

An American facilitator, unaware of the managers' proficiency in English, frequently tried to simplify his words. Out of courtesy and respect for the visitor, the workshop participants allowed him to carry on in this vein. Finally, when the American tried to find a simplified alternative to the word "conciliatory," the managers piped up with a list of synonyms and antonyms. The American was embarrassed. He realized he had under-estimated their language skills.

When Indians discuss a deal, they rarely give a definitive "no" because they don't wish to offend clients or make them feel uncomfortable. You will often hear a vague remark such as "we'll see what we can do." Indians take this approach in order not to be perceived as unkind or harsh. The younger generation of technocrats and business people appear to have less time for such niceties. Feeling pressure from competition, their

communication with you may be more direct, a sign that traditional business culture is giving way to modernization.

Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal signals can mean one thing in Canada and something completely different in India. The following episode illustrates the need to avoid certain non-verbal signals without first explaining their meaning.

A Canadian once told an Indian colleague that the Canadian team leader and his Indian counterpart were "like that," holding up his hand with his middle finger crossed over his index finger. The colleague was aghast. While the Canadian intended to convey that he and his counterpart were very close, the Indian understood crossed fingers to mean the two were crossing swords.