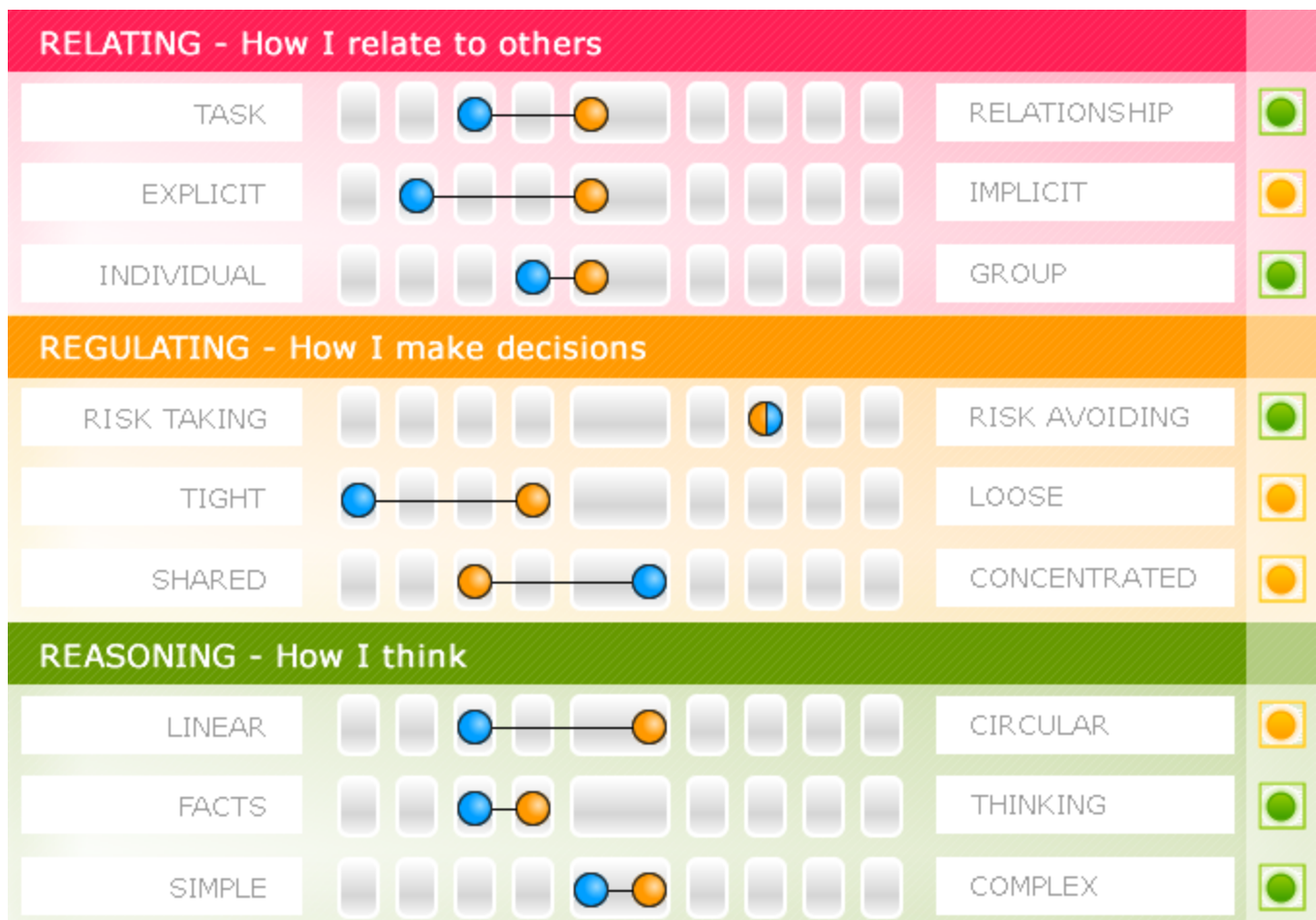
Gerry Broennimann's Profile Comparison: Switzerland

