
COMMUNICATION

Good communication is the key to successful partnerships. Exchange of skills and transfer of technology depend on communication. Communicating effectively across cultures requires well-honed listening skills and an understanding of the host culture. The following information includes some guidelines to assist you in developing your communication skills in a Pakistani work environment.

Urdu

Urdu, Pakistan's national language, is spoken by the majority of the population. It is difficult to function well without a grounding in Urdu in many other parts of the country, especially in rural areas and small towns and cities. Most Canadians arriving in Islamabad, the capital, are not motivated to learn Urdu because they are surrounded by people who speak English. By the end of their assignments, however, most Canadians, even those posted to the capital, regret not having made greater effort to learn basic Urdu. Just a few key words and phrases go a long way towards building rapport with your partners and their staff. It is the effort that Pakistanis greatly appreciate. It is well worth your time and effort, if only to get exposure to the rudiments of the language.

English

Many educated Pakistanis have a good command of written and spoken English since all schools teach English. Standards are, however, generally lower than in Canada. Some Pakistanis, even those with graduate degrees, have great difficulty expressing themselves well in written English. Canadians find the Pakistani writing style flowery and their language-use stilted. When writing to prominent people, by Canadian standards, Pakistanis letters are long-winded and laced with too many superlatives. Canadian correspondence tends to be brief, concise and to-the-point, to the extent that some Pakistanis find it abrupt and jarring. You should strive for a balance between the two styles in your letters to Pakistani officials.

Some Pakistanis who do not speak English well can read and write reasonably well. This is because there is little emphasis on spoken English at school and few opportunities to practice speaking.

Many Canadian English words have a different meaning in Pakistan. It is best not to use too much slang. Pakistan's English is of the British variety, and so is the spelling.