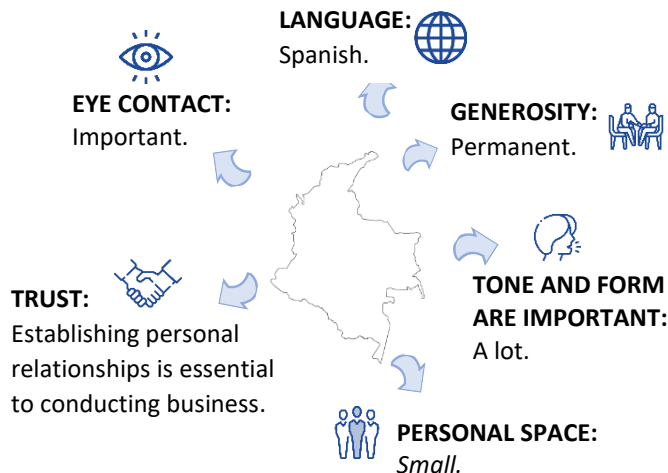


BUSINESS CULTURE IN COLOMBIA

TIPS ABOUT A COLOMBIAN:



ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS:

- Organising for results:
 - Keep an agenda for the meeting and be clear about the timing.
- Cancellations:
 - When you want to cancel the meeting, you should do so in good time and with a valid reason.
- Response times:
 - Media.
 - Keep in mind that "soon" or a "while" means later or after, i.e. in the near future.
- Citations:
 - The initial written approaches to Colombian companies are in Spanish, then you should ask if your contact speaks English or if they would feel more comfortable with an interpreter.
 - Citations are tentative until reconfirmed again with both parties. It is advisable to reconfirm meetings the day prior to the scheduled slot.
- Language:
 - Spanish is the spoken language in Colombia.
 - Most of the Colombian companies with an international outlook have English speakers on their staff, but you can't assume that everyone speaks English.
 - Because of this, is advisable to engage a interpreter to accompany you to the meeting.
- Business culture:
 - In Bogotá or Medellín, the business culture is more formal (often more so than in Europa).
 - In smaller cities, the culture is generally more informal.
- Punctuality:
 - It is not customary to arrive much earlier for appointments, but to keep to the agreed time.
 - The time frame for a meeting with a Colombian can be from 7 a.m. at 6:30 p.m.
 - For social functions they usually arrive 15 minutes after the agreed time.
- Clear issues:
 - It is recommended to set out a clear issue to be addressed, and it is advisable provide it in advance.

PROTOCOL:

- Greetings:
 - Precedence:
Always greet the person with the highest precedence and in order of highest to lowest importance greet the following guests.
 - Mention of names and titles:
Introductions are usually made with full names and surnames. The first name is usually accompanied by Mr, Mrs or position of importance.
 - Is recommendable a firm handshake, combines with strong eye contact. Smiling is also important.
- Dress code:
 - In the major cities like Bogotá o Medellín, conservative European dress code is the norm for all the meetings.
 - For the smaller cities, smart casual dress is acceptable, especially those in more tropical climates.
- Flags:
 - When the Colombian flag is to be used on national territory, a Colombian embassy or consulate: the Colombian flag should always be on the right and the flag of the visiting country on the left.
 - When there are more than 2 flags: the Colombian flag is placed in the centre and the flags of the other countries in alphabetical order (without touching the ground and without a shield).
 - In multilateral organisations, they are listed in alphabetical order, in the main language of the event venue.

- Distribution of the tables:
 - According to hierarchies. It can be like an auditorium table, u-format, round table or imperial one.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT:

- It is common for a Colombian to meet for breakfast, lunch or dinner with potential clients, suppliers, among others. The average duration of these meetings is usually two hours.
 - Breakfast: 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. approx.
 - Lunch: from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.
 - Dinner: 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. approx.
- Always ask for an appointment, never arrive unexpectedly.
- The Colombian is warm and usually starts meetings by talking about personal issues, but this does not mean overconfidence.
- People use gestures and their hands a lot when speaking.
- Normally, they make respectful contact on arms and back.
- For Colombians, the tone and manner of communication is very important. They can take a tactless gesture or comment personally.
- For Colombians, social relations are very important before entering into any lasting business relationship.
- It is common for them to bring corporate gifts, Colombian souvenirs, or alcohol.
- Colombians usually take holidays during Christmas, New Year and Easter Week. So try to plan you visit at other times.