

DUXNRO & JACK EDWARD HEALD

STRANGE FRIEND FAMILIAR ALIEN

A BUSINESS PRIMER
FOR AMERICANS IN ENGLAND

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PREFACE

When I was a kid, “Run faster, jump higher” was the slogan of *PF Flyers*. They were *the* tennis shoe to own. I can remember badgering my mom to take me down to Kenney’s Shoe Store because I *had* to have a pair of *PF Flyers*. I dreamed about being able to run faster and jump higher. I imagined outrunning every other boy at recess and winning the high jump competition at our school track meet. At last, mom relented. I can still remember when I put them on my feet that I felt faster and lighter than I ever had before. I was certain I would be able to run faster and jump higher with those beauties on my feet.

Running Faster and Jumping Higher is something every American kid wanted to do. It was a brilliant four-word slogan in its day and it sold an awful lot of shoes. (Nike repeated the same success 20 years later with only *three* words!)

And it was a slogan that could work only in America.


America has a tradition of success and a culture of achievement; we value *performance* above nearly everything else. That potent and distinct combination of tradition, culture and values makes us who we are.

England too has a unique tradition, culture and values, and together they make the English who they are. But their traditions, culture and especially values are different from ours. Very different.


Many claim that today’s business world is borderless, that cultural differences have become almost meaningless, and that the world now speaks “the common language of business”. But if you are so foolish as to act on such a naïve belief, you will significantly limit your chances of success outside of America.

Though our markets are global, buying decisions are still made by people - people who live and work and raise their families in a distinct culture with distinct values and unique traditions. Culture, tradition and especially values shape us in far more fundamental ways than mere trade ever can or ever will.


A great many of my conclusions herein are generalizations, and I readily admit that any generalization tends to unravel a bit at the margins. So, even though what I say here may not



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by



necessarily be true about a particular Englishman you may know, it will still be true - in general - about the English people taken as a whole.

If you are an American doing business in England or with the English, I think you'll be surprised by this culture that seems so familiar to us and yet is so radically different from our own. You will learn how the English view the world and will begin to grasp the essential differences between our countries. You will discover the real reason why Americans are resented in England and Europe. Most importantly, you will find out how to adjust your message so that your products and services are not merely palatable to the English, but well-nigh irresistible.

And perhaps, you may even learn to see the world through the eyes of an Englishman.

Jack Edward Heald

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INTRODUCTION

When I first came to England for a brief month-long project in 1997, I was an utter novice to international travel, let alone international business. I remember thinking that the English seemed different from Americans in a way I could not quite pinpoint. Sure, they talked funny, that much was obvious, but New Yorkers talk funny too and they are not *different* in the same way the English are *different*. However, the project was short and my responsibilities were few. Since I didn't expect to be there very long or to deal with them very much, I didn't make much effort to understand England or the English.

My next international project was an entirely different matter.

I came to England in the summer of 2001 for what was supposed to be a six-month project. In fact, the project lasted more than twice that long. My responsibilities on the project were dramatically greater than they were when I first came over in 1997, so my interest in understanding my environment has been proportionally higher. I was brought in as “the American expert” and charged with leading the project for this high-profile client through to completion. I knew at the outset that I was swimming in dangerous waters, simply by virtue of being an outsider, so I decided at the very start to do everything I could to understand the culture in which I would be living and working.

I purchased books written for American expatriates living in England and devoured them. I joined a church and a musical group. I made friends and shared meals together. I watched television and read the papers. I kept my eyes and ears open. I determined that I would suspend judgment about this foreign culture until I had been immersed in it and was certain that whatever conclusions I drew were supportable by the evidence.

America and England are two countries divided by a common language.

George Bernard Shaw

It took me almost an entire year to begin to make sense of this culture, and I suspect that I could live here for the rest of my life and never truly understand it. One of the books I read indicated as much, and though I didn't understand why at the time, I do now.

The English look just like Americans. They use the same language we use, (mostly). We share a common heritage. Our place names are largely derived from theirs. Our government institutions are drawn in large part from theirs. We fought side-by-side to stop the threat of Imperial Germany in the First World War and then the fascist Axis in the second. We have been allies for as long as any of us remember.

But we are different in such fundamental ways that we may as well be different species. Before living in England, I thought the English and Americans were like different breeds of dogs – Golden Retrievers and Labrador Retrievers. Today I know better – we are more like different species of animals altogether – dogs and fish, or birds and cats.

That's why the document you are reading now exists – I want to help you succeed in England, and the better you understand both the visible and invisible differences between our countries and our people, the better your chances of success will be.

I have organized the document into three sections:

1. *The External Differences*

This section reviews five distinct *visible* differences between England and America. Any American could recognize them if they observed England closely, but unfortunately, most Americans never quite “get it”.

2. *The Internal Differences*

This section reveals the *invisible* differences between us. Here, you will peek into the mind and heart of an Englishman as expressed in five distinct English values and motivations. I'll explain *how* and *why* the English think as they do.

