

CONDUCTING BUSINESS WITH PEOPLE FROM



MEXICO



Greetings



Shake hands upon meeting someone and when you leave. Women should initiate all handshakes. When meeting someone, address them as *Señor*, *Señora* or *Señorita* followed by their last names. Individuals who have earned degrees and have titles such as “*Profesor*”, “*Doctor*”, “*Ingeniero*” (engineer) should be addressed by titles followed by their last names. Once a good rapport has been established, you may drop their last name and refer to them using their professional title.

Conversation



Mexicans are very proud of their culture and heritage. Topics of interest may include your travel itinerary, what’s going on in Mexico, *fútbol* (soccer), sites you have visited in Mexico, the weather, and your immediate surroundings. Be prepared for personal discussions; Mexicans tend to talk about their families and private lives. Topics to avoid include the Mexican-American War, Mexican politics, or any comparison between Mexico and the U.S. that appears to put the latter in a position of superiority.

Gestures



Conversations take place at a close physical distance; pulling away may be regarded as unfriendly. Maintaining eye contact is perceived as gawking. Be sure to break eye contact regularly when talking with a Mexican. Keeping your hands in your pockets is considered rude. The “OK” gesture formed with the thumb and index finger should be avoided; it is considered vulgar. Instead of waiting patiently when standing in line, Mexicans tend to push their way to the front. Mexicans catch another person’s attention in public with a “psst-psst” sound; this is not considered rude.

Business Attire



Mexicans dress with dignity no matter what the social class. They are fastidious about their grooming. For business meetings, dark suits and ties are the norm. When the situation calls for business-casual attire, be certain that your shirts are clean and pressed and shoes are polished. Women should dress in skirted suits, hosiery, and heels. The “natural look” is not common in Mexico. Make-up and ornate jewelry are important to Mexican woman.

Hierarchy/Family



Mexican companies comprise top executives, managers, and workers. Although many individuals may be asked their opinions on decisions, the person who will have the last say will be the top person in authority. Machismo is very strong.

Manners



Confirm in advance any appointments you have made. When possible, correspondence should be prepared in Spanish. It is important to remain flexible during meetings. More often than not, there may not be a formal agenda. When in a meeting, be sure not to challenge or correct your Mexican counterpart.

When scheduling appointments with a Mexican, be sure to ask if the scheduled time will be *en punto* (exact) or *más o meno* – that is “more or less,” meaning that you should prepare to wait when you arrive.

Don’t use the Lord’s name in vain, as this will offend your Mexican contacts.

Cognitive Styles



Haggling is very much a part of the decision-making process. In Mexico information is readily accepted for purposes of discussion, but little movement in attitude is seen. Mexicans process information subjectively and associatively, since most of the education is by rote. They become personally involved in each situation and look at the particulars rather than using a rule or law to solve problems.

Currency



Unit of currency is the peso and the coin is the centavo. 100 centavos = 1 peso.

Ethnic Make-Up



The ethnic composition of Mexico is 60% mestizo (a mixture of Indian and European), 30% Amerindian, 9% white, and 1% other.

Language



Spanish is the official language, although over 100 Indian languages are also spoken. English is widely understood by educated people and in urban centers.

Religion



90% Roman Catholic.