

The Oys & Joys of Working in

Tips and tricks for navigating the American workplace

Andrew Keene | July 2023

+1.414.943.9999 | andrewmkeene@gmail.com

Shabbat Dinner

Yes, even Shabbat has rules :)

- Plans are made at least a week in advance
- Check before bringing a guest
- Clarify your dietary restrictions beforehand
- Offer to bring something...and then
- Show up with something (wine, flowers, etc.)
- Avoid discussing American politics
- Send a thank you text/email either after you get home or the next morning

Communications

We do it a bit differently

- Email is still the dominant tool in the workplace. Respond timely to emails.
- SMS/WhatsApp is not preferred for work communication
- If you call someone, especially an older person, leave a voicemail with your phone number to call back
- Include pleasantries in your email but keep them short and to the point
- Spell check your emails esp. when using people's names
- Say “thank you” more than you think you need to :)

Americans are passive aggressive...

| When an American says.... | The American may mean... | An Israeli might hear / think... |
|---|--|---|
| We may have some challenges here. | There are problems here that must be solved. | Great -- finally things are getting interesting, challenge is good. |
| I might do this differently | The way it is getting done now is wrong and needs to be changed. | How you would do it isn't relevant, since there doesn't sound like there's any problem with the way we're doing it already. |
| Did I understand you correctly when you said Y? | I am amazed that you said something so wrong or stupid. | Looks like I need to explain again because they didn't understand the first time. |
| I would appreciate if you could get this to me by Thursday. | The drop dead deadline for this is Thursday. | It would be nice to get it done by Thursday, but not essential. Later than Thursday will also be OK. |

| When an Israeli says... | The Israeli may mean... | An American might hear / think... |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| You have to listen to me | I want to get your attention | You're ordering me around, how insulting! |
| You are wrong | I disagree with your point of view and want to discuss it some more so that we can reach agreement on the correct view | There's no room for discussion. Better back off. |
| Your presentation was OK | Your presentation was really good | You didn't like my presentation. |
| Why don't you do it another way? | I'm giving you a helpful suggestion. | You are really insulting my work. |

Adapted (in part) with permission of Lucy Shahaar

Meetings

Americans love them!

- Show up **early**. Start on time. End on time.
- Check the meeting agenda beforehand. If you're organizing the meeting, include an agenda/goals.
- Double check that you haven't excluded anyone from the meeting invite - clarify with your supervisor who should be included. Some meetings should be very small, some should be much larger.
- Come prepared. If it is a group of important stakeholders, consider a slide deck.
- Know what decisions you need to make by the end, assign owners/volunteers, and clarify deadlines.
- Keep your work calendar updated so people can schedule meetings with you easily.
- Try not to interrupt other people or dominate the conversation (even if you are leading it)
- The meeting after the meeting is often where the real work is done.
- Disagree with **ideas**, not people. (Disagree without being disagreeable)

Feedback

There's a few different flavors

- Americans like the sh*t sandwich method - critical feedback on a bun of compliments
- Feedback has a power dynamic involved
- Praise: a generic compliment not specific to any one action
- Positive Reinforcement: positive feedback on a specific action
- Corrective Action: swift correction to an action taken
- Negative Feedback: didn't like a specific action taken

Personal Boundaries

- Respect physical office space
- Texting is seen as personal (versus email)
- Don't show up unannounced at someone's house (or even with short notice)
- Don't call someone after 8pm (or so) either at home or cell unless they are expecting it
- Be mindful of personal space/boundaries in conversation
- Okay to be social with colleagues but colleagues are colleagues before friends

The Art of Schmoozing

It's not what you know, it's who you know!

- A way to converse casually, especially in order to gain an advantage or make a social connection
- Gateway to invaluable connections, opens doors to new opportunities
- Helps you understand the social landscape and community politics
- Helps build your stakeholder map
- Practice your elevator speech (who are you in 30 seconds?)
- Have 5 go-to questions to be interested (not interesting)
- Follow up!!

Gender

- We are all learning
- Each community is at a different place
- Listen, observe, ask questions
- Pronouns
- Disconnect gender from politics
- Questions? Concerns?