

Doing Business Abroad - India

Location: Southern Asia.

Capital: New Delhi

Climate: varies from tropical monsoon in south to temperate in north

Population: 1,065,070,607 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3% (2000)

Religions: Hindu 81.3%, Muslim 12%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other groups including Buddhist, Jain, Parsi 2.5% (2000)



Languages in India

The different states of India have different official languages, some of them not recognized by the central government. Some states have more than one official language. Bihar in east India has three official languages - Hindi, Urdu and Bengali - which are all recognized by the central government. But Sikkim, also in east India, has four official languages of which only Nepali is recognized by the central government. Besides the languages officially recognized by central or state governments, there are other languages which don't have this recognition and their speakers are running political struggles to get this recognition. Central government decided that Hindi was to be the official language of India and therefore it also has the status of official language in the states.

Relationships & Communication

- Indians prefer to do business with those they know.
- Relationships are built upon mutual trust and respect.
- In general, Indians prefer to have long-standing personal relationships prior to doing business.
- It may be a good idea to go through a third party introduction. This gives you immediate credibility.





Titles

- Indians revere titles such as Professor, Doctor and Engineer.
- Status is determined by age, university degree, caste and profession.
- .- If someone does not have a professional title, use the honorific title "Sir" or "Madam".
- .- Titles are used with the person's name or the surname, depending upon the person's name. (See Social Etiquette for more information on Indian naming conventions.)

Dress Etiquette

- Business attire is conservative.
- Men should wear dark colored conservative business suits.
- Women should dress conservatively in suits or dresses.
- The weather often determines clothing. In the hotter parts of the country, dress is less formal, although dressing as suggested above for the first meeting will indicate respect.



Business Meeting Etiquette

- If you will be traveling to India from abroad, it is advisable to make appointments by letter, at least one month and preferably two months in advance.
- It is a good idea to confirm your appointment as they do get cancelled at short notice.
- .- The best time for a meeting is late morning or early afternoon. Reconfirm your meeting the week before and call again that morning, since it is common for meetings to be cancelled at the last minute.
- .- Keep your schedule flexible so that it can be adjusted for last minute rescheduling of meetings.
- .- You should arrive at meetings on time since Indians are impressed with punctuality.
- .- Meetings will start with a great deal of getting-to-know-you talk. In fact, it is quite possible that no business will be discussed at the first meeting.
- .- Always send a detailed agenda in advance. Send back-up materials and charts and other data as well. This allows everyone to review and become comfortable with the material prior to the meeting.
- Follow up a meeting with an overview of what was discussed and the next steps.