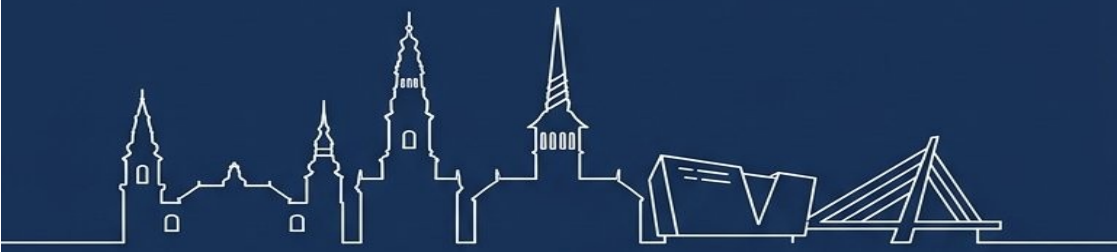
DOING BUSINESS THE DANISH WAY

A CULTURAL GUIDE FOR FOREIGN PROFESSIONALS

Sample



By Lene Els, MA

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Welcome to this sample of Doing Business the Danish Way



This sample gives you a first look at how *Doing Business the Danish Way* helps international professionals understand, navigate, and succeed in Danish work culture. The course is often used as an **onboarding course**.

The full course combines:

- Cultural insight
- Practical communication tools
- Real-life scenarios
- Hands-on strategies
- Leadership and collaboration techniques

All with one goal: **to help you work confidently and effectively in Danish professional environments.**

The Danish Cultural Landscape



Danish business culture is shaped by centuries of stability, social trust, and a strong welfare model. These foundations influence how Danes collaborate, communicate, and lead.

A key insight:

> Authority is legitimized through competence and fairness – not through status or hierarchy.

What this means in practice

- Employees expect involvement
- Leaders must justify decisions
- Dialogue is valued over dominance
- Hierarchies are flat and informal

📝 Mini-Reflection

How does this compare to the leadership norms in your own culture?

Historical Roots of Danish Work Culture

🏛️ Denmark's political evolution has been unusually peaceful. The transition from monarchy to democracy happened through negotiation - not revolution.

This history created a culture that values:

- Stability
- Predictability
- Fairness
- Consensus

Another major influence is Lutheranism, which shaped norms around modesty, diligence, and ethical behavior.

💡 Mini-Insight

Modesty is a core value in Danish workplaces because it supports equality and prevents elitism.

Core Values: Trust, Equality & Modesty

💎 These three values form the backbone of Danish professional life.

1. Trust

Trust is the invisible infrastructure of Danish society.

> Employees are trusted to manage their own time, tasks, and responsibilities.

This means:

- Minimal micromanagement
- Flexible work hours
- High expectations for self-management

2. Equality

Danish workplaces are famously egalitarian.

- Titles are rarely used
- Everyone is expected to contribute
- Decisions are made collaboratively

3. Modesty

Self-promotion is discouraged. Quiet competence is respected.



Let your work speak for itself - not your words.

Mini-Exercise

Write down one situation where you normally expect hierarchy. How might it look in a Danish context?

The Danish Mindset

 The Danish mindset is built on autonomy, responsibility, and balance.

✔ Autonomy

Danes are raised to think independently and take initiative. “Freedom with responsibility” is a core principle.

✔ Internal Motivation

People are driven by meaning, not status. Purpose > prestige.

✔ Balance

Work-life balance is a principle - not a perk. Even managers leave early.

✔ Boundaries

Personal time is protected. Contacting colleagues outside working hours is discouraged.

📝 Mini-Reflection

Which of these values align with your own mindset? Which challenge your habits?

Communication the Danish Way

🇩🇰 Danish communication is:

- Direct
- Clear
- Low-context
- Respectful

A Danish colleague may say:

> “I don’t think this solution works - we need to rethink it.”

This is not rude. It is considered *honest, efficient, and constructive*.

