

# International Conversation Cafe

*The Culture Map* by Erin Meyer

Do cultural differences impact people and organizations that work globally? The answer is obviously, yes. From how we disagree to how we manage others, to how we communicate, our differences and misunderstandings can threaten to undo the cooperation we so desperately want. Enter Erin Meyer's, *The Culture Map*. Written in 2014, Meyer, a professor at INSEAD, a leading international business school, explains eight areas of friction between cultures. Each discussion guide focuses on one of the eight areas.

## Two Kinds of Trust

Everyone knows that trust is the foundation of all healthy relationships. If there is no trust then there is no meaningful and helpful relationship. But how is trust built?

Meyers explains that there are two kinds of trust: cognitive and affective trust. Cognitive trust comes from the confidence you feel in the other person based on their accomplishments and skills. The person does good work and is pleasant and consistent. Hence, we trust them.

Affective trust comes from feelings of closeness, empathy, and friendship. You might laugh together, relax together, know the other person on a friendship level. Hence, we trust them.

Another way of looking at this topic is to think of task-based and relationship-based trust. Task-based comes from recognizing skills and relationship-based comes from personal relationships.

*Read over the following chart. Identify where you fall on this scale and give an example.*



The difficulty comes when two opposite cultures look to establish trust with the other one. Each comes into the relationship with different expectations. Let's say that a Brazilian company is seeking to make a deal with an American company.

*According to the chart, what are the ways each culture goes about establishing trust?*

*What are the conflicts they might have?*

*What might you suggest to each to resolve the problems?*

Peaches and Coconuts

People from the United States or Brazil, for example, tend to be described as a peach. They are easy to talk to and share personal information quickly. This does not always result in ongoing friendship though. People from Russia, Prague, or Munich, are a coconut culture and do not generally make an effort to smile or to make small talk. There is a Russian saying, "If we pass a stranger on the street who is smiling, we know with certainty that that person is crazy...or else American." "Different cultures have different social cues that mark appropriate behavior with strangers." P 177

*How would you describe the culture you are from?*

*Tell about a time you were confused about what another person's behavior meant?*

Finally, there are reasons why some cultures establish trust over relationships rather than tasks. Meyer suggests that some countries rely on relationships because, in the case of a failed contract, it is much more difficult to take people to court. "The only way you feel assured that you'll be paid in countries like Nigeria is the trust you have in the other person....For this reason, investing time in establishing trust will often save time in the long run." Even in countries with reliable legal structures, such as Japan and France, relationship building is highly valued. Pg. 184-185

*How do you go about building relationships of trust?*

*How could you accommodate yourself to another person's style of trust?*