



Chester & Sons Co.

EXPANDING OVERSEAS: Preparing Our Team

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Presented to: Chester & Sons Board of Directors

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Board of Directors
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Dear Board of Directors,

Enclosed is our report on the expansion of Chester & Sons Company to the Netherlands. We have researched information about business culture in this country in order to prepare our people to do business with a country in the Netherlands.

The methods our team used to find information were from both textbooks and the Internet. We used several scholarly sources and a textbook about business communication. Things we did not cover in this report are the specific economic aspects of the country, their political preferences and style of governance, or other companies that would present competition for us if we do business there.

The positive experiences of creating this report are that we got to look inside a totally different culture and expand our own knowledge on the way business can be conducted. One of the more difficult parts was the long hours spent researching information and the language barrier when we visited to do more hands on research.

Based on the information our team has gathered we recommend that we should start conducting business in the Netherlands immediately. We recommend filing the necessary paperwork as soon as possible, in order to prepare for the arrival of our business in the Netherlands. The country presents a business culture similar to our own and we should have no difficulties harboring success there.

The Netherlands presents an incredible opportunity to begin our expansion overseas and we encourage you to begin that process as soon as possible. We would like to thank you for allowing us to take on this project and ask for your consideration for more in the future.

Regards,

Student 1
Team Member

Student 2
Team Member

Student 3
Team Member



Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the board of directors with information about the business culture of the Netherlands. Our company's founder was from the Netherlands and is looking to expand overseas. Our team was given the privilege of exploring the possibility of doing business in the Netherlands and hopefully opening the door to a new realm of business.

The findings of our report are conclusive in that the business culture of the Netherlands is very similar to our own. They are well known for having the best non-native English tongue and present almost no significant cultural challenges to work with.

Based on the information our team has gathered we recommend that we should start conducting business in the Netherlands immediately. We recommend filing the necessary paperwork as soon as possible, in order to prepare for the arrival of our business in the Netherlands. The country presents a business culture similar to our own and we should have no difficulties harboring success there.



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Introduction

We will be exploring the idea of whether or not our company could effectively expand overseas into the Netherlands.

Purpose

The purpose of our research is to find out whether it is worth the company's time and resources to expand into the country of the Netherlands. Our research will help provide the board of directors with information to help them decide whether to seek business there.

Scope

The scope of this report covers all pertinent information that would be needed to make a decision on whether to conduct business in the Netherlands. This information will include everything from what vaccinations and papers the country requires, to the culture that the country's businesses operate according to.

Limitations

Things not covered in this report are the Netherlands economic trends, the government stability, nor the family culture in households.

Assumptions

In order for this report to be acted on the country needs to present a compatible business culture for us to work with. Also the region of the world this country is located needs to present a safe environment for our people to conduct business.

Methods of Obtaining Information

We have conducted extensive research through numerous reliable databases. These include CIA and governmental websites, including many online articles and studies focusing on culture. We also relied heavily on the information presented in Cardon's Business Communication Text Book.

Background and Expansion Decision

Over the last ten years, Chester & Sons Company has been fortunate to see rapid expansion throughout the United States and Canada. Our company is increasingly growing and as a result of our successes, we have decided to venture overseas to expand our business.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's latest business environment rankings, the Netherlands is currently one of the best countries to conduct business with in the world. (Business... Netherlands 1).

Additionally, Chester & Sons was founded by a Dutchmen and because the Netherlands has a business culture relatively similar to that of the United States, we have decided to start our expansion in the Netherlands.

Business Etiquette in the Netherlands

This section will discuss the standard norms and different approaches the Dutch prefer in relation to their workplace. This will give the reader an idea on how to behave and what to expect in a working environment regarding interaction between people and accepted working methods.

Government requirements for visiting and returning to US

In order to get into the Netherlands, visitors must have two blank pages in their passport for entry stamps. Passports must also be valid for at least three months beyond the planned date of departure from the Netherlands (Netherlands). This avoids any conflicts that might arise from unintended travel interruptions.

For stays of less than 90 days, no travel visa is needed. For stays longer than 90 days, however, it is necessary to inquire about the appropriate visa by contacting the Dutch Embassy or a Dutch Consulate in the United States (Netherlands).

You may not enter or exit the Netherlands with more than 10,000 euros in your possession (Netherlands).

