

BUSINESS ETIQUETTES AND CUSTOMS



SPAIN

WORKING HOURS

- 9 am to around 2 pm and then from 4 pm to around 7 pm, from Monday to Friday. The famous siesta is not as common now, or as long, as is thought outside Spain, and is mainly taken in the South and in the hotter months.

PUNCTUALITY

- Spanish people do not share the same concept of time as other western European nations. In Spain, being late is usually not considered impolite and deadlines are often considered as objectives to be met where possible, but are not viewed as binding.

GIFTS AND PRESENTS

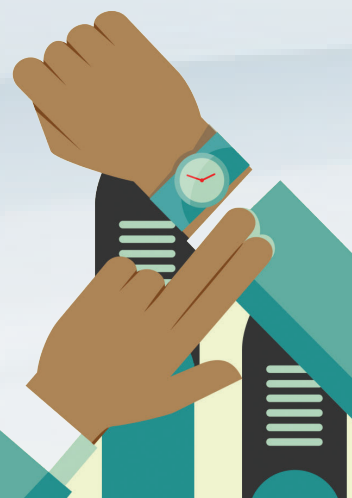
- In Spain, business people do not usually give gifts to each other. However, gifts are sometimes offered at the end of a successful negotiation or to say thank you for a favour.

ADDRESSING A PERSON

- In recent times, a change has been taking place regarding the use of names and titles in Spain.
- Previously, first names tended to be used only when addressing someone from your family circle, friends and children, while this is now not so. Similarly, in the Spanish language there are two ways of saying 'you'; 'usted' is the formal style of address, used for addressing older or more senior people with respect; whereas 'tú' is more informal and used mainly amongst family members and friends. In today's language, 'tú' is used more than it was some years ago.
- In the business environment, it is advisable to use the courtesy titles 'señor' for a man, 'señora' for a married woman, and 'señorita' for an unmarried woman, together with the person's surname.
- In certain cases, you may be expected to use their professional titles when addressing a person, such as professor or doctor together with their surname. However, professional and academic titles are not normally used when addressing Spanish executives.
- The tradition of addressing someone by the title 'don' (for a man) or 'doña' (for a woman) with their first name was historically used as a form of respect to an older or senior person.
- Today, this is uncommon and using this form of address may appear sarcastic or mocking

BUSINESS CLOTHING

- In Spain, the look of the person one is doing business with is important. It is important to dress in a manner that demonstrates professionalism, style and a serious approach to business.
- It is advisable to dress with elegance and use only top-quality materials in subdued colours. Designer clothes are particularly recommended and elegant accessories are important for both men and women.



BUSINESS MEETINGS

- In Spanish business culture, hierarchy and position are valued highly and it is advisable to arrange meetings between representatives of an equivalent position and professional status.
- Spanish business culture places great emphasis on authority within organizations and decisions are often made by the most senior manager present in a meeting. Senior managers tend to be far-removed from more junior colleagues.
- Generally, subordinates are required to respect their managers and follow the instructions given to them.
- Spaniards tend to work well in teams with managers seeing themselves as team players, even though there is usually a 'closed-door' approach to management.
- Before the formalities of a meeting, you should spend time getting to know your host and expect to discuss general informal subjects, such as the weather, family, or travel arrangements and how your journey was.
- It is common to give out business cards in meetings but do not be surprised if people fail to do so.
- Spaniards pay attention to what they say and how they say it.
- Especially when dealing with outsiders, Spaniards will often insist that everything is in perfect order, even when this is not the case.
- This is a measure to appear competent and in control.
- The foreign visitor should pay close attention during conversations with Spanish contacts to discern the sincerity or veracity of what is being said.

CONVERSATION

- Welcome topics of conversation include talk about your home country, places you have visited (particularly in Spain), Spanish art, architecture, and traditions, such as dance or wines and family, as well as sport, especially football.
- Ask the Spanish about their children or family; few subjects are taboo. The Spanish are proud of their food and wine; you would be wise not to disagree.
- You should avoid making disrespectful remarks about Spanish traditions or practices and you should not comment on national or regional stereotypes that Spaniards may find insulting, such as bullfighting or similar.
- Flamenco, and siestas are other Spanish stereotypes but these will not produce the same negative effect as a conversation topic. In fact, these are even stereotypes that the rest of Spain has towards Andalucía.
- Do not be surprised if an evening out lasts until the late hours (nor will the Spanish be offended if you leave because you can't keep your eyes open). Spanish presentations tend to be long-winded; expect it and do not get frustrated.

BUSINESS MEALS

- Meal times in Spain are generally considered the time to relax and enjoy oneself rather than to close deals.
- More typically, the deals are done at the office, and then after the successful negotiations, you all go to celebrate at a restaurant.
- Lunch, rather than dinner, is usually the best time for a business meal.
- Depending on the circumstances, this could either be a casual meal at a local café or an extended lunch over the course of several hours in a fine restaurant.
- Colleagues regularly eat lunch together, in the staff canteen or out at restaurants, but senior managers often eat together and the boss usually makes a point of eating separately, or off the premises.
- Breakfast meetings are not very popular in Spain and are never scheduled before 9 am

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- In Spain, close to 5% of employees work very long hours, less than the OECD average of 13%. Full-time workers devote 66% of their day on average, or 15.9 hours, to personal care (eating, sleeping, etc.) and leisure (socializing with friends and family, hobbies, games, computer and television use, etc.) – more than the OECD average of 15 hours.
- Families in Spain find it difficult to combine work and family life (OECD Better life Index 2018).

NATIONAL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

- Approx. 23 days

