

### **Employment practices are more restrictive.**

Canadian companies should not forget that France has a very elaborate and expensive set of rules regarding the social protection of employees. The obligations of employers are so onerous that many Canadian parent companies simply do not believe their French subsidiaries when they are told of the rights and demands of employees, even after years of establishment in France. Canadian parent companies sometimes try to find a way out of these rules...but there is no way out. The French administration does not negotiate.

### **But French management is flexible.**

While extensive employee rights may seem a restriction, French management is mobile and will accept travelling extensively and stay abroad if needed. Similarly, French agents will travel readily to visit the manufacturers of the products they sell and report on the market.

### **A good meal is an essential ingredient of good business.**

Corporate entertaining is important but it is mostly over lunch. A good meal is essential to seal a relationship, celebrate an agreement, or just keep in touch.

### **Business gifts are a way of life.**

Another common practice is "le cadeau d'affaires" or business gift. These can be lavish and may be expected by your counterpart. Every industry has its "rules" and it is best to ask your French collaborators. For a North American, the ethics of such gifts may be questionable but in certain industries you cannot operate without playing by the rules. The "cadeau d'affaires" does not enable you to win a contract, it is more a way of maintaining good relations and more akin to upmarket promotional gifts. Examples of such gifts would be a box of foie gras for Christmas, or a silver pen on signing a deal.

### **Personal relations are extremely important.**

Another effect is that your German counterpart will not enter the negotiation until he has established a personal relationship with you. This is not to say that the negotiation will be more difficult, but it will be more time-consuming. In fact, the personal relationship is often the key to success. You will find that colleagues having worked together in a previous company will be more helpful and will give you more information than those who have not. This is not to say that the negotiation will be more difficult, but it will be more time-consuming. In fact, the personal relationship is often the key to success. You will find that colleagues having worked together in a previous company will be more helpful and will give you more information than those who have not.

Firstly, most German companies are very loyal to their supplier and value a long-term relationship. To protect an established relationship with a supplier, German companies will even buy a product from you when they have a better alternative. A new supplier will also have to work consistently in order to be accepted. This is not to say that the negotiation will be more difficult, but it will be more time-consuming. In fact, the personal relationship is often the key to success. You will find that colleagues having worked together in a previous company will be more helpful and will give you more information than those who have not.