Immunizations

There are no vaccination requirements for visiting the Netherlands (Netherlands).

Business Dress

Business dress in the Netherlands is quite similar to that in the United States. Most people tend to dress fairly conservatively and it is better to be overdressed than underdressed (Business etiquette).

For ladies, a trousers and trouser suits are often common. For men, it is common to wear a jacket, but not necessarily a suit, and to take the jacket off while working. Uniforms, except at the janitorial level, are often rare (Business etiquette).

Dress does vary between industries, however. The following are some guidelines for business dress in specific fields:

- Banking: American business formal
- IT and entertainment: jeans and an open neck shirt
- Marketing and service: colorful shirt and tie combinations (Business etiquette)

Laws and regulations required for starting a business as a non-citizen

The Netherlands offers a one-year start up residence permit for entrepreneurs interested in starting a business in the country.

In order to partake in this program, entrepreneurs must: have a valid passport, pose no threat to the country's safety, and take out a health insurance policy within the country (Start-up).

To be considered for the start-up entrepreneur program, the following conditions must be met:

- The entrepreneur must work together with an expert facilitator

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- The intended product or service must be innovative
- The start-up entrepreneur must have a plan to advance their business
- The start-up entrepreneur and facilitator must be registered in the Commercial Register of the Chamber of Commerce
- The start-up entrepreneur must have sufficient resources to live in the Netherlands (Start-up)

For businesses NOT interested in gaining a residence permit through the start-up entrepreneur program, they must register at the local chamber of commerce and with local tax authorities. In addition, the company must prove that they have sufficient capital deposited in the bank and have their company name checked for appropriateness and validity. Finally, the company will need to draw up and present a deed of incorporation (Top 10 Challenges).

Introduction Etiquette

When meeting an important business colleague for the first time, it is best to be introduced by a third party. If this is not available, you should introduce yourself by stating your first and last name and providing a firm handshake. You may also offer a casual greeting like “good day”, but should refrain from asking any type of rhetorical question as this may be seen as confusing.

One must pay attention to the following points regarding social interactions:

- A common greeting between acquaintances is to give three kisses on the cheek starting with the right cheek (Netherlands/Holland).
- Refrain from vigorous handshaking or other touching gestures.
- The intimate zone of most Dutch people tends to be 50 cm, so don't stand or sit directly beside someone unless there is no alternative (Business communication).
- Upon meeting someone, it's acceptable to call them by their first name.

Suggestions

When doing introductions with Dutch people:

- Try to have a third party introduce you
- Do not be too touchy and respect their personal space
- Shake hands and give a warm greeting

Meeting Etiquette

Meetings are frequent and are important to ensure consensus. In meetings, punctuality is key. It is common someone to be in charge of timekeeping and for someone else to be in charge of making sure the agenda is moving along (Business meeting etiquette).

Official meetings will start precisely on time. Most official meetings will even indicate a 15 or 30 minutes timeslot to arrive before the event starts (Business meeting etiquette).

In small meetings, you should always begin by introducing yourself and shaking everyone's hand. In larger meetings, the chairperson will go around and allow each person to introduce themselves. It is also common to shake hands with everyone before leaving a meeting.

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Most meetings should be scheduled at least two weeks in advance and once a meeting has been scheduled, there is no need to confirm or check-up (Business meeting etiquette).

The most suitable time to schedule a meeting is 10:00 in the morning or sometime in early afternoon (Business meeting etiquette).

Suggestions

When holding or attending a meeting with Dutch people:

- Make sure to be on time or even a few minutes early
- Always introduce yourself
- Try to foster a group environment

Hospitality requirements and expectations

In the Netherlands, it is rare to be invited into someone's home. If you are, it is seen as a great honor (Netherlands/Holland).

If invited to someone's house you should bring a small gift. Some appropriate gifts include: flowers or various house plants, chocolates, pastries or other sweets.

Wine may be considered an appropriate gift if the host is a male, but not if you are invited over for dinner since a wine may have already been selected (Netherlands/Holland).

When it comes to flowers, chrysanthemums, white lilies, and carnations should be avoided. Flowers should also be given in odd numbers, but not thirteen, as this is seen as an unlucky number (Netherlands/Holland).

Outside of the home, gift giving is not a common aspect of business. If you do receive a gift, however, it should be opened immediately and thanks should be expressed.

