

# ISRAELI BUSINESS CULTURE: MODEL SYNOPSIS

(Based in part on Osnat Lautman's Amazon bestseller, "Israeli Business Culture")

Once the honeymoon of initial professional contact is over, international businesspeople look for common social norms, core beliefs and sensitivity.

Following is a summary of the main Israeli business culture characteristics, using the word ISRAELI™ as an acronym:

## INFORMAL

Informality in the Israeli business world is expressed not only in outward signs such as casual dress in the workplace, but also in the way people interact. In preliminary meetings or work interviews an Israeli might easily ask questions about your personal life, such as whether you are married or have children. In a low power distance culture like Israel, people also address one another by nicknames. Even Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is called by his nickname, Bibi. Using such monikers gives both sides a feeling of closeness and maybe even friendship.

## STRAIGHTFORWARD

In Israeli culture you don't have to dig deep to understand where the other person stands. What they say is what they mean. When an Israeli thinks you are mistaken, he simply says, "You're wrong." When an Israeli invites you to his home, he expects you to arrive. When you ask for his opinion, he assumes you really want it, and gives you an honest and straightforward answer.

<b>I</b>	INFORMAL
<b>S</b>	STRAIGHTFORWARD
<b>R</b>	RISK-TAKING
<b>A</b>	AMBITIOUS
<b>E</b>	ENTREPRENEURIAL
<b>L</b>	LOUD
<b>I</b>	IMPROVISATIONAL

## RISK-TAKING, AMBITIOUS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL

The next three characteristics are treated as one unit, since the combination of risk-taking and ambition jointly create the characteristic of entrepreneurialism, and form an integral part of it. An entrepreneur is an individual with the ambition to successfully create something new and the willingness to take risks to achieve it. Israel is a country of entrepreneurs seeking advancement. They are comfortable asking difficult questions and exploring all possibilities. They don't lose sight of their goals even if they don't always stick to rigid work plans or timetables.

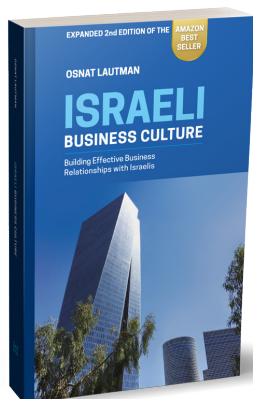
## LOUD

Loudness implies not only high volume, sharp intonations and forceful body language, but also the general feeling of intensity in Israel. The sense of "noise" everywhere comes from the multitudes of families walking down the streets, crowded roads and supermarkets. It also stems from the lack of personal space in Israel, reflected in constant touching and blunt questioning. In the business arena, there is no separation between personal and business life. Israelis may speak to family members and friends on the phone while at work and also put in long extra hours from home, including contacting colleagues during evening hours. All these in combination contribute to the impression that Israel and Israelis are "loud."

## IMPROVISATIONAL

The culture of improvisation in Israel supports "thinking outside the box." This means not just going along with an existing plan but continually thinking, initiating and changing until the desired goal is reached, especially in accordance with changes and challenges that arise along the way. Many countries work with a strict work plan and find it very challenging to accept Israelis' rapid changes.

Please note that in each culture, there will always be those who act somewhat differently. However, the majority of a country's population tends to behave in a similar manner, with the same behavior patterns and cultural assumptions.



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