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CULTURAL ASPECTS OF DOING BUSINESS IN MEXICO



Team Canada - Equipe Canada



Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade

Ministère des Affaires étrangères
et du Commerce International

Latin America & Caribbean Branch

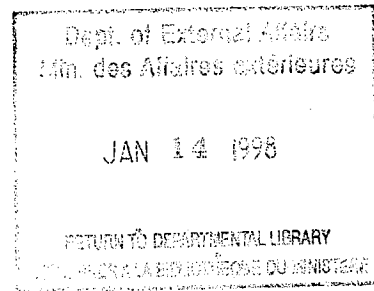
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REFERENCE MATERIALS - MEXICO

Cultural Aspects of Doing Business in Mexico

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Reference Materials — Mexico

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Introduction

Companies that do business in Canada and the United States tend to take cultural differences for granted. Canada is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural country. This feature goes well beyond the obvious English-French differences. Marketers are accustomed to adapting their products and their promotion methods to appeal to various sub-markets. Moreover, Canadians are used to accommodating differences in the way that people from different cultures behave in business situations. For the most part, however, these are relatively minor adjustments. While product preferences may vary, the overall style of conducting business is very similar throughout the United States and Canada.

Doing business in Mexico is another matter. Differences in consumer tastes and marketing methods are only the tip of the iceberg. There are major cultural differences, and they affect virtually every aspect of business relationships. For the most part, Mexicans are not as accustomed as Canadians to dealing with other cultures. As a result, they are more likely than Canadians to react badly to visitors who do not share their own values. This is partly because their traditions are based mainly on a single culture and are firmly rooted. Decades of protectionism have insulated Mexicans from the ways that other cultures do business. It is therefore essential for Canadians who export to Mexico to understand and adapt to the Mexican ways of doing things.

The need to do business “the Mexican way” applies to all types of business. It might at first appear that goods could be shipped to Mexico with the same kind of adaptations that are common within the Canadian market. This is certainly true in some cases. But Canadian companies that operate in Mexico usually say that establishing a long-term presence in the local market is a key to success. Accomplishing such a presence requires communications with four groups:

- local agents, representatives or joint-venture partners;
- customers or end-users of the good or service;
- government officials and regulatory authorities; and
- other actors in the business environment, such as banks, lawyers, employees, lobby groups and the media.

Communicating effectively with these groups requires a high degree of cultural sensitivity. This guide has been prepared to help Canadian companies understand the cultural factors that underlie the way Mexicans conduct business. Ideally, this information will minimize the

misunderstandings that inevitably arise when people from two cultures are forced to work out the minute details of a business deal.

The New Mexico

Mexico has undergone immense change over the past ten years. For decades, the country followed protectionist policies designed to encourage import displacement. The nation's major industrial enterprises were government-owned. Prices of key commodities were set by the government. The private sector was dominated by a large number of small family-owned firms operating in a highly-regulated environment. The result was an inefficient economy with business relationships based more on personal connections than on performance.

An Economy in Transition

Beginning in the late 1980s, the government began to reverse its traditional policies. Trade barriers were unilaterally dismantled, and Mexico became a member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986. The vast majority of government-owned enterprises were sold to the private sector. Price supports were removed, and the regulatory framework was streamlined. In 1994, Mexico entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement, which further reduced trade barriers and provided new access to Mexico for Canadian and American companies.

The globalization of business, technological change, improved communications, and better education have all played a role in the changing business environment. Many traditional family firms have disappeared in the wake of corporate take-overs, both by large Mexican *Grupos*, and by multinational corporations. Many of the agents who formerly represented foreign firms have gone out of business, and numerous foreign firms have now established a direct presence in Mexico.

Mexican corporations and government institutions alike have been forced to modernize in the face of these changes. Not surprisingly, many traditional ways of doing business have fallen by the wayside in the process. As a result, the new Mexico is a composite of traditional and modern values.

Modern Mexican cultural values tend to be similar to those commonly found in Canada and the United States. Assuming that any individual will exhibit a particular cultural behavior is just as wrong in Mexico as it is in Canada. Nonetheless, Canadians doing business in Mexico should be prepared to encounter many aspects of the traditional Mexican culture.

