

- Give Mexican contacts the opportunity to ask questions later, after they have had time to think about it.
- Give explanations on an individual basis rather than to a group. Groups are more likely to say “yes”, especially if subordinates are in the presence of their superiors.

The Meaning of Time

Business dealings in Mexico are usually time-consuming. This is especially true when dealing with the government or traditional business people. The lack of concern about time and punctuality is part of the business culture, and Mexicans often forget that such delays are not normal for foreigners. It is not uncommon for a Mexican to be an hour late for a business meeting, although this is not likely to happen on a first meeting. Usually this is due to a chain of events that has delayed all meetings of the day. Mexico City’s traffic is so congested that it serves as a safe excuse, albeit one that is much overused.

Being made to wait should not be seen as an insult or sign of disrespect. If the practice persists, it is appropriate to reschedule the meeting if you have to wait more than 30 minutes. The Mexican host will respect the value of your time and eventually adopt your culture of punctuality.

Punctuality is becoming more common in Mexico, especially in the north, which is more “Americanized”. Visitors should always be on time and avoid adopting this particular Mexican trait.

The Work Ethic

Mexicans work very hard and with discipline. This is perhaps the area where Mexican culture is most misunderstood by foreigners. Contrary to the popular stereotype, Mexicans do not take *siestas* in the middle of the day.

Working hours typically start at 08:00 or 09:00. There is a lunch break from 2:00 to 4:00, although subordinates usually take only one hour. Then the work day resumes until perhaps 8:00 in the evening. Many senior executives work even later and continue with a business meeting at dinner.

Mexico suffers from serious unemployment and underemployment, and apparent laziness is found mainly in situations where there is nothing to do. Given the opportunity to learn and better their economic situation, Mexicans are both diligent and motivated.

Most people prefer to work in a friendly atmosphere and socialization with co-workers is common. Major motivators are money and benefits offered by the company. Opportunities for advancement are often a secondary factor. Loyalty to co-workers and the firm is usually high.