3. *The Keys to the Kingdom*

The last section tells you how to make use of your newfound knowledge. All this data is pretty useless without interpretation, isn't it? I'll tell you how to turn your inside information into business success.

THE EXTERNAL DIFFERENCES

HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, GOVERNMENT, CLASS & DEBT

1. HISTORY

Americans don't really have any – history, that is.

Oh sure, we can talk about 1776 and 1865 and maybe even 1945, but compared to the English, we are utterly bereft of history.

Why does this matter?

Because if you do not understand the differences between our countries at the historical level, you will never grasp our differences at the cultural level.

London was founded as a military outpost by the Romans.

That's *Romans* as in Julius Caesar, the Coliseum, Constantine, Marc Antony and Cleopatra.

Those Romans.

You can go to the Tower of London today and put your hands on a wall built by the Romans in the second century. You can get in a boat and navigate throughout England on canals built by the Romans. You can drive your car across bridges built by the Romans.

All over England are the remains of Roman-built structures. This past summer, the ruin of a Roman villa with a still-intact mosaic-tile floor was uncovered in rural England.

The Romans ruled England until the 4th century when they pulled out to take care of business back at home. The following period was one of relative lawlessness as the various warlords waged battles for control over different areas of the country. On the west side of Westminster Bridge is a statue of Boadicea, the English version of Joan of Arc, only she was kicking Roman butt in the 1st century. (And she was one nasty war-mistress, let me tell you.) The guys (and gals) who did the best job as warlords eventually became acknowledged as rulers, *Kings* if you will. The English can trace their Kings & Queens back in a continuous line at least as far as the 7th century.

Some of you who paid attention in world history class may even remember the year 1066 as being important in English history. That was the last time that England was successfully invaded by a foreign conqueror – William from across the channel in France. (Did you know the English and French don't like each other? Did you know this little episode almost 1000 years ago has a lot to do with it?)

The foundation stone of Westminster Abbey was laid by the English monarch Edward the Confessor in the year 1065, the year before William the Conqueror set foot on English soil. Christians have been worshipping in that building for nearly 1000 years. Now put this in perspective – 1066 was nearly 450 years before the first settlement was established in the New World. In other words, today you can attend an Evensong worship service in a breathtaking building that was already 400 years old when the Jamestown colony was established near the Virginia tidewaters.

England is *old* – very, very old. Everywhere you walk in England, you walk on ground that has been in continuous use for millennia – not just several years, several decades or several centuries. This fact contributes to the psyche of the average Englishman in ways that neither he nor you will be aware of unless you both spend a lot of time studying the phenomena. The Englishman bears an almost imponderable weight of history and it weighs on him in ways that make him fundamentally different from any native-born American. But it is an unconscious weight; he is no more aware of this weight than a fish in the ocean is aware of the water in which it swims.

Because he is literally immersed in history and living in the midst of historical sights that are hundreds or even thousands of years old, the English have a conservative streak that is simply incomprehensible to most Americans. The depth and extent of this conservatism is difficult to describe, but it is very real.

To help you get a feel for this cultural conservatism, I'll have to compare it to a familiar experience. My dad has a family bible that has been passed down through several generations of the Heald clan. It weighs about 20 pounds, it has a carved wooden cover and the pages are yellowed and crumbling. I am eagerly looking forward to the day that Bible is passed to my family for safekeeping. And I can assure you I will guard it as jealously as I will guard anything I have ever possessed. The Bible itself has little intrinsic value. Oh, it might have meaning to someone outside my family by virtue of its historical value, but by and large, it is not terribly valuable to anyone outside my family.

The English feel the same way about their culture as I feel about my family Bible. Yet my family Bible is only about 150 years old. Their culture can be traced back in a continuous line for thousands of years. From the 21st century hustle of London to the almost timeless quietude of little country villages, almost every square foot of England is steeped in history. It is all far more precious to them than my family Bible is to me. They will resist any change that threatens that history with a vehemence that far exceeds reason.

I can *almost* understand that conservatism because I am a Texan. Our sacred ground is the Alamo - everything that makes Texas unique is in some way tied up in the Alamo; it is the spiritual heart of Texas. Texans would not tolerate any change to the Alamo itself, and will violently resist anything that threatens that building. But consider - Texas is less than 175 years old. To an Englishman, that is a mere blink of the eye. 175 years is so little time as to be virtually irrelevant. If I feel so strongly about a family Bible that is less than 150 years old, if Texans feel so strongly about a symbol of their state that has less than 175 years of history, just imagine how the English feel about places that have thousands of years of English history behind them.

Although you may see no direct evidence of this unwillingness to let go of the past, it will nonetheless be a significant factor in any decision-making process you require of your English counterparts. History is a nearly irresistible weight on English society. Though invisible, it exerts a cultural gravitational pull on the Englishman that makes him fundamentally different from Americans. You are immune to its weight; he is not.