Hand-written notes should be given after receiving a gift or after going to someone's home.

Suggestions

When visiting with Dutch people:

- Consider it an honor
- Bring a small gift if you are going to their home
- Write a thank you note the day after

Dining etiquette

When approaching the table, remain standing until invited to sit down. It is custom for all the men to stay standing until every woman has taken her seat.

- Indicate you have finished eating by laying your knife and fork parallel across the right side of your plate (Business meeting etiquette). Try to avoid leaving any food on your plate, as this is seen as wasteful.
- In the Netherlands, most food, including sandwiches, are eaten using utensils. The fork is held in the left hand and the knife is held in the right hand (Business meeting etiquette).

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- It is also important that only the host pick up the wine list. Selecting a wine for the meal is seen as the host's responsibility (Business meeting etiquette).
- Although a service charge is already included on the bill, exceptional service may be tipped between five and ten percent (Netherlands/Holland).
- Dinner is the most important meal of the day to the Dutch and is typically served between 6:30 and 7:00 PM. Small snacks are commonly eaten at 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM.

Suggestions

When dining in the Netherlands:

- Try to eat all of the food on your plate
- Be prepared to use utensils for almost everything

Business Communication in the Netherlands

People in the Netherlands often know multiple languages. English is the lingua franca used by most business people in the Netherlands. Because of this, translators are rarely needed and using one may actually be seen as a lack of trust (Business communication).

In the Netherlands, talking with the hands is considered impolite and gestures are rarely used (Business communication).

Suggestions

When communicating with people from the Netherlands in business:

- Expect to speak mostly English
- Avoid talking too much with your hands

Business Meetings

According to Business Etiquette In The Netherlands, when it comes to meetings, the Dutch are known to take a liking towards them. The goal of a meeting is to discuss options, reach consensus and take decisions. Despite everyone's different positions, all members are expected to make their contributions in meetings.

According to *Make Europe Work* one must take the following into considerations before attending a meeting

- Meetings for the most part, are informal
- Protocols and agendas play a big role
- Flat structure
- All members must compromise and come to an agreement before a decision is made
- Before closing a meeting, each member is asked if they would like to say something (pg 2).

Pros and Cons

The downside to having a workplace centered so heavily on meetings, is that it's very time consuming. The decision making process is lengthy and complex and foreigners might view them as ineffective.

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As time consuming as they are, these meetings are used as an instrument to hear everyone's thoughts and opinions. This causes the members to feel valued and respected, resulting in a healthy working environment.

Solutions

Here is what we must keep in mind when attending business meetings in the Netherlands.

- Be prepared to share opinions and ideas
- Be informed about what will be discussed
- Be on time; since these meetings are at fixed times punctuality is crucial.
- Be patient

Individualism

According to Cardon's Textbook, individualism is defined as "a mind-set that prioritizes independence more highly than interdependence, emphasizing individual goals over group goals, and valuing choice more than obligation" (Cardon, 2016, pg. 105).

Some of the characteristics of a country with a high performance orientation found in Table 4.4 of Cardon's Business Communications textbook include:

- Discuss individual rewards and goals
- Emphasize opportunities and choices
- Spend less time in group decision making
- Socialize infrequently with colleagues outside of work
- Network in loosely tied and temporary social networks
- Communicate directly to efficiently deal with work tasks and outcomes (pg 114)

Egalitarianism

The Netherlands has an egalitarian society. According to Cardon's Business Communication Text Book (Og 2017) in Egalitarian cultures, people tend to "distribute and share power evenly, minimize status differences, and minimize special privileges and opportunities for people just because they have higher authority. All people are seen as equal regardless of title or social status.

Here are some characteristics of the Egalitarian approach according to Eleonore Breukel in her article *Dutch Business Culture and Etiquette*:

- As an Egalitarian society, the Dutch struggle with accepting Hierarchy
- Communication between different positions and statuses is normal
- Rarely will companies use academic titles on their business cards
- People call each other by their first names, regardless of title

Pros and Cons

This will take some getting used to, for cross level communicating can be viewed as inappropriate or rude to us foreigners.

On the contrary, this will create a bond between workers, since equality is valued. Because the relationships are so relaxed, it makes it much easier for members to voice their concerns and opinions regarding different subjects.

