HOW TO DO BUSINESS IN THE UK
A CULTURAL GUIDE

FACTS
• #5 LARGEST ECONOMY IN THE WORLD
• ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE
• GATEWAY TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETS
• LONDON WORLD CITY
• INCOMPARABLE DIVERSITY
• HOME TO ONE OF WORLD’S LEADING FINANCIAL CENTRES
• AT THE FOREFRONT OF R&D
• #8 IN THE WORLD ON THE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS INDEX

MAIN ECONOMIC ATTRIBUTES
• The UK is a service-oriented economy (the service industries account for 79% of GDP), but also a leader in engineering and manufacturing.
• It is a country of freelancers and individual consultants.
• There is a booming start up culture and an appetite for innovation and creative solutions.
• The UK presents an outstanding density of incubators, accelerators, and other open innovation programs.
• 99.3% of UK businesses are small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and make up 60% of private sector employment.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE
• The use of first names is common.
• Contrary to the custom in Switzerland, the salutation “Doctor” is generally only used by medical doctors.
• Politeness is a key aspect of British business culture. Never state dislike or disapproval directly.
• Don’t overestimate someone’s interest in your ideas. The British are often open to discussion and willing to listen even when their level of interest is not high.
• Patience is a British virtue, don’t pressure anyone into making a decision.

WORKING CULTURE
• Working hours are typically from 9-6 and working from home is common.
• Business is often conducted outside of the office.
• Hierarchy is important, yet the concept of teamwork is a crucial aspect of British work culture.
• Social media is an indispensable channel to converse with clients.

THE ART OF CONVERSATION
• Humor and understatements are often used in British business communication. You will need to read between the lines.
• Pub culture is an integral part of British life. Going to the pub after work is still a popular relationship-building activity.
• Meet-up groups provide informal networking opportunities that must not be neglected.
• Networking events, trade shows, fairs and conferences are a highly effective way to gauge potential market interest, and the variety of events the UK offers is exceptional.

SWISS BUSINESS HUB UK
The Swiss Business Hub UK + Ireland is the key contact point for Swiss and Liechtenstein SMEs looking for export opportunities in the United Kingdom + Ireland market. Our team provides individualised consulting and expertise for current and aspiring exporters. For any queries on this fact sheet or enquiries about export opportunities please contact lon.sbhuk@eda.admin.ch