How does this relate to doing business with an Englishman? You must be aware that change is not nearly as easy for him as it for you. Before he changes anything, he will have to evaluate the potential benefits of the change against the very real benefits of preserving his culture and history. Although you may perceive such conservatism to be irrational and even counter-productive, he will not.

2. GEOGRAPHY

The United Kingdom occupies the whole of Great Britain, an island off the coast of northwest Europe, and is home to three different countries with three distinct cultures: England, Scotland and Wales. West of Great Britain lies the island of Ireland which is home to two more countries, Northern Ireland, (part of the British Commonwealth), and the Republic of Ireland. This discussion only peripherally involves Ireland, so I will say no more about Ireland for now.

The island of Great Britain is home to some 66 million people, about one fourth the population of the United States. Those 66 million people live on an island the physical size of the state of Florida, and the vast bulk of them live in the southern half of the island. To imagine the population density of this island, take the population of Texas, California and New York, and move them all to the southern half of Florida.

Unsurprisingly, the British as a people are used to being crowded. They've never known anything else. This constant crowding, this squeezing together cheek-by-jowl with others for as long as they have lived – this shapes the English psyche in a way almost unknown to Americans.

It exerts a gravitational pull on the psyche of England and forces her people to deal with issues of personal and corporate space, issues Americans as a people never have to consider. How does this affect the Englishman? He is used to a life of physical constraints. He lives in small spaces, drives a small car, is mashed into small public transport, and works in a small cubicle. His elevators are small, his roads are small, his parking places are small, and everywhere he goes he has to fight for a place.

As an American in England, this crowding will be uncomfortable and always near the surface of your consciousness. Yet the English take it as an axiom of life, and barely notice it. America is a nation with almost unlimited elbow-room. Even the most crowded resident of mid-town Manhattan can look at a map of America and daydream about moving to the mountains of Montana. No such daydream even exists in England. Instead, people retreat to the refuge of their own private gardens.

This is a key to understanding. For the English, solitude and serenity nearly always involves a small, private space. For an American, it generally involves an expansive, empty yet public space. In this truth, you can see the seeds of the British resentment towards Americans: our physical resources are virtually unlimited; his are severely limited. We think big; he thinks small. We tame the vast wilderness; he tends his back garden.

How does this relate to business? Americans almost always think big; we tend to equate bigness with success. We like things to be on a grand scale simply because we love the spectacle. This is not a value the English share. Don't make the mistake of bringing your American love of size and spectacle into your business dealings with the English. At best, they won't understand. At worst, you will make them defensive and angry.

3. GOVERNMENT

All the major political parties in England are well to the political left of the Democrat Party in America. Compared to English politicians, Bill Clinton was a raging conservative, George W. Bush is a fascist and Ralph Nader is a centrist.

Socialism is not merely the dominant economic philosophy, it is the utterly unquestioned political philosophy. People *expect* the state to pay for food, housing, medical care, education,

*A government that robs
Peter to pay Paul can always
depend upon the support of
Paul.*

George Bernard Shaw

transportation and spending money for anyone who doesn't work, can't work, won't work or just prefers not to work. They expect the state to pass laws regulating everything from the amount of tread on your tires to the age at which your children can begin having sex. There is absolutely no discussion in England about whether or not these activities are the proper realm of the state, the only discussion is about how much, how fast, how long. It is assumed by all that this is why the state exists.

How can England be both conservative and Socialistic? England's conservatism is cultural, not political. She protects the "rights" of her buildings and institutions while simultaneously transgressing the rights of her individual citizens.

For example, private property rights are virtually non-existent in England. Perhaps this is a result of England's class-warfare history as much as its marriage to socialism, but it is true nonetheless. (We will trace the effects of class warfare in the [following section](#).)

In America, the right of any citizen to acquire, use, protect and dispose of property without undue outside interference is virtually unquestioned. Although private property rights have been gradually restricted in America over the past three decades, by and large American citizens enjoy virtually unlimited rights to acquire, use, protect and dispose of property without undue outside interference. The English government has created a lethal mixture of oppressive taxes and invasive bureaucracy that makes these essential wealth-building activities dramatically more difficult than they are in America.

Upward movement in jobs and society is much more difficult in England than in the US. Again, this is primarily a function of the intrusive, enervating effects of socialism. Upward movement is so difficult, in fact, that many people have never even hoped to improve their station in life, and therefore have no expectation of such. The English tend to be far less ambitious than Americans simply because the chances of moving up are so much smaller for the typical Englishman.

The effects of this are that people are much more content to "punch the clock". There is a pervading sense in both the ruling class and the "ruled" class that if the employee shows up for work, then the employer is obligated to keep him in that position for as long as he is alive and able to work.

This can affect your business pitch and your business decisions. Whereas most American managers expect their employees to care about performance, most English managers expect their employees *not* to care. After all, they live in a culture where performance does not matter. Should you avoid any discussion of the performance-enhancing aspects of your offering? Probably not, but you should be aware that those features may not be nearly as appealing to an English prospect as they would be to an American one.