The scale positions are indicated as follows:

 = Your position  = Overlapping position  = The Swiss 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 Swiss Position

German Swiss tend to be very task oriented. They have a strong work ethic and will prioritise the job in hand. First meetings will focus less on getting to know the partner. There will be little small talk, in an effort to behave in a professional manner and get down to business quickly. Private issues and social life are strictly separated from business. Personal questions should be avoided unless the subject is volunteered. The relationship with the business partner is of underlying importance, but this may not be immediately obvious due to the focus on task and the direct communication style. Over time the balance will tip more towards relationship first - it just takes time for this to develop.

Because the German Swiss can be a little cautious towards newcomers, it is important to pay particular attention to starting off in the right way. It may be helpful to use third parties for introductions - preferably someone of high professional standing e.g. a lawyer or banker. The Swiss find it easier to welcome people who are sincere, well informed, polite and courteous. Abiding by the rules is extremely important -whether these are written or just understood. Newcomers who do not behave in the "correct" manner and circumvent accepted practice are likely to be treated with suspicion or cause upset. Laws govern many aspects of daily business and everyday life. These include compulsory social insurance schemes (such as security against illness, accident and unemployment) and laws allocating permissible times for leisure pursuits (e.g. when not to wash the car or mow the lawn).

The Swiss have a high regard for private property, whether material or intellectual. They prefer to have agreements confirmed in writing, rather than relying on the spoken word.

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 Swiss Position

Swiss German communication is very explicit and direct. Clarity and sincerity are respected, as is a low key and quietly self-confident manner. People generally exercise moderation in tone and volume. It would be unusual to experience shouting and great exuberance. The Swiss can appear reserved and rather serious. They are attentive and good listeners, and will rarely interrupt. People are not afraid to express their own opinions clearly, but they are unlikely to disagree strongly, preferring to avoid confrontation and conflict. Switzerland has a policy of permanent neutrality. This transfers to the personal level, where people prefer not to take sides in a conflict if possible.

Politeness and respect of the correct form are key. There will always be a right way of doing things. Business dinners can be quite formal. People shake hands both on meeting and departing. Direct eye contact is seen as a sign of honesty. Business is taken seriously - humour is reserved for social occasions and is not generally appreciated to lighten the tone in business meetings.

The Swiss are generally on first name terms with friends only, although this differs a lot between businesses as well as in language usage. In some companies people use first names, but usually in combination with the formal personal pronoun ("Sie" in German or "vous" in French). Modesty and understatement are valued.

The Swiss all learn two languages in school and many speak more, including their home dialect. In some companies, "Hochdeutsch" may be the language of business rather than English. The Swiss German majority speak Schwyzerdütsch, (which is a dialect and not one of the four official languages) which they revert to amongst themselves when not required to speak English or German for the sake of their visitors.

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 Swiss Position

The Swiss respect individualism and recognise that each person is responsible for their own actions and decisions. This is seen no more clearly than in the banking sector which prides itself on its confidentiality and discretion. Self-reliance is valued, as is the respect for privacy. As a country, Switzerland has profited from isolation and international trade throughout the ages. Since medieval times, its mountainous terrain guaranteed natural independence. It has a policy of permanent neutrality, which has been respected by other European countries since 1815. Landlocked in the middle of Europe, it chooses not to be a member of the European Union. The Swiss elected by popular referendum in 1991 and 2001 to stay out. Swiss national pride is strong, at least towards outsiders. Individually the Swiss feel they belong primarily to their ethnic group. They see themselves as being "united but not unified", living in harmony next to each other without being greatly interlinked. They have a very long history of federalism, starting with the "everlasting confederation" of the three earliest cantons in 1291. Regional differences and rivalry can be quite strong, with many different dialects, hardly surprising in a country that is two thirds mountainous. With little outside influence, strong individual identities in small local communities developed over centuries.

