

Unit 4: International Business

Unit 4 deals provides information geared towards general international comparisons. There are 3 brief topics:

International Comparisons

Business Cards

Canadian Standards

International Comparisons

The information in this article is presented from a Western point of view. It is important to note that etiquette in other cultures requires a bit of adaptation and flexibility. If you're travelling on business to a foreign destination, or have visitors here, it is a good idea to learn as much as you can about the culture they are coming from and make appropriate allowances.

Items to consider:

Language

Time zones

Working schedules

Holidays

Food customs

Generally speaking, as long as you are trying to be considerate and express an interest in learning, you should be fine. If in doubt, err on the conservative, formal side.

Business Cards

The presentation and exchange of business cards in Canada is rather informal. They can be exchanged at the beginning or end of a meeting. Once exchanged, it is acceptable to immediately place the card in a wallet or pocket. There is no requirement to read the card or ask questions on its content, unless you honestly have a question.

Canada is officially bilingual. The federal government works in the two official languages - English and French. Other companies may also have bilingual requirements.

In the province of Quebec, there are very stringent French-language requirements for all commercial endeavours. Ensure that you provide a French translation for promotional material and other documents. Occasionally, however, including English phrases that have no French equivalents can be permissible.

Generally, it's an asset to include both French and English translations on your business card. Business cards are exchanged, although not usually during an initial greeting.

Canadian Standards

The majority of Canadians, as well as citizens of other English speaking countries, have individualism ranked highest. Success is measured by personal achievement. Canadians tend to

be self-confident and open to discussions on general topics; however, they hold their personal privacy off limits to all but the closest friends. It should be noted there is tension between the French province of Quebec and other Canadian provinces.

There are ideological differences between Canadians and Americans. These ideological differences extend to Canadians' way of life and approach to work. The reverence Americans feel for achieving and taking risks is not generally met with thunderous applause in Canada. Canadians have developed a slower pace and more cautious approach to life and work, as well as a greater emphasis on organization and detail. Working within the given parameters, as opposed to outside the box, is more the Canadian style. American enthusiasm for taking risks is often perceived as excessive, unnecessary and sometimes even a little dangerous.

In Canadian business culture, consciousness of rank and title is somewhat more pronounced than in the United States.

Canadians often begin informal meetings by talking about inoffensive topics, such as the weather or transportation. Canadians usually hope that visitors will recognize and appreciate the many unique attributes that make their country distinct from the United States.

Tolerance, calmness, and reasonableness are behaviours valued by many Canadians. Canada is a multicultural society and the customs of businesspeople may reflect their ethnic background. Emphasis is on one's ability and competitive behaviour is expected.

Traditional sex roles are changing rapidly, but there is still some struggle among women for equality in income and positions of authority.