4. CLASS

Class-based conflict in England can be traced at least as far back as King John and the Magna Carta in 1215 AD. Then, the King would regularly avail himself of the property and familial "duties" of his Barons. More recently, you can see it in the resentment between the landed gentry and the mercantilists in the 16th and 17th centuries, and later in the labor movement that gave rise to the Labour Party late in the 19th century. Although this may sound like the struggle between the "haves" "have-nots", it is not quite that simple. In England, the lower classes typically support the royalty against the nobility, so you have those at either extreme of society pitted against those in the middle.

Before I went to England, a colleague explained the difference between an American and an Englishman like this:

If an American sees someone driving a big fancy car, he thinks to himself, "Someday I'll drive a car like that." If an Englishman sees someone driving a big fancy car, he thinks to himself, "We've gotta get that guy out of that car."

I thought it made a good story, but frankly thought it was complete balderdash. I continued believing it until one of my English friends told me the same story and confirmed its accuracy. The English tend to resent anyone who succeeds and anyone who is better off than they are. But this is a fairly benign sort of resentment; it seldom spills over into anything more dangerous than a negative attitude.

English class-consciousness takes two forms: the snobbishness which is reserved for fellow Englishmen, (I call this intra-national snobbishness), and international snobbishness – that form of snobbishness that focuses on anyone not English.

NATIONAL SNOBBISHNESS

Shaw's quote here is funny because it is so true. If you are an Englishman, your accent is the indelible stamp of your class; every time you speak, you tell other Englishman which social strata you come from. For example, directors of organizations will always have "the BBC accent" and will have graduated from one of the upper class universities whereas laborers will *always* come from the lower classes and will not have attended university. Professionals will always come from some middle class area and/or will have graduated from a middle class university.

The moment an Englishman opens his mouth he makes some other Englishman despise him.

George Bernard Shaw

Compare this situation with the US.

In America, you would not be terribly surprised to find that your favorite business is owned by someone with an 8th grade education, nor would you be surprised to discover that the guy bagging groceries at the local Safeway has a graduate degree. In England, such occurrences would be nearly unthinkable.

In America, we tend to admire people who are able to improve their social standing, but in England, "rising above your station" is an activity viewed with resentment. The English value their position in the social strata and guard it jealously. Therefore, any appeal you make toward "upward mobility" is likely to be viewed with suspicion. On the other hand, if you appeal to *maintaining* their position or *strengthening* their hold upon their position, you will be much more warmly received.

As a foreigner, you are practically immune from the liabilities of this method of scorekeeping since you fall outside the known boundaries of the game. You may be at the same station in life as your prospect or customer. You may be in a "class" below them or you may be above them. Unfortunately, (for the typical Englishman), his method of making that judgment does not work on you. Therefore, you can proceed without much concern for how he perceives your social status.

INTERNATIONAL SNOBBISHNESS

On the other hand, you will be confronted with a more insidious form of class prejudice which is undeniably alive and well in England and Europe. Although they will usually admit that class-based bigotry exists *between* the various classes within their own country, most Englishmen, (and most

Europeans as well), will deny the equally pervasive class-consciousness that exists within their countries towards us “rubies” here in the New World, specifically towards Americans.

The English and Europeans believe that America and Americans are cultural adolescents in need of instruction and that they, as our moral, intellectual and spiritual betters, should be the instructors. They resent our success, our wealth and our easy self-confidence. They resent our ignorance of their history and most of all they resent our failure to recognize their innate superiority.

It is impossible to escape the constant lecturing of the English press towards all things American. The general tenor of “official” English thought toward America and Americans is condescension. This is the undercurrent against which you will always conduct business in the UK. It exists, it is undeniable, but like bad breath and body odor, it is something you simply do not address in polite company.

The irony of it all is that the English also harbor the contradictory attitude that Americans can *get things done*. Whereas an Englishman sees a problem as an intractable difficulties that must be accommodated, an American sees the same difficulty as an exciting challenge to be overcome. And whenever the English face a particularly difficult problem, (one which they really prefer not to accommodate), they tend to look to America and Americans for solutions.

So in a strange and inconsistent way, your English customers and prospects will view you with a perplexing mixture of unreasonable arrogance and unreasonable admiration. If you find yourself confused by the signals they give you, it is probably because they are sending confusing signals.

5. DEBT

I suspect all of us have experienced one side or the other of this old truism. If you’ve ever borrowed money from a friend, you know that it works like a slow-acting poison in your system. You begin to resent your friend. Every time you see him, you are reminded of your debt to him. Eventually you begin avoiding him altogether and find a myriad of reasons to question the integrity of his character and the purity of his motivations. No one likes to be reminded of his debts.

If you want to lose a friend, loan him money.

Anonymous

Unfortunately for all concerned, England owes America a gigantic, unpayable debt. And, even though most Americans never even think about that debt, England never forgets it. We saved England and Europe from the Germans in World War I and then turned around and had to do it again 25 years later in World War II. Without America’s material, manpower and weaponry in these wars, England might have ceased to exist altogether and certainly would not be free.