There is strict delineation between public and private domains. Relationships are clearly defined so that people know what the expectations of others are, and where personal boundaries lie. People would be unlikely to withhold their opinions for the sake of group harmony, but would not deliberately provoke conflict. Consensus is extremely important.

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 Swiss Position

The Swiss have a very strong preference for risk avoidance. They have a reputation for being stable and secure, with a low risk threshold. This is one of the reasons international businesses often choose to locate their European or global headquarters in Switzerland. The service sector accounts for two thirds of Switzerland's GDP, with banking and insurance being particularly prominent. Swiss banks are the safe haven of funds from all over the world. As individuals, the Swiss are quite averse to taking out credit and generally would prefer to save up for major purchases. They tend to be more conservative than adventurous in their behaviour, habits and dress. It is seen as important to conform and keep up appearances. Anyone who is deliberately showy, loud or ostentatious is likely to be viewed as a rebel. Children are brought up to behave in an "exemplary" manner, to respect their elders and tradition, abide by the rules and be hard-working and reliable. Non-conformers can be reported to the local police by their fellow citizens. Predictability is valued. Improvisation is not a strong trait of the Swiss. This is not to say that they are not inventive, but rather that the new and unexpected is not readily embraced. Change needs proper preparation to be most successful. It is best to avoid major modifications while a project is underway.

Switzerland has survived admirably, both politically and economically with its policy of permanent neutrality. Big decisions are taken by referendum, which are a central feature of Swiss political life and are conducted at federal, cantonal and municipal level several times a year. The Swiss have elected by referenda not to join the European Union. They finally elected to give women the right to vote at federal level in 1971 (the final canton - Appenzell - did not follow suit until 1990).

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 Swiss Position

The Swiss have an exact, linear view of time. Punctuality is seen as imperative. Timetables and deadlines are taken very seriously. The most obvious expression of the Swiss passion for time is its world-renowned clock-making industry. Swiss watches exemplify the Swiss values of high quality precision, reliability, durability and design.

Meetings are always by appointment. Punctual arrival is expected. Even 5 minutes after the appointed time can be viewed as late, requiring an apology. For social invitations, people tend to arrive a little later - about 15 minutes is accepted practice. When running a meeting, it will be expected to start and finish on time and to follow the agenda. Interruptions and side-tracking are not welcome. Deadlines are taken seriously and respected. People feel honour-bound to deliver on time. If this is not possible, an apology and acceptable reasons must be given.

Shops across the country have clearly regulated opening times, which may vary in large city centres, where the trend is towards more flexible hours. Public transport is dense and highly efficient. Trains in Switzerland really do run like clock-work.

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 Swiss Position

The balance of power in Switzerland tends to be concentrated, but this depends very much on the size and type of business, as well as its ownership and location. Many international organisations (both private and public) have made Switzerland their headquarters. This is not least due to its political and economic stability, the reputation of its banks and the financial advantages of being located there (tax incentives etc.). Many Swiss banks and companies are global e.g. Nestlé, which is the largest food manufacturer in the world. There are a large number of regional banks, although the number has decreased significantly as a result of consolidation in the nineties. On balance, there are more SMEs. Family owned businesses tend to have patriarchal leadership, with a large degree of formality and hierarchy in spite of their smaller size.

State organisations (government, cantonal banks and organisations in the rail transport, electricity and telecomms sector) tend to be very bureaucratic, with a high degree of hierarchy. Decisions come from the top, although senior people will avoid autocratic decision-making which is too overt. There is an expectation of allowing a fair hearing. Consultation is widespread, with contributions expected from all involved. Since open confrontation is to be avoided, people engage in lobbying and private briefing strategies before arriving at a shared consensus. The Swiss are good team players in this respect, listening attentively and trying to incorporate different views. Their neutral and federalist stance is nurtured in the military service, which is compulsory for males between 20 and 30. Most men serve for an initial short term, followed by several weeks annually until the required number of days has been reached.

