



# BUSINESS ETIQUETTES AND CUSTOMS



## INDIA

### WORKING HOURS

- Start between 9 and 10:30am for a minimum of 8 hours a day.
- Monday to Saturday except for every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month.

### PUNCTUALITY

- Indians appreciate punctuality but may not reciprocate it.
- People from different industries and regions in the country approach punctuality differently.
- In most business situations it is advisable to turn up a few minutes early and in case of an unavoidable delay, to warn the other party of said delay.

### GIFTS AND PRESENTS

- Not a customary part.
- Not usually given in a first meeting but are often given around Diwali or the New Year.
- Once a relationship has flourished, gifts may be exchanged.
- Sometimes gifts are exchanged on the successful completion of a deal.
- Reciprocation is a respectable practice when gifts are received.
- In India, many organizations and government encourage their employees not to accept any form of gifts to prevent them from the legal consequences. For this reason corporate gifts are usually of a lower value.

### BUSINESS CLOTHING

- Varies in different parts of India and industries.
- Choose between traditional and western wear, formal or casual depending on the company dress code.
- For men traditional formal wear includes a safari suit, kurta pajama, trousers and shirt (tie optional) or a business suit.
- Traditional formals for women include a saree or a salwar suit while western formals include trousers and a formal shirt or a business suits.
- Many organization have their own uniform with company style, logo and slogans to look corporate. It reflects the certain image of the company for Indian business etiquette.

### BUREAUCRACY

- Complex and ineffective bureaucracy.
- However, the Union level bureaucracy has improved vastly over the last few years and is quite proactive.
- Several states have also shown considerable improvement but there still are some state governments that are quite challenging to deal with.



## BUSINESS MEALS

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- A business meal is an important part of the professional world in India.
- Always accept the invitation for the lunch or dinner with your Indian counterpart.
- It will present a wonderful opportunity to connect and to know more about your colleagues.
- India is very popular for its variety of delicious and mouth-watering food. Indian food has lots of variety and options, outdoor eating is quite popular in India.
- Usually a service charge of 10% is included in the bill, if not then include a tip.
- Depending on the region and religious leanings of your host, alcohol may or may not be consumed with the meal. Tea and coffee are common for the business meeting.
- Carry antacids with you as some Indian meals can be extremely heavy and spicy.

## BUSINESS MEETINGS

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- Ensure you arrive on time and introduce yourself if the other members in the room do not know about you and your organisation.
- Indians can on occasion be loud, do not take offence or be embarrassed.
- Also remember that English is not always a first language and some metaphors or idioms might accidentally be used out of context. Do not be afraid to ask for clarifications.
- In the meeting, people tend to be polite and discuss every aspects of business.
- Meetings can extend beyond the dedicated time span, so be prepared for extra time.
- In the initial stages, people keep emotional and physical expressions at minimum level.

## NATIONAL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

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- Three national holidays and 9 major religious public holidays.

## ADDRESSING A PERSON

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- Personal titles are vital in India. The common title is 'Sir' for the male and 'Madam' or 'Mam' for the female.
- Indians tend to use first names quite early in business relationship. Therefore, it is appropriate and well acceptable if you call them by their first name followed by social or academic title. When in doubt, ask how they would like to be addressed.
- Use the email or business cards to find out how to address an associate with proper title. If he or she has a title in front of the name, then you should address the person by their title following by the name.
- Academic and hierarchy titles are highly recommended to be used when talking with the senior person.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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- Not very good work life balance. But depends on the company and the seniority of the person concerned.

## CONVERSATION

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- Indian people appear formal and they are also very vocal.
- They like having discussions on cultural and historical topics.
- Avoid bringing up issues concerning touchy subjects such as Kashmir, religion and Indian politics unless these topics are raised. It is then advisable to speak with caution on these kinds of sensitive topics.