That is a heavy weight to bear. And they resent us for it.

America’s intervention in England’s wars proved conclusively that the English were neither strong enough nor rich enough to save themselves. It proved once and for all that the English Empire was in a state of irreparable decay and that the ascendancy of the American Empire was undeniable. For a country that once presided over the greatest empire in history, this continues to be a bitter pill to swallow.

Very few English and even fewer Europeans will ever admit it, but they are eaten with jealousy and consumed with resentment toward America. Aside from the debt they owe us for saving them from the Germans, for rebuilding their cities with our own money after World War II and for protecting their countries from the Soviet threat all throughout the Cold War, our standard of living adds insult to injury. The strength, youth, vibrancy, buoyancy and vigor of our people and our economy irritates them beyond words. By every objective measure, our way of life is better than theirs.

And they betray their feelings through a non-stop litany of self-aggrandizement at the expense of us morally inferior Americans. They lecture us in their newspapers. They look down upon us from their ancient ivory-towered universities. Since England is not superior to America in any measurable way, then she must assert her superiority in non-quantifiable ways. She is more “civilized”, more “compassionate”, more realistic, less Pollyanna than us country-bumpkins across the ocean. She cares more than we do; she is more balanced in her treatment of aliens than we are. She is more likely to react “reasonably” than we are.

You get the idea.

Make no mistake; the disdain that Europe and England holds toward America is very real and very deep. Most people are much too polite and reserved to voice it, but just because it remains unspoken, it is not less real. A smoldering resentment bubbles just under the surface and always bursts out under pressure.

They resent us for being uncultured and powerful. They resent us for being wealthy and optimistic. They resent us for being daring and successful. Our success makes their own self-induced delusions of superiority that much harder for anyone to believe, especially themselves.

The irony of it all is that many Americans believe the English and Europeans truly are superior cultures. We walk among their ancient cities with a kind of awe that is certainly justified by their history, but entirely inappropriate given their current status as minor players on the world stage.

When you are doing business anywhere in England or Western Europe, be aware that the undercurrent of resentment you feel is not directed at you personally. It is there just because you are an American. The best thing you can do with this information is remember not to bring up the fact that England and Europe owe their very freedom to America.

THE INTERNAL DIFFERENCES

INSIDE THE ENGLISH MIND AND HEART

Although we are very much alike on the surface, the deep, invisible differences between the English and Americans can make communication difficult at best. Not that we do not understand one another's words, but rather we simply do not understand one another's *values* and *motivations*.

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place

George Bernard Shaw

Our values drive us and determine how we spend our time and resources. Different values are usually revealed in different actions, and in the case of our English cousins, their actions are very revealing: the English invest their time and resources differently than Americans do. Because they have different values, they behave differently .

Understanding where English values differ from American values will allow you to communicate more effectively and, more importantly, do business more profitably and effectively.

To make the comparison between English and American values simpler, I have presented them as five pairs of opposites. You can think of these characteristics as the extreme ends of a single axis:

AMERICAN	ENGLISH
Optimism	Pessimism
Opportunity	Position
Money	Mind
Risk Takers	Controllers
Parochial	Cosmopolitan

Of course, in real life, nothing is ever quite this neat and clean-cut. Nevertheless, these comparisons are still valid and – for the most part – accurate reflections of our different values.

1. OPTIMISM / PESSIMISM

Although most Americans have heard the quintessentially English phrase *stiff upper lip*, fewer of us are familiar with the equally typical and much more pervasive phrase *mustn't grumble*.

Stiff upper lip implies a stoicism and emotional self-control indicative of Englishmen, but it reveals more about how the English view themselves than about how they view their world. *Mustn't grumble* on the other hand, reveals the fundamental worldview of the English: the circumstances of life are not merely

Americans believe life is serious but not hopeless. The English believe life is hopeless but not serious.

*BBC Radio 4
31 August 2002*

difficult but are in fact unchangeable. The only effective way to deal with the fundamental absurdities of life is to laugh about them. In other words, where Americans see challenges to be conquered and mountains to be climbed, the English see an ordeal to be endured.

Stop for a moment and ponder how profoundly this affects business relationships:

Superficially, Americans and Englishmen want the same thing, and whatever product or service you offer to one will probably appeal to the other. But the *reason* for the appeal will be different. Americans see a world full of possibilities, whereas the English see a world full of difficulties. Your product will help an American reach the pinnacle of his particular mountain, whereas it will help the Englishman endure the absurdities and vicissitudes of life. It will help the American expand his realm of control whereas it will help the Englishman reduce the realm of chaos. Even something as apparently simple as making more money will mean different things to the English. Americans would see making more money as something good in and of itself. The English will see making more money as just an additional buffer against the inevitable storm.

Rather than speaking the American language of conquering and overcoming, we must learn to adjust our message to appeal to the uniquely English desire to endure.

