




CULTURAL PROFILE




Profile Comparison: Gerry Broennimann vs. USA

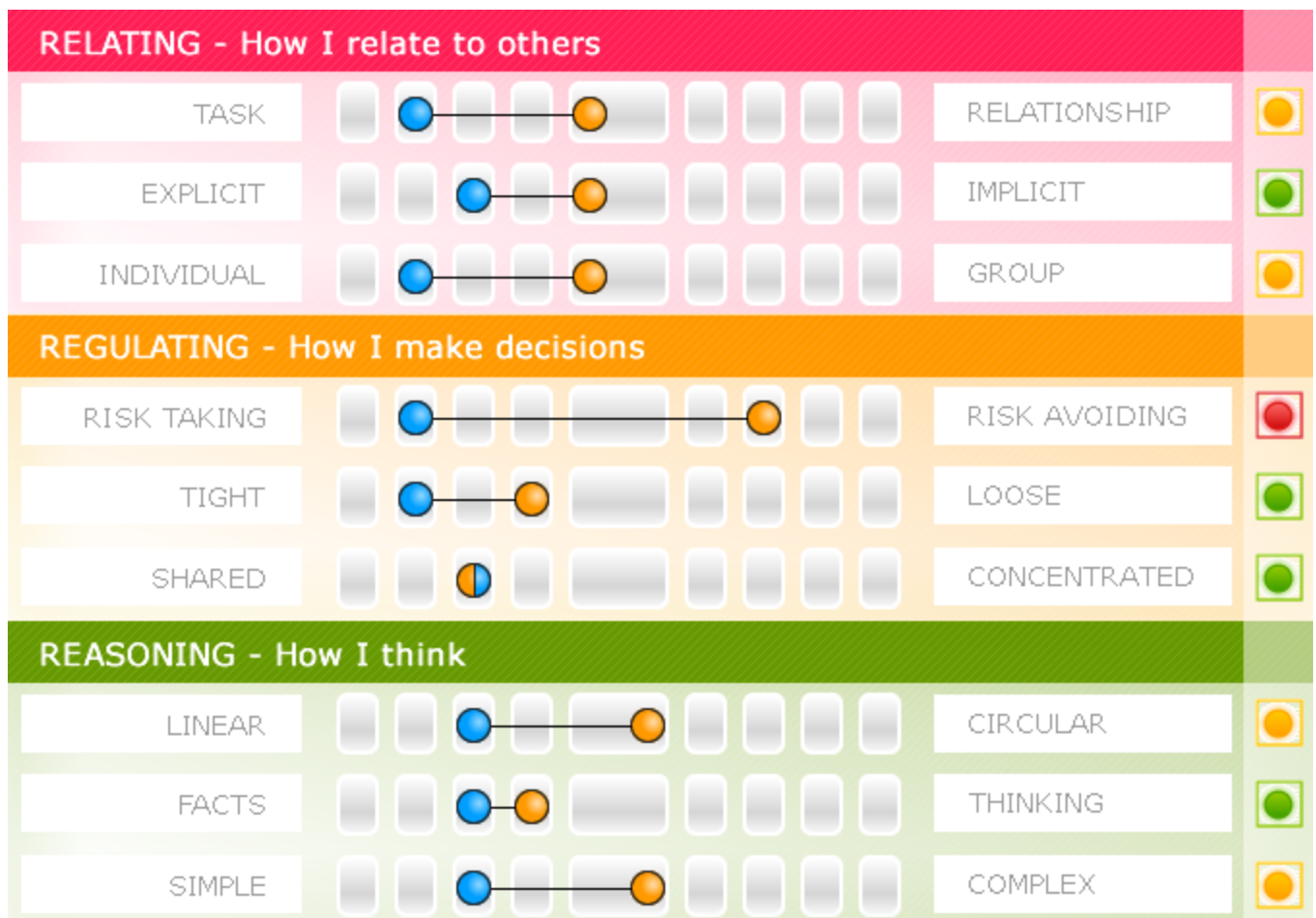
Gerry Broennimann's Profile Comparison: USA

The scale positions are indicated as follows:

 = Your position  = Overlapping position  = The American 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 American Position

Most Americans are very task oriented. Business success is measured by achieving targets and getting the job done. Most Americans would consider it sufficient to pay due respect to their business partners by exchanging a few pleasantries at the beginning of a conversation. They may not offer refreshments on meeting, in order not to "waste time". There is a tendency to focus on the "bottom line", i.e. measure success in monetary terms. Time is money, and short-term, commercial results deliver faster than relationship building. A great deal of satisfaction is derived from reaping the visible (materialistic) rewards of a good, hard day's labour. This may be traced back to the Puritan work ethic of the first settlers in America. Work comes before pleasure. Americans live to work, not vice versa. Relationships are important, but will often play a secondary role when work deadlines loom. It is considered acceptable to put relationships "on hold" while attending to pressing work matters. Americans are known for the long hours they work, and short holidays they take, in comparison to most European countries. The vast majority of office workers will stay in touch with their company while on holiday by phone or email. The focus is on short-term deliverables rather than the long term. The population is highly migrant, and likely to have a number of different jobs over a lifetime career, changing location accordingly. This may explain why Americans are less inclined to put down roots and nurture long-term relationships, both socially as well as in business.