Solutions

Here are approaches we must take in order to adjust to the Egalitarian system:

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- Avoid using titles in a business setting
- Use first names
- Take initiative and do things your self (Ex, make your own photo copies)
- See everyone as your coworker, regardless of position

Dutch Society

Although men and women are seen equal before the law, and gender equality is noticeable, the two genders do play distinct roles. Women only make up 38% of the work force and are most commonly occupying part time jobs. Women are expected to fulfill the role of maintaining life at home while the men provide for the family (The Netherlands, pg).

Religion wise, over 30% of the Dutch population identifies as Catholic, followed by Reformed Protestant at 14%. The large majority, over 40%, are classified as non-religious (New Source) and overall 80% of the ethnic Dutch do not attend church anymore (Breukel, 3).

Differences in social class are not very noticeable. Seeing as the Dutch have a mindset where showing off wealth is frowned upon, families of higher income are less likely to show off their wealth. The Netherlands is an Egalitarianistic country, so citizens will, for the most part, treat each other equal regardless of income (The Netherlands).

Business Ethics

According to Business Corrupt in The Netherlands, pg 1, corruption is a close to non-existing issue in the Netherlands. Business and anti-corruption regulations are crucial and greatly enforced and the Dutch public administration is exceedingly transparent. Standards have updated throughout the years and ethical failure may result in significant civil and criminal sanctions, including imprisonment. The Dutch Penal Code makes it illegal to give or receive bribes in sectors and therefore, bribery not prevalent in the Netherlands.

Assertiveness

The Netherlands ranks very high in assertiveness (Refer to table). Assertiveness, according to Cardon's Business Communications textbook (page 109), is defined as "dealing with the level of confrontation and directness that is considered appropriate and productive." Its characteristics, from table 4.8 in the textbook, are as follows:

- Emphasizes direct and unambiguous language
- Uncomfortable with silence
- Prioritize resolving issues of showing respect to others
- Typically express more emotion
- Use touch, even dominant, language
- Stress equity and use competitive language
- Value unrestrained expression of thoughts and feelings (Cardon, 2016, pg 109)

High Assertiveness	
Germany	92
Hong Kong	82
USA	80
Netherlands	77
France	76
S Korea	70
Mexico	66
Brazil	62
UK	60
Italy	52
China	26
Taiwan	21
Japan	21
Low Assertiveness	

Members of a company will talk in short, clear sentences and are not one for sugar coating. In return, the Dutch want others to be open and direct like them. They will criticize your work and will likewise expect you to criticize their work (Breukel 3).

Pros and Cons

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The Dutch directness is prone to causing misunderstandings with foreigners. Their blunt way of communicating can be viewed as rude without such intentions. They lack politeness when communicating which can offend people.

Even though they seem unpleasant at times, being so direct makes for very clear intentions and expectations. Communication is rarely unclear or confusing, for the Dutch disregard the thought of hurting feelings in order to get their point across. Because of their blunt statements, misinterpretation is kept at a minimum while productivity increases. Another positive is that the people will not feel ashamed when corrected about a mistake and on the contrary, will appreciate it.

Solutions

Here are some solutions on how to adapt to such assertiveness:

- Communicate in a clear and direct way
- Ask people what they think instead of depending or waiting on non-verbal signs
- Refrain from polite conversation, because it causes mistrust
- Accept correction without taking it personal

Performance Orientation

Performance orientation ranks as the highest aspect of business culture in the Netherlands.

This means that the country's businesses value productivity very highly.

Some of the characteristics of a country with a high performance orientation found in Table 4.6 of Cardon's Business Communications textbook (Cardon, 2016, pg 106) include:

- Emphasis on results more than relationships
- Prioritize measurable goals and objectives in meetings and communication
- View feedback as essential to improvement
- Explicitly talk about financial incentives
- Value statements of individual accountability
- Expect urgency in communication and emphasize deadlines (Cardon, 2016, pg. 108)

This means that when dealing with companies in the Netherlands we will have to make impressions with our results. Good intentions will not be enough for our company to thrive here, we will need to back it up with solid productivity

Pros and Cons

The bad side to dealing with a highly performance oriented business culture is that they will value our profitability over all else. They will care little for the relationships and impressions our people make if we do not show them that we are worth their time from a financial standpoint.

The good side to a high performance orientation is that we know exactly what they want. Businesses here want goals to be met, which is exactly what we will have to do in order to create a sustainable business in this part of the world.