2. OPPORTUNITY / POSITION

Because England looks backward, maintaining their position in society and in life occupies far more brain space for the average Brit than do thoughts of “getting ahead”. For many, the idea of getting ahead is almost inconceivable and is certainly beyond what they believe is personally possible. This is because the role you will fill in life is, by and large, determined for you before you are born. Therefore, maintaining that position and fulfilling that role is almost unimaginably important.

It is not for nothing that America is called “the land of opportunity.” We take for granted the fact that anyone can accomplish almost anything they want if they are willing to work hard and not give up. In America, neither culture, law nor history will present an active barrier to accomplishment. In England, all three are arrayed against you.

In America, we celebrate the achievements of the successful. In England, those who rise above their pre-ordained station in life are resented. In America, we have an entire culture devoted to improving yourself. In England, an equal amount of cultural energy is devoted to simply not losing.

In America, a man gets an education to pave the way for advancement to the limit of his abilities. In England, education exists to move a person into the place already prepared for him by virtue of his birth and his place in society.

The English value learning for its own sake, whereas Americans consider it simply a pragmatic way to achieve success in a chosen field. No American would consider it terribly odd that a student dropped out of college because he believed he had better opportunities or better ideas elsewhere. On the other hand, an English student who dropped out could only expect a life with severely limited choices. America offers a multiplicity of ways to succeed for the ambitious. In England, the pathway to success almost always runs through the university system.

Remember that your English prospect will be more interested in preserving his current position in his company, his marketplace and his life than he will be in advancing it.

3. MONEY / MIND

In America, we keep score with money. For better or for worse, our culture considers wealthy people to be successful. And likewise, we assume that successful people will probably also be wealthy people. The promise of America is that no matter where you started or who your parents were, your opportunities are limited only by your willingness to work hard and persevere. This is one of the main reasons immigrants flock to America – each person has a chance to rise to the very limit of his own abilities, and in many cases, that means become very wealthy.

In England, by contrast, the “score” is determined the day you are born. The best most Englishmen can hope for is to maintain the place in society their family has always held. If you were born into a family of laborers, then you expect to be a laborer. If you were born into a family of professionals, you expect to be a professional. If you were born into a family of civil servants, you expect to be a civil servant. And of course, if you happen to have been born into royalty, you will always be royalty.

In America, anyone can distinguish themselves by making lots of money. And this path is open to anyone with the guts and determination to try it.

In England, the only way most people can hope to distinguish themselves is by becoming an expert in some esoteric field. You cannot hope to do it for the sake of social or economic advancement, but simply for the sake of becoming expert at something. For that reason, one of the characteristics that distinguish the English from Americans is their intense pursuit of specialized knowledge *for its own sake*.

How often have you heard an American complain, “...but what *good* is it?” We are intensely pragmatic about everything we do, and as a rule, we measure the utility of nearly anything in monetary terms.

By contrast, England is full of people who devote vast amounts of time to learning just for the sake of learning. Virtually every Englishman is an expert in some obscure subject that most Americans would never consider to be deserving of study. This is illustrated in everything from the English passion for gardening to the English invention of “train-spotting” and its close cousin “plane-spotting”.

English TV is full of popular game shows that require their contestants to possess an intellectual mastery of a wide variety of subjects. Many of these games make Jeopardy look like a kindergarten class. And the prizes offered on these shows demonstrate conclusively that the English place an extremely high value on knowledge for its own sake. The winners on these shows take home prizes in the £300-£500 range – amounts that would hardly get an American audience out of bed. But the winners of these shows value the fact that they have proved their mastery; winning the competition is sufficient reward; they don't money to make it meaningful.

The life of the mind is lively and vibrant in England simply because the English value learning and knowledge far more highly than do Americans. By contrast, most of America is an intellectual wasteland.

With this knowledge, you should never discount the value your opportunity could provide the Englishman to gain expertise for its own sake. Or to say it another way, when selling in England, it is

not necessary to focus on the direct utility of your product or service offering. If it is interesting and intellectually engaging, that can be attractive all by itself, regardless of its utility.

4. RISK-TAKING / CONTROLLING

America has a tradition of taking risks. From the very first explorers who arrived on the shores of the New World, to the early settlers fleeing religious or political persecution, from the frontiersmen who explored the continent to the folks who traveled the Oregon Trail looking for a better life, from the 49ers seeking gold to the 89ers seeking a homestead, from the astronauts to the entrepreneurs of the 20th century, America was literally and figuratively built on the back of risk takers. We celebrate them in our histories, our myths and our folk tales.

A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.

George Bernard Shaw

England has no such tradition.

Which, if you ponder it for a moment, is really very strange. After all, we Americans owe so much to the English: Obviously our language is theirs. Our legal system is directly derived from the English legal tradition and our system of government was the product of distinctly English writers. Yet in spite of these fundamental similarities, the English are as averse to taking risks as Americans are prone to that particular activity.

