

# Welcome To New Employee Orientation

## Germany

Congratulations on your new position at the Acme Engineering, Hamburg Facility. Your days since receiving your offer letter have likely been full of excitement and anxiety as you packed up and moved half way around the world. Hopefully you have already began feel at home in your new workplace, but we fully understanding of the transitional period you'll face as you adjust to your new surroundings. We'd like to help you acclimate as quickly as possible so we've put together this list of the top 10 things you'll experience while working in a German office that are the most different from your work in America.

**10 Dress Code:** The dress code in most German offices, including the Acme Engineering Offices, is Business-Casual. That means wearing nice, clean (containing no holes or tears) jeans is acceptable every day. Compared to many countries, Germans prefer a slightly more conservative wardrobe but we also like to be comfortable. Don't be surprise if you see a bare knee on the hottest days of the year when you some people come to work wearing shorts!

**9 Paid Time Off:** Unlike most other western economies, German companies offer an unlimited number of sick days per year to their employees and there isn't any sort of stigma associated with using them. Germans simply believe that if you are sick you should not be at work. As long as people don't abuse this privilege workers are encouraged to stay home until they feel well enough to return. Be prepared to bring a doctors note after 3 days consecutive days off. Also, if you are a team leader, don't be surprised when members take days off work for illness. Additionally, most German businesses offer a minimum of 25 paid vacation days per year and 12

### Did you know?

With well over 2,500, Hamburg has more bridges than any other city in the world! We have more bridges than Amsterdam and Venice **combined!**

months of paid time off for Mothers *and* Fathers after a child is born.

**8 Water Cooler Talk:** It's a common practice in many western offices to start the workday by turning on your computer then heading to the coffee station or water cooler to talk about whatever happened in sports or in the news the night before. These impromptu social gatherings may last as long as 10 or 15 minutes and are, in many places, an acceptable way to strengthen social bonds among co-workers. However, you won't find these water cooler moments in Germany. Germans prefer to get right to work in the mornings and may stay at their desks for an hour or more before even getting a cup of coffee.

**7 Formal Titles:** In the office people refer to each other by formal names such as Mr. and Mrs. or, in German, Heir and Frau. They are also sticklers for using any earned title, such as Doctor, and are likely to be highly offended if they are not used.

**6 Job Description:** When you land a job in Germany you sign a contract with your employer. Part of this contract lays out the job duties you are responsible for. The plus side is you'll never be asked to do something not found in that contract (like making coffee or emptying trash cans).

**5 Thoroughness:** Unlike many western offices, where a certain amount of mistakes can be overlooked, in a German office the work you turn in is expected to be 100% correct on the first try. A manager will get extremely frustrated with work containing mistakes. Make sure you review your work a few times before you turn anything in.

**4 Work/Life Separation:** Germans are known for being some of the most efficient workers in the world. They come to work to work, not to make friends. This may seem uncomfortable and stuffy to someone used to the friendly offices of the United States. But don't worry! Outside of work your coworkers and managers will likely be happy to get to know you.

**3 Independence:** In the German workplace the typical worker is left to do their work with out much oversight. A manger will trust their employees are capable of getting their assignments done without having to be micromanaged. On the flip side, if you need help from a manager they will expect you to troubleshoot the situation from every possible angle before asking for assistance. If you ask for



help without trying to solve the problem first, your manager will be incredibly frustrated.

**2 Time Management:** In Germany, if you're not ten to fifteen minutes early for work every day...you're late to work every day. Germans demand that you respect their time and have little patience for people who don't. This includes meeting times and deadlines. On the plus side, that respect goes both ways. When you schedule a meeting or assign a task you can count on the fact that they will get done on time.

**1 Bluntness:** In an American office when an employee disagrees with a decision or doesn't understand an instruction there is a delicate balance between each party to gain understanding and come to a mutually beneficial outcome. In Germany, however, that interaction is much different. If someone has an opinion or thought about a situation they will tell you directly, and bluntly. At first, someone not used to this way of communication may interpret it as a personal attack or general aggression, but Germans don't see it that way. Rather than wasting time dancing around a situation to spare someone's feelings, they would rather concisely speak their peace and get the situation resolved as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Want to study more about the the German workplace? Follow these links or see an HR rep.

<https://www.expatica.com/de/employment/employment-basics/understanding-german-business-culture-100983>

<https://careerprofessor.works/work-culture-in-germany>

<https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/jobs/business-etiquette/workplace-manners>