Traditional and Non-traditional Cultural Values	
Traditional	Non-Traditional
Collectivism and group well-being, with close family ties.	Individualism and loose family ties
Cooperation	Competition
More friendliness	More rivalry
Most information is physical and hidden (spoken and body language)	Most information is coded in words (written language)
Religious beliefs entrenched and unquestioned	Religious beliefs are questioned
Time is a continuum (do several things at once for as long as it takes)	Time is compartmentalized: schedule appointments and tasks for specific periods
Orientation is the present	Orientation is the future
Work motivated by need	Work motivated by ambition
More spiritualism	More materialism
More patience	Impatient for change or action
May say one thing and mean something else	Straightforward
Saving face is important	Decisions made on the basis of efficiency
Decision-making is personal	Decision-making is impersonal

The Rise of Non-traditional Values

In the private sector, the rationalization of industry has broken up traditional lines of supply. Sellers can no longer count on business just because they have a cozy relationship with friends in other companies or in key government positions. The influx of foreign competition has forced buyers to place efficiency ahead of other purchase criteria. This focus on performance has reduced corruption. Privatization of many firms has also reduced opportunities for corruption. Pressure from an increasingly sophisticated middle class and foreign business has reinforced this trend.

The decline of "connections" as the major factor driving sales does not mean that prospective Mexican partners will not claim to have close relationships with people in power. Although these claims may be true, their influence on sales is frequently exaggerated. A highly placed political contact is always helpful, at least to get a foot in the door. Contacts can also help to build strategic alliances with other companies. But as Mexico's corporate and political cultures mature, this element is becoming less and less important in making sales.

In general, Canadian businesses have found that local firms with less-traditional business styles make better partners. Their executives tend to use less hierarchical decision-making processes. They are generally better educated and may have attended foreign universities. And they are more likely to have a global outlook and an understanding of international business ethics.

Although non-traditional cultural values are gradually working their way into the public sector, government officials are more likely than their private sector counterparts to adopt traditional styles. It has always been a status symbol to have a large department, regardless of the work actually accomplished. Even though the practice of over-employment has been severely curtailed by budget cutbacks, most officials are still very status conscious.

The Role of the Mexican Partner

Overcoming cultural obstacles is one of the principal reasons for forming a partnership with a Mexican firm. Since both parties share mutual goals for the partnership, adapting to differences of style is usually easier than when dealing directly with customers. Sometimes this two-way adaptation takes place naturally without any formal strategy. Thus, the partner can serve as a kind of cultural bridge to the customer. If the partner has adopted some non-traditional values, this process is likely to work more effectively.

The partner is also likely to be the primary link to the Mexican business community. Although the importance of connections in making a sale has diminished, business groups continue to wield considerable influence. They can be particularly important for forming strategic alliances for large projects.

Even though the Mexican partner will be the primary interface with customers and the Mexican business community, the Canadian partner still has a large stake in understanding the cultural environment. The effectiveness with which the Mexican partner presents the product is critical to the success of the venture. Canadian executives must therefore assess the partnership's performance within the context of Mexican culture.

Knowing What to Expect

Good preparation is the best way to avoid a culture clash between Canadian and Mexican associates. Both sides need to understand in advance that their counterparts will not necessarily share their own views about how things should be done. Canadians have the advantage that most Mexicans consider them more culturally sensitive than Americans. Maintaining this reputation requires nothing more than remembering that neither culture is better.

Typically, problems are triggered by individual reactions to cultural differences rather than the differences themselves. Executives who know what to expect are less likely to act in a way that will be interpreted negatively. While the onus is on both parties to overcome cultural obstacles, a Canadian seller who is visiting Mexico must assume a greater part of the responsibility. At least at first, doing business “the Mexican way” is a good strategy. As the relationship matures, ongoing informal communications will help both parties understand how cultural differences come into play.

Although this kind of dialogue makes for good non-business conversation, it is wise to avoid observations about Mexican culture that might be interpreted as condescending or offensive. The best solution is to talk about the way things are done in Canada and let Mexicans volunteer opinions about their own culture.