I cannot explain this, but I suspect World War I played a huge role in the character of today's England. The English had nearly a million young men killed or lost in action – more than two percent of the total population - and over 2.5 million wounded.

To get an idea of the kind of impact those losses made on England, compare ours in Vietnam: the Vietnam War resulted in 50,000 American deaths and about 150,000 American casualties. If we had suffered the same kind of losses in Vietnam that England suffered in World War I, those numbers would have been five million dead and 12.5 million wounded.

England lost proportionally 100 times as many men in World War I as America lost in Vietnam. The Great War wiped out virtually an entire generation of young men. Entire classes at Oxford and Cambridge – the future leaders of the country - were killed in the war. This fact alone accounts for a great deal of the rapid decline of the British Empire following World War I. With an entire generation of leaders liquidated, and millions of wounded survivors, England lost her national will and her will to rule.

Furthermore, she seemed to repudiate strong leadership altogether. We can argue about whether that reaction was justified given the horrors she had just survived, but the fact remains that England chose a succession of weak leaders and when given the opportunity to select a strong one, turned away time and again.

Winston Churchill was driven from power following the Dardenelles debacle, in spite of the fact that he had proven to be an astute, creative and energetic leader of men. He spent the entire decade of the thirties in virtual political exile as a back-bencher, warning against the coming danger from Nazism, but his warnings were ignored until it was almost too late. After the Dunkirk evacuation, the English seemed to awake from their slumber and put Churchill in power. But the instant the war over Germany was won, the country turned him out of office. Churchill, it seems, was just too

flamboyant, too loud, too gregarious but mostly – *too risky* – to be tolerated any longer than absolutely necessary.

5. PAROCHIAL / COSMOPOLITAN

The English and Europeans frequently criticize America and Americans for being provincial. Many Americans who have traveled abroad will do the same. And although the criticism is valid to a certain extent, it fails to take into account the very good reasons for those differences.

England is a much more homogenous political entity than the US. By that I mean England is a single political unity whereas the US is a formal confederation of 50 independent states. No political entity comparable to our states exists in England. The English tend to be conscious of what is happening in every area of their country whereas most Americans are only marginally aware of anything happening outside of their state or local region.

The press plays a major role in this phenomenon. England boasts 10 or 12 major daily national newspapers available at every little newsstand in every town and village the entire length and breadth of the country. American papers, by contrast, focus on serving a local region with a lesser emphasis on national and international issues.

The sheer size of the two countries also accounts for a great deal of the difference. There is far less of England with which to stay current, and far smaller distances separate people from events.

Finally, unlike the English and the Europeans, Americans have no compelling reason to think about, let alone worry about, what is happening in the rest of the world. Our geography, our economy and our form of government make America far less dependent upon the vicissitudes of the rest of world. The American economy is truly the engine that drives the rest of the world, and “the rest of the world” tends to believe we don’t care about them. They need us; we don’t need them. Their dependence upon us requires them to pay close attention to us. Our independence from them means we pay attention only when we cannot ignore them.

We Americans truly are parochial, and for very good reasons. If the other countries of the world were not as ideologically and economically sterile, then they would not be so dependent upon America. If the other countries of the world had robust economies and vibrant, stable political structures, then they could afford to be parochial just as we are. If you are not an America, then expressing that reality may have the ring of arrogance – and perhaps it is arrogant – but ignoring the whole point of this article is to help Americans understand the English. Part of understanding them involves realizing that they do not understand us.

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

HOW TO SUCCEED IN ENGLAND WITHOUT APPARENTLY TRYING

One unusually warm Saturday afternoon in March, my family and I were taking advantage of one of London's all-too-rare sunny days by relaxing in our back garden. We had put our seats in a circle and a table in the middle of us. We all had our beverage of choice in one hand and some kind of munchie in the other. I don't remember who started it, perhaps my younger son, but somebody began thinking out loud about what we could do to improve the process of provisioning ourselves with drinks and snacks. Somebody else suggested a way to make the setting even more comfortable and enjoyable. And nobody thought it strange that we were spending our free time thinking about ways to *improve the efficiency of our relaxation*.

In the following days, as I reflected on that experience, I realized that it illustrated one of the fundamental differences between the English and Americans: with nothing to do on a Saturday afternoon, the natural response of each American was to try to figure out how to do nothing – *better!* It seems that no matter the situation, Americans are geared to try to make things better, faster, stronger, cheaper. It is almost as though we have the urge toward *improvement* in our DNA.

Yet the rest of the world is not like us.

People buy benefits, not features. By selling the benefits of improved efficiency, greater profits, reduced costs and a growth vision for the future, we appeal to distinctly *American* values. But these benefits do not have the same appeal for the English. Let me rephrase that so you do not fail to grasp it:

Improved efficiency, greater profits, reduced costs and increased growth are not nearly as appealing to an English audience as to an American one.

We must stop trying to sell American benefits to an English audience. Instead, we must rethink the benefits of our offerings and recast their features in terms that appeal to our target audience.