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 Swiss Position

As task-oriented, direct communicators, the German Swiss are generally linear in their processing. French Swiss and Italian Swiss may process their thoughts in a more circular way. Meetings have a detailed agenda that is followed through. People like to formulate clear outcomes with action plans. Issues will be addressed in a logical order, moving only to the next when one has been completed. Responsibilities are clearly allocated and these are tied to agreed time frames. The Swiss can appear intense in the pursuit of their objectives and in the effort to adhere to strict time-keeping. What has been agreed will be carried out without the need for checking up.

Business presentations are rational, structured and easy to follow. Materials and media are expected to be of the highest quality. This also applies to the style of delivery and content, which should be precise, but reflecting serious thought and background research. Switzerland is a high-tech country that sets high standards and expects its partners to be of the same calibre.

It is important to follow set procedures in a linear fashion, but this does not mean that action will be quick. The Swiss are not famous for making swift decisions. They prefer to think long term and of issues and consequences which could impact decision-making. They are not out for the "quick win" but rather for something more solid and lasting. Once the decision has been made, however slowly, it will be adhered to. People are prepared to wait longer for a satisfactory outcome, welcoming long-term continuity over short term gains which may be less calculable. "More haste, less speed" is an accurate Swiss proverb. Rather than let a process evolve, managers would rather set stringent objectives to work towards over a defined period of time.

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 Swiss Position

The German Swiss are analytical thinkers, using universal rules to solve problems. They value intelligence and are impressed by thoughtful questions. The Swiss are not generally comfortable with improvisation, which could be perceived as too risky and unpredictable. They prefer taking their time to work methodically with great depth and precision. This approach makes them very successful as inventors. Smart cars and micro-scooters both originated here. Famous thinkers and philosophers include Karl Jung, and Albert Einstein who took Swiss nationality and worked in the patent office in Bern.

Switzerland ranks high on innovation in international comparisons, which may be explained by the thorough, factual approach to product development. Business and government spending on research and development is amongst the highest in the world. Many international companies have their R&D centres in Switzerland. A significant number of enterprises cater to high value, small niche markets which rely on being ahead of the field. Since Switzerland is two thirds mountainous and lacks natural resources, the Swiss have always been forced to seek alternative methods of income. Services account for two thirds of GNP, the most prominent sectors being banking and insurance, tourism and health services.

Logic and solid fact are important in influencing and negotiating. Subjective feelings are less likely to sway decision-making. People prefer to work within the guidelines. As such, a very effective management approach can be the delegation of tasks, as long as the responsibility and expectations are carefully defined and understood.

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 Swiss Position

The German Swiss prefer logical reasoning and explanations that are well founded and presented in a concise way. They are unlikely to accept brief "bullet point" proposals without being assured of the depth of the underlying research. They are direct in their style of communication so will get to the point quickly, but would be wary of quick and easy solutions. The French and Italian Swiss are also interested in a thorough exploration of the contextual background of an issue, but they will verbalise this process too.

The Swiss are reputed to be skilful negotiators, due to their low-key style and ability to stand their ground. They are confident of the high quality of their goods and services and are difficult to put under pressure, since they are prepared to wait for the best outcome. They are generally very well prepared and informed, having researched thoroughly the matter in hand.

Many Swiss love precision and detail, exemplified in their industry - precision instruments are their third largest export category. They have learned to live with the complexity of their environment over the ages. The number of distinct units of government (cantons), each with their own currency and customs deterred international traders in the 19th century because it was so complex. Swiss bureaucracy today is lengthy and cumbersome, although the trend is towards greater efficiency and streamlining. Taxes are levied both by the Federal Government as well as by the cantons and communes. Each of the 26 cantons has its own tax legislation, so the tax burden varies depending on where a business is located.