The Mexican Perception of Canadians

Canadians enjoy a reputation in Mexico as reasonable and trustworthy people. This is an advantage over American competitors seeking the same opportunities. Traditionally, Mexicans say they dislike the typical American business style, which they tend to perceive as pushy and rude.

In the Mexican view, the United States has been able to flourish and prosper in the world economy without having to adapt to differences in culture, language, customs, and business practices. As a result, American culture has impinged upon both Mexico and Canada. Thus, Mexicans tend to perceive certain common interests with Canadians.

Canadians are seen as making a greater effort to learn Spanish than Americans, even though proportionately, there are many more Spanish speakers in the United States. Most importantly, Canadians are regarded as flexible and willing to adapt their strategies to fit Mexican needs. This contrasts with the perceived American approach of transplanting American operating methods and management principles in Mexico in an unaltered form.

These attitudes are based on general perceptions. Most Mexicans actually have little direct knowledge of Canada. Few are aware of the contrast between Canada's multicultural society and the American cultural "melting pot", and the effect this has on business styles. There is even less knowledge of specific Canadian companies and products. Indeed, one of the obstacles to raising Canada's profile in Mexico is that many Canadian products are assumed by Mexicans to be of American origin.

While the perception of Canadians as being nicer to do business with is widely expressed in Mexico, it is also true that Americans have been much more successful in actually concluding business deals. In the view of some Mexican observers, this is because Canadians tend to have little staying power, and often do not follow up on initial forays into the market. Considering that the initial impression made by most Canadians is positive, Mexicans are often puzzled by this behavior. It is therefore, essential to consider that most marketing efforts in Mexico will require more time, effort and money than would otherwise be required to sell to a more culturally similar market in the United States or in Canada.

Aspects of Mexican Culture

In these changing times, it is dangerous to generalize. But there are certain characteristics of Mexican culture that Canadians will inevitably encounter. The following sections summarize the more important elements.

Nationalism

Nationalism is fundamental to Mexican culture. Whereas Canadian national pride tends to be linked to current accomplishments, Mexican pride stems from its violent revolutionary history. A long history of foreign domination has left an indelible imprint on the nation's culture. Mexicans have historically mistrusted Americans and, to a lesser extent, foreigners in general. This attitude is one of the factors that have lead past governments to support a closed economy.

Because the borders have been essentially closed to foreign goods for such a long time, the quality and diversity of Mexican products have suffered. Consequently, Mexicans have come to regard foreign products as superior and to mistrust their own. This paradox between national pride and protectionism, combined with a preference for foreign goods, has caused great damage to Mexican industry. In Mexico someone that has a taste for foreign things is sometimes called a *malinchista*, after the Indian wife of Cortes.

Machismo

Women are well-respected in their role as mothers within the Mexican family. The worst possible insult to a Mexican man is to question his mother's honour. On the other hand, women have traditionally had a subservient role in Mexican society. Male dominance is particularly prevalent in the business world. The term *machismo* refers to an attitude of male chauvinism. *Macho* is the Spanish word for male, and it does not have the negative connotations in Mexico that it has in Canada.

Machismo reflects a general underestimation of the ability of women to care for themselves, and an overestimation of their need to be protected. This leads to chivalrous, but condescending, treatment of women. Mexican women usually expect this type of behavior, which is perceived as polite and masculine. On the other hand, the exaggerated masculinity involved is usually intended to impress other males rather than women.

Machismo is gradually disappearing from Mexican society and foreigners should not try to adopt this attitude as a means of fitting in. Women are playing more important roles in business, and foreign influences are starting to cause upper-class men to pay at least lip service to women's liberation. While a sexual double standard persists, Canadian visitors should avoid making assumptions about the role of any particular woman.

Race and Class

Mexican society is divided in a number of social classes that often decide a person's position in the business community. Class divisions are based on a combination of family origin, wealth and education. These factors are rarely discussed openly but they have a strong bearing on social and business relationships.

The Age Factor

Mexico's population is extremely young. About half of the population is under 20 years old. In comparison, half of Canada's population is over the age of 40. One consequence is that young people are often treated condescendingly. This is based on the notion that the lack of experience limits the ability of the young to hold a valid opinion.