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 American Position

Americans tend to have a direct, assertive communication style. Communication is low context, meaning that the spoken word is intended to convey meaning. The message is spelt out, and kept clear and concise. The bullet point summary is preferred to a long-winded explanation. This is linked to the focus on time-keeping, tight planning and meeting deadlines. From an early age, American children are taught to speak up, speak clearly and be assertive. There is little concept of "face-saving" found in higher context cultures. For most Americans, the email is the ideal vehicle of written communication, allowing fast and terse messaging with even unknown recipients, who do not take offence at the lack of perfection or formality. Invented in the US, it is now the most commonly used (and abused) written form of communication. Protocol governing the usage of email is often unspoken but understood. The acceptable minimum response time may often be as short as 24 hours. Voicemail is another popular way of conveying messages in the shortest possible time.

Most Americans would consider that it is the responsibility of the speaker to communicate clearly and precisely, in order to avoid misunderstanding. "Say what you mean and mean what you say". It is not surprising that the American use of language has developed to be so direct, concise and informal since America is such a multiracial society where newly arrived settlers all spoke different languages, and needed to find a common form of communicating with one another. For many, English was not their mother tongue.

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 American Position

The Americans are highly individualistic. If they had to decide who should come first, the majority would reply "me before we". They consider themselves as free, independent actors who are responsible for their own actions. Children are taught from an early age to be independent and are given every opportunity to choose from a selection of options to develop their individual taste. Products and services are available to the consumer in a vast array of options, catering to the individual taste. You only need to visit the nearest deli counter or coffee shop to have this confirmed.

There is great conviction that every person is unique and is able through his or her own effort to achieve "the American dream". The freedom of the individual was anchored in the Constitution and is still guarded closely today by a large number of "watchdog" organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The view of self is often so strong that it is believed that a person can accomplish anything through hard work and a positive attitude. This view is born out by the great number of highly publicised and celebrated individuals who have gone from humble beginnings to become rich and powerful (Abraham Lincoln, Bill Clinton).

The idea of each for his own has been rooted in US culture since the Pilgrims, who started with nothing and achieved so much. The strong Protestant culture promoted the belief that you look after yourself and "your own", (i.e. close family) with looser ties to the larger community.

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 American Position

Americans tend to be quite comfortable with risk and are generally very forward looking. They are optimistic in their belief that the future will be better and that change means progress which can only be positive. Almost anything new must be better than the old. This attitude has been passed on down generations from the founders of the US who left their own countries for a fresh start in an unknown land. They found a land of plenty which posed its own challenges. The wagon trains of the 1800's were urged to claim as much land as quickly as possible. The new settlers persevered in the belief that if it did not work first time, it would the next. (If at first you don't succeed, try again). This also explains the high tolerance for failure, which is acceptable as long as it is viewed as a learning experience.

The American culture nurtures "entrepreneurs", and celebrates those who are most successful as heroes and role models (Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Jack Welch). This contrasts to other, less risk-tolerant cultures where the same people could be viewed as eccentric or non-conformist.

Employers look for individuals who are highly flexible, creative, have a positive attitude and excellent problem-solving skills. They recognise the necessity of having a workforce which is able to adapt to constantly changing circumstances. Lean organisational forms are created for the same reason. The short-term "hire and fire" mentality of American firms is accepted practice and not prevented by labour laws, as is the case in many other countries.

It is acceptable to single out individuals for reward and praise. In some companies this is a formalised practise with "employee of the week (or month)" awards. Companies recognise that, to retain the best employees, opportunities must be given for individual self-actualisation and development.

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 American Position

Most Americans are driven by deadlines and schedules. This obsession with time can be traced back to the Founding Fathers – mostly Europeans bringing their factory focus on time from the Industrial Revolution. Many Americans today feel pressurized and rushed by the many competing demands on their time. At the same time "busyness" is a sign of status and importance, so achieving a great deal under time pressure is recognised proof of one's capability.

America is the inventor of 24/7 store hours, fast food, drive-through restaurants and many more time-saving inventions that have become an undisputed part of modern day living. Americans would generally feel honour-bound to deliver to promised deadlines. It would not be considered impolite to cancel a social engagement in order to attend to pressing business matters. The timely completion of a task takes precedence over relationships, which can be put on hold.

Since time is money, punctuality is all-important. Calling ahead to announce an unforeseen delay (even of a few minutes) is considered correct business practice.