So what should be our appeal when we sell in England? Will we have to revamp *everything*? Must we start virtually from scratch? Fortunately, the answer is, “no, we won't”. Our products and services are just as welcome in England as they are in America, but they are welcome *for different reasons*. We simply have to do a better job of understanding what our English friends want. And what is it that they want?

Security. Stability. Reliability. Control. Predictability.

These are the features that appeal to an English audience.

The following discussion contrasts five American values with their English counterparts and explains how to adjust your message to make it as appealing as possible to a British audience.

AMERICA	ENGLAND
Achievement	Conservation
“Be your best”	“Keep your place”

Test your limits	Protect your pension
“Faster, Farther, Higher”	“Gently, Gently”
Opportunity!	Obligation...

1. ACHIEVEMENT VS. CONSERVATION

Creating or enhancing wealth does not have the same appeal to the English as it does to Americans. Most wealth in America is earned, whereas most wealth in England is inherited. America has a strong tradition of upward mobility, whereas England does not.

American companies tend to focus their appeal on meeting the uniquely American idols of *efficiency* and *wealth*, features that carry far less weight for the typical English audience, yet we wonder why our appeals fall on deaf ears in the United Kingdom.

Improved efficiency and increased wealth do not have the same appeal in England because the English are fundamentally pessimistic. They do not believe that permanent improvement is really possible. They tend to focus instead on enduring hardship, surviving the storm and laughing about the absurdities of life. Englishmen as a rule do not care value efficiency and wealth nearly as highly as do Americans. On the other hand, the English care about conserving and preserving far more than do most Americans.

So how do you adjust your message to appeal to your English prospects?

MONEY

In America, money is a way to keep score. (In fact, because of the fluidity of our society, it is practically the only way to keep score.) But in England, money is simply a way to identify whether or not you had rich ancestors. Therefore, the English do not keep score with money. Instead, they tend to keep score with education and position.

Do not assume that your English prospect or customer will be impressed by money or will care about money in the way that an American does. Do not think that he will share the American passion and intensity for making or saving more money.

These are the ideas that animate the Englishman:

- Preserve Your Position
- Make A Small Place Of Your Own
- Get What You Deserve
- Conserve History

SUMMARY

England is a land familiar on the surface yet alien in her soul.

Remember that the English resent you for being an American. Play up to their inner sense of moral superiority. Make it a point to acknowledge the superiority of their culture and history. Play the role of the rube. Allow them to believe that their own biases against America and Americans are entirely justified.

You are there to make money, not make converts to “the American way”.

You will never persuade them that their biases are baseless. In fact, if you attempt to openly acknowledge the existence of their resentment, they will deny it. Your job is to pretend that you are unaware of their resentment, that you believe that England and Europe truly are the very pinnacle of civilization, and that their company’s particular expression of that civilization is certainly equal to, if not superior to, anything comparable in America.

Remember that they really do have a very good reason for being resentful – they owe us. But do not ever – EVER - remind them of their debt to America.

END NOTES

Geert Hofstede, in a 1980 study of over 100,000 IBM employees in more than 35 countries around the world, theorized that world cultures vary along four consistent, fundamental divisions. He suggested that a culture imposes the same kinds of constraints upon those people it hosts as an operating system imposes upon the software it hosts. Just as an operating system contains a set of rules that act as a reference point and a set of constraints to higher-level programs, so culture includes a set of societal values that establish behavioral norms and constraints.

Because all of Hofstede's respondents were IBM employees, (and therefore subject to the same multi-national culture within their place of work), Hofstede rightly determined that differences in their responses could be attributed primarily to difference in national culture.

His four dimensions of culture are:

- Power Distance
- Collectivism vs. Individualism
- Femininity vs. Masculinity
- Uncertainty avoidance

POWER DISTANCE

Power distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal power distribution within a culture. People in societies that have large power distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place that needs no further justification. The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is how society handles inequalities among people when they occur.

The English expect and accept a greater "power distance" than do Americans.

INDIVIDUALISM VS. COLLECTIVISM

Individualism stands for a preference for loosely knit social framework in society where individuals are supposed to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence that a society maintains among individuals.

America is significantly more individualistic than is England.

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. This feeling leads them to beliefs promoting certainty and to institutions protecting conformity. Strong uncertainty avoidance societies maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior and are intolerant towards deviant persons and ideas. Weak uncertainty avoidance societies maintain a more relaxed atmosphere in which practice counts more than principles and deviance is more easily tolerated. A fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is how a society reacts to the

fact that time only runs one way and that the future is unknown: whether it tries to control the future or let it happen.

Americans tend to tolerate a little greater degree of uncertainty than do the English.

MASCULINITY VERSUS FEMININITY

Masculinity stands for a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material success. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for relationships, modesty, caring for the weak and the quality of life.

America tends to be slightly more masculine than England.

(Hofstede 1984, pp83-84)