

E.

CULTURAL AND BUSINESS TIPS FOR DOING BUSINESS IN PAKISTAN

An appreciation for a country's cultural and business practices can be beneficial to the business executive approaching the market for the first time. This is especially true for a country such as Pakistan which, for many entrepreneurs, remains a market both mysterious and exotic. Following are some observations worthy of note.

I. Dress Code

Foreign men do not have to change their style of dress in Pakistan but should refrain from appearing in public shirtless or in shorts, regardless of the heat.

Foreign women will want to be more careful in order to avoid offending Pakistanis or attracting unwanted attention. It is best for women to dress in modest, loose fitting clothing which covers most of the body. Bare backs, sleeveless dresses and short skirts are definitely out of line in Pakistan. When in doubt, a shalwar kameez is the best option. Foreign women who adopt the local dress, especially in public places and always when travelling, have found it to be the easiest way to gain acceptance and respectability.

When you receive a printed invitation in Pakistan, it will state whether the function is casual, informal or formal.

Casual: Wear what you want. Sports shirt, sweaters, pants, skirts, dresses or shalwar kameez.

Informal: Coat and tie or lounge suit for men; dress or fancy shalwar kameez for women.

Formal: Black or white dinner jacket for men; dress (usually long) for women or a glittery silk shalwar kameez.

II. How to Address People

In many ways, Pakistanis are more formal than Canadians, much the same way that Canadians were a generation or two ago. Younger people tend to address older people as "Sir" or "Mr." or "Mrs." If there is a title, such as "Dr." or "Colonel", it should always be used. Titles are very important in this country. A first name can be used with "Sahib", such as Tariq Sahib or Bashir Sahib. In the workplace, a general rule of thumb for this is that one uses "Sahib" or Sir for those above you in the hierarchy, the exception being those who are older yet below you in the pecking order. In other words, age supersedes title.