

No matter how accurate or insightful a generalization might be, if it is assumed to apply to an individual, it becomes prejudice. In contrast, “cultural sensitivity” involves no assumptions. It means understanding the values that are likely to underlie a person’s behaviour and their perceptions of us.

The generalizations in this workbook are the opinions of Canadian service providers with direct experience in Mexico. But the workbook cannot describe one Mexican, and it cannot describe all Mexicans. It is merely a guide for interpreting Mexican business practices that will be most useful when supplemented with personal experience.

With those caveats, a number of common characteristics of the Mexican people can be identified:

- They are friendly, positive and outgoing.
- They are respectful and loyal, especially to family and friends.
- They like to socialize and discuss issues that are personal to them, but at the same time they are often guarded and selective with their trust.
- They hold the mother figure in extremely high regard in the context of the family, but often discriminate against women in the workplace.
- They have respect for authority, often to the extent that they cannot make a decision without first consulting their superiors.
- They often rely on social networks and political contacts to further their businesses.
- They place great emphasis on honour, respect, and trust — yet corruption is widespread and often accepted as a normal part of doing business.

These characteristics do not define the Mexican culture. They are reflections of the underlying cultural values. Different people will handle these forces differently, but almost all Mexicans are influenced by them to some extent. Considering them, therefore, is much more important than contemplating individual characteristics while trying to understand the changing Mexican business environment.