The concern to be punctual may override the necessity for adequate preparation. The American approach has been described as "shoot first, then aim". It is no surprise that the slogan "Just do it" was coined by the American company Nike.

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 American Position

Americans firmly believe that everyone is born equal and free. Since America is considered the land of opportunity, even those with the most humble beginnings can achieve the greatest success. The Horatio Alger society lists new additions to the "rags to riches" tales annually.

As an employee, you can climb the professional ladder based on your experience, achievement and education. Networking can help, but not without having the right professional profile first. Recognised proof of achievement is often stated in hard facts (financial results, tasks accomplished with measurable outcomes).

Traditional more hierarchical organisation structures in American companies have been very much flattened in recent years. Since the American consultants McKinsey introduced the matrix organisation in the sixties, organisations have been in a constant state of flux. The US is the birthplace of most management trends, so all organisational forms can be found there. The short-term business focus and risk-friendly approach favours fluid organisational forms such as task forces and virtual teams, particularly in high tech industries. Authority is highly decentralized. Many organisations are still hierarchical though, where the boss is the traditional resource controller, authoritative and results-driven.

The preferred style is informal, since people do not want to emphasize status differences. This is why Americans are quickly on first name terms and do not often use titles on business cards.

Employees are generally expected to take the initiative to accomplish tasks, working across functional lines where necessary. They might be guided on priorities, but not how to achieve the targets set. Where people work in teams, roles are assigned with different levels of authority. The leader will cooperate, but still direct and take personal responsibility. It would be unusual for the team to take collective responsibility for error.

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 American Position

Americans have a strong bias towards linear processing. They want to get down to action fast, since they feel under pressure to achieve targets on time. They are task-focused and open to taking risks. Mistakes are tolerated and problems are seen as challenges, so the linear approach is considered the most efficient. Interruptions are generally not welcomed. Covering similar ground to include all angles would be considered a waste of time.

American products tend to be launched on the market at an early stage of the total project planning and implementation process. This may be considered immature by less action oriented, and more risk-averse cultures. Once the product is launched it may be reintroduced in several updated versions before its final form is found.

American life is ruled by planning – a linear process which directs action through a number of sequential steps to achieve a foreseeable goal. Planning gives control to the owner of the process and is seen to concentrate efforts to achieve set deadlines. Too much analysis is unnecessary, hence the popular saying “paralysis by analysis”. A whole American industry is devoted to personal organization and planning. Products and services catering to the mass market include literature, Filofaxes, electronic planners, PDAs (personal digital assistants), planning software and even life planning consultants. The majority of Americans live by lists, transferring their strategic plans to daily actionable items.

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 American Position

Americans tend to be very concerned with hard evidence and rely strongly on facts for problem analysis and decision-making. There is a general disregard for the voicing of emotion or thoughts which can not be backed up by evidence.

Americans favour direct communication and particularly the written form, whether by email, memos, agenda, and the minutes of meetings. There is a strong compulsion to file reports on a regular basis. A likely explanation is that if the facts are recorded, the process is controlled and those involved are more committed to action.

Typical business correspondence tends to be succinct, using a heading to introduce the subject, a factual report and a brief closure. Even for longer reports, a theoretical exploration would generally be considered unnecessary detail. Dealing with the matter in hand, and finding the solution quickly is considered a better use of time than developing conceptual frameworks.

Where a great amount of detail is encountered is in legal documents and contracts. Americans like to play by the rules and expect others to do the same. Contracts are often very lengthy to cover all cases, and will list assets and regulatory filings in numerous appendices.

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 American Position

Americans tend to prefer simple explanations, rather than a lengthy treatment of most subjects. A convincing line of argumentation, backed by solid fact is the most likely way to go about winning a proposal. Dissent may be seen as destructive, and the airing of feelings and intuition inappropriate. Discussion just for the sake of it is viewed as a complete waste of time. People are in a hurry to complete the task and move on. Americans are taught early to "stay focused" and "get to the point", and to distinguish between "nice to know" and "need to know". Many will have had practice composing "elevator pitches" for that occasion where you have a rare opportunity to get your message across in a very short space of time.

Why make matters more complex? Simplicity is the key! These are commonly heard phrases. Massive volumes of literature are dedicated to the "effective but simple" following. A whole series of best-selling business and general reference books entitled "... for Dummies" targets people who find traditional reference books "overloaded with technical details and advice you'll never use". Language usage reflects the preference towards simple and informal, seen particularly when comparing British and American English. In American English, words are more commonly spelt as they sound (color, not colour).

Many abbreviations and acronyms are used for the sake of simplicity and speed. E.g. tba (to be announced) asap (as soon as possible) and even tragic, historical events (9/11: the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center). Presentations are generally held with bullet point slide shows, using visuals and adhering to the KISS principle (keep it short and simple).