This is beginning to change, however, partly because young Mexicans are more likely to hold degrees from foreign universities. Moreover, Mexicans with business degrees are likely to come from extremely wealthy families. Canadian senior executives should not be surprised to meet counterparts or senior officials in their late twenties or early thirties.

Family

The family is the most important institution in Mexican culture. It is considered to be the root of trust, which underlies all important personal relationships. Mexicans believe that if their families know each other, the likelihood of being wronged is greatly diminished because it would cause embarrassment to the family. Families are usually large and close friends are considered as part of the family. Indeed, there is no Mexican expression for "extended family"; this concept is assumed.

The *Mañana* Syndrome

Time is a relative concept for most Mexicans, and deadlines are usually flexible. Mexicans hate deadlines, and are often late completing work that is time sensitive. Taken literally, *mañana*, means "tomorrow", but in many cases it really means "later". Mexico's easy-going business environment is often misinterpreted by foreigners as laziness or lack of interest. In fact, the *mañana* syndrome simply reflects a system of priorities embedded in the Mexican culture. Family and social obligations come first and business later. This tradition is changing quickly in the modern sectors of the economy.

Religion

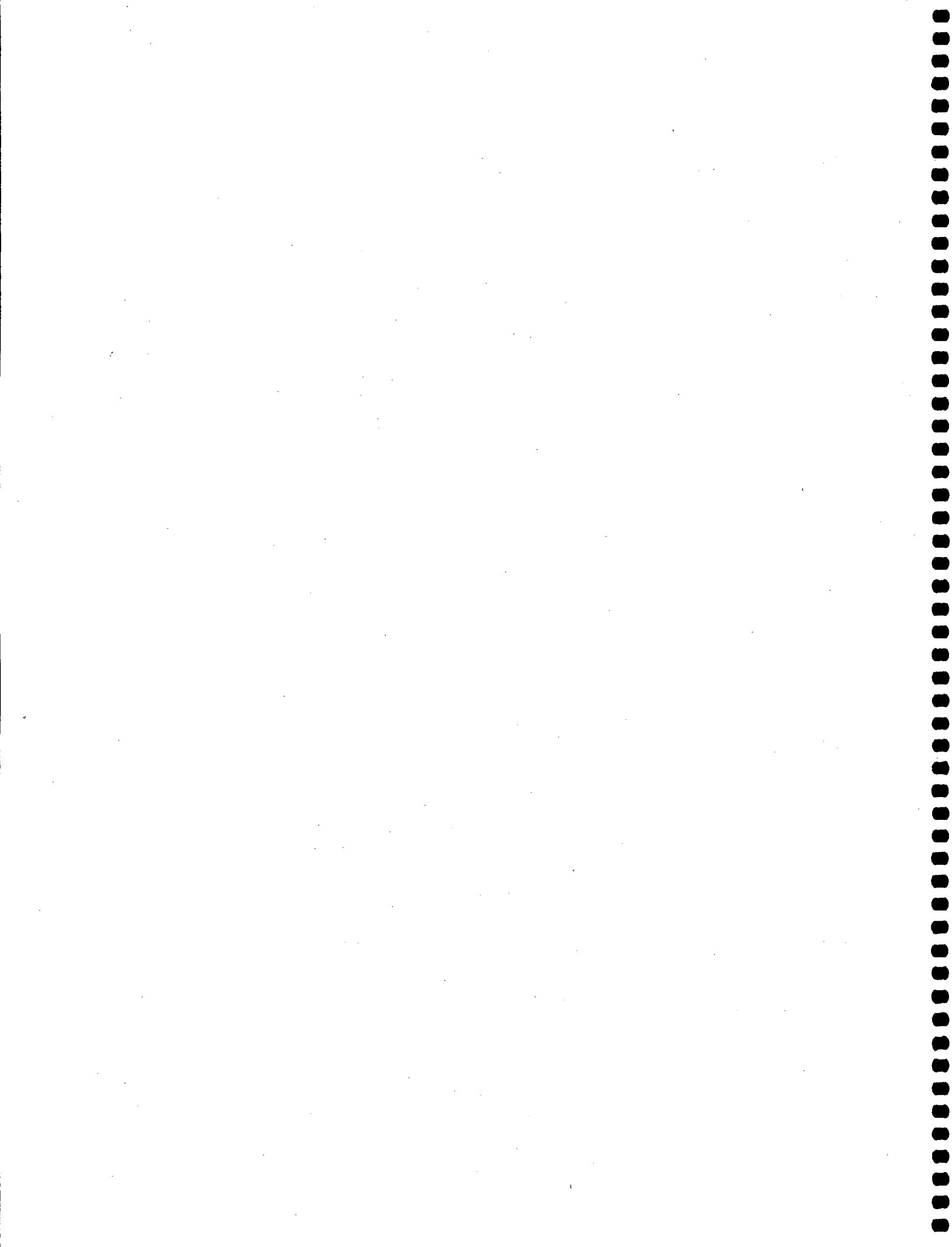
Mexico is an overwhelmingly Catholic country with a long history of struggling against the power of the church. Mexican Catholics are distinguished from those in other parts of the world by their veneration of certain saints, many of which have pre-Columbian models. Shrines to the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, are widespread. References to *Dios*, God, are often heard in Mexican speech, even among the non-religious. They are especially common when explaining good or bad luck as in *Asi lo quiso Dios*, "It was God's will" and *Si Dios quiere*, "God willing". These should be interpreted as linguistic artifacts rather than expressions of religious faith. Just as in Canada, most young people are less religious than their parents. In fact, the level of religious practice is lower than in the United States.