Solutions

Here are several solutions as to how we should go about doing business here:

- Present an organized business plan to companies in this area that shows reachable goals
- Make sure to reach the goals we set to ensure trust

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- Create and sustain strong communication channels with companies, they value timely information

Future Orientation

According to Cardon the Netherlands is highly ranked among countries with the strongest future orientations (Cardon, 2016, pg. 108). This means that companies will evaluate us on how we will help them in the long run rather than the immediate future.

Here are several characteristics of future orientated business aspects from Table 4.7 of Cardon's textbook:

- Emphasize control and planning for the future
- Focus more on intrinsic motivation
- Frequently discuss long-term strategies as part of business communications
- Use flexible and adaptive language
- Often mention long-term rewards and incentives
- Appreciate visionary approaches to business problems (Cardon, 2016, pg. 108)

Dealing with a high future orientation means planning business proposals that show long term sustainable gain rather than short-term high profits with inferior quality. This is a very important element to this culture and could determine whether or not they accept our business.

Pros and Cons

The bad side to dealing with a future oriented business is that we will have to make a plan that ensures sustainable profitability. They will not want a plan that does not involve a safe future for business.

The good side to a future orientation is that they value new and inventive approaches. This means that if we were to bring to them a new solution to an old problem they would be likely willing to give it a try.

Solutions

Here are some approaches we recommend taking with businesses with high future orientation:

- Make sure to emphasize how our business can benefit them in the future
- Make sure to present organized planning that exhibits a high amount of control
- Look to present a new approach or type of planning in order to catch their attention

Humane Orientation

The Netherlands values a humane orientation in their business culture very highly according to Cardon's textbook (Cardon, 2016, pg. 110). They encourage an environment where friendliness and courteousness are exhibited.

Cardon's textbook outlines several characteristics of humane orientation in business culture, in table 4.9 they are as follows:

- Express greetings, welcome, concern, and appreciation in most interactions
- Consider taking time to talk about feeling as critical
- Volunteer to help others
- Smile and display other nonverbal signs of welcome frequently (Cardon, 2016, pg. 110)

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When working with a high humane oriented business culture it is important to exhibit courteousness. Greetings are a big deal and taking concern in others wellbeing is important. The more someone shows a willingness to volunteer and help those around him, the more they are going to respond positively.

When working with a company like this it is a good idea to make sure and go the extra mile to ensure giving them the best treatment possible. Special consideration for deliveries and forming deals unique to the business will help to create loyalty with companies like these. It is also okay to share your feelings and get to know people you are working with on a personal level. This type of business culture encourages openness and showing affection to those around you.

Pros and Cons

The downside to dealing with companies high in humane orientation is making sure to choose the right people for the job. If someone was to represent our company without the proper courtesies expected, it could hurt our reputation among business in the region.

The upside to companies with high humane orientation is that loyalty can be built through the right attitude. If their associates enjoy doing business with ours, then they will be more likely to choose us over other competitors in the market.

Solutions

Here are several approaches to dealing with humane oriented business cultures:

- Be sure to always greet people appropriately and show courtesy
- Make sure to exhibit caring, nonverbal behavior
- Show an interest in people's well-being and make sure to always volunteer your help

Uncertainty Avoidance

According to Cardon's textbook, the Netherlands exhibits a very high uncertainty avoidance. This type of culture can be difficult to work with at times, but presents less risky ventures to those involved.

Here are several characteristics of how companies high in uncertainty avoidance operate, taken from Cardon's textbook:

- Document agreements in legal contracts
- Expect orderly communication: keep meticulous records, document conclusions drawn in meetings
- Refer to formalized policies, procedures. And rules as basis for decision making
- Verify with written communication
- Prefer formality in the majority of interpersonal business interactions (Cardon, 2016, pg. 111)

When working with companies like this they are going to want everything to be official and in writing. They will go over contracts vigorously and stick to them no matter what. They are not going to "take your word" for something, they will need to be presented with proof that we will uphold our end of any deal.

Recommendations

Based on the information our team has gathered we recommend that we should start conducting business in the Netherlands immediately. We recommend filing the necessary paperwork as soon as possible, in order to prepare for the arrival of our business in the Netherlands. The country presents a business culture similar to our own and we should have no difficulties harboring success there.

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