👖 Informality with Precision

Danes may dress casually - but they expect punctuality, preparation, and clarity.

🗣️ Mini-Dialogue Example

Colleague A: “I think we should change the timeline.”

Colleague B: *nods* “Yes, that makes sense.”

Short. Direct. Efficient.

Silence, Feedback & Directness

🔄 Dialogue is constructive and focused strictly on the project.

✔ Silence = Agreement

In Denmark, silence often means:

- “I agree”
- “I have no objections”
- “Let’s move forward”

Don’t expect enthusiastic verbal approval.

✔ Feedback the Danish Way

Feedback is:

- Specific
- Timely
- Neutral in tone
- Focused on the task, not the person

📌 **Example:**

> “Your presentation lacked structure. Let’s work on outlining key points more clearly next time.”

✏ Mini-Exercise

Rewrite this sentence in a more Danish style: *“Perhaps we could consider another option if you think it might be okay?”*

Leadership in a Flat Hierarchy

🧑‍🤝‍🧑 Danish leaders are facilitators, not commanders.

> The manager's role is to facilitate – not to command.

What this looks like

- Leaders guide, support, and create structure
- Employees take responsibility
- Decisions are shared
- Feedback flows both ways

🎭 Scenario

A junior employee challenges the manager in a meeting - and the manager listens.

In Denmark, this is normal. In many cultures, it would be unthinkable.

📝 Mini-Reflection

How would this scenario be perceived in your home culture?

Workplace Norms & Expectations

🏢 Danish workplace culture combines casual behavior with high precision.

1. Work-Life Balance

Danes protect their personal time. Leaving at 16:00–17:00 is normal - not a sign of low commitment.

2. Boundaries

Avoid contacting colleagues outside working hours unless urgent.

3. Meetings

- Start on time
- End on time
- Clear agenda
- Everyone contributes

4. Informality with Precision

Danes may wear jeans to a meeting - but expect punctuality, preparation, and high quality.

📝 Mini-Exercise

Think of one workplace habit you may need to adjust when working with Danes.

🎬 Real-Life Scenarios

Scenario 1: 🧭 Minimal Instructions

Your manager says: “Feel free to dive in - let me know if you need anything.”

This reflects trust and autonomy. You are expected to take initiative.

Scenario 2: ⚖️ Flat Hierarchy

A junior colleague openly disagrees with the manager. The manager listens and adjusts the plan.

Ideas matter more than titles.

Scenario 3: 😄 Informal Tone

A colleague jokes during a serious discussion and calls the CEO by their first name.

Informality is normal - and not a sign of disrespect.

Mini-Reflection

📝 Which scenario feels most unfamiliar to you?

What You Get in the Full Course

📘 The full *Doing Business the Danish Way* program includes **11 modules** with:

🌍 Cultural Foundations

- Danish values and mindset
- Trust, equality, modesty
- Work-life balance and boundaries

💬 Communication Skills

- Directness and clarity
- Feedback the Danish way
- Handling silence
- Navigating Danish humor

🤝 Leadership & Collaboration

- Leading in flat hierarchies
- Consensus-based decision-making
- Empowering autonomy
- Conflict resolution

🧰 Practical Tools

- Real-life scenarios
- Checklists
- Reflection exercises
- Video lessons with voice-over

Designed for international professionals who want to collaborate effectively in Danish workplaces - regardless of background or experience.

About the Author



Lene Els holds a Master’s degree in English, a Bachelor’s degree in German, and further training in journalism.

With experience from the export industry, university teaching, and corporate consulting, she specializes in cross-cultural communication and strategic communication.

As founder of Els-Com, she helps organizations strengthen communication across languages and cultures - always with a focus on clarity, professionalism, and practical value.

Contact

Would you like to learn more about *Doing Business the Danish Way* or try a full module?

You are welcome to reach out for a conversation about:

- Tailoring the course to your organization
- Choosing the right modules
- Online, blended, or company-specific formats

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