Education and Language

Mexicans place enormous value on education. The nation's educational infrastructure is not adequate to meet the needs of the population, and a university education is a luxury enjoyed mainly by children of wealthy and middle class families. Nonetheless, some Mexican private schools have achieved levels of excellence.

Learning English is an important objective for many Mexicans, especially professionals. In most private schools, English is a mandatory subject, and there are many non-university adult language schools in Mexico. French is often the third language of choice, usually for the sake of cultural more for the sale of sultural appreciation than for business.

Mexicans generally try to speak English when dealing with Canadians or Americans but they appreciate a visitor's effort to speak Spanish. Canadians need to remember to speak slowly and simply, making constant efforts to express their ideas clearly.



Doing Business in Mexico

The general aspects of Mexican culture discussed in the previous section are reflected in some very specific behaviour in business relationships. The following sections include suggestions about how Canadians can deal effectively with Mexicans and minimize misunderstandings.

Formality

Mexican business people are much more formal than Canadians and Americans. In major cities, business dress is relatively formal, even in casual meetings. Although clothes don't have to be expensive, the right clothing can convey a status that is very important to most Mexicans.

Mexican names usually include both the father's and the mother's last name. It is proper to use this full name both in face-to-face communications and correspondence until the person is on friendly terms. Never use first names until invited to do so.

Mexicans are very status conscious and people are always addressed by their occupational titles. Titles are an important formality because they indicate a person's educational status. Even a bachelor's degree carries the title *licenciado*. This is not surprising considering that only about 1 percent of Mexicans have the opportunity to attend university.

Handshakes are very important, even among friends and business associates. When the relationship is closer, the *abrazo*, hug, is common.

Mexicans like to give gifts on many occasions. The appropriate response is a return gift of smaller or equal value on an appropriate occasion. Canadian gifts, flowers or wine are usually appropriate.

Friendship and Trust

Mexicans value personal honor very highly. The need for trust in business relationships is partly a consequence of a cumbersome legal system that cannot be relied upon to settle disputes. Business relationships are therefore based on friendship and trust. A Mexican cannot fully trust his or her business partner until they are personal friends. But it takes time for a foreigner to become a *persona de buena mader*, trustworthy. For this reason, it is common during first encounters to talk about almost anything but business. This can be very time consuming, and is often a source of frustration for Canadians anxious to get down to business. What may appear to be a waste of time to the Canadian, is typically an essential period of evaluation for the Mexican counterpart. From the point of view of a Mexican executive, the purpose of this evaluation is to assess the visitor's status and to demonstrate his or her own position. Just as important, it is an opportunity to become friends and establish trust.

For these reasons, it is inappropriate to begin talking business immediately when first meeting with a Mexican counterpart. The first encounter will likely be over lunch or dinner. Be prepared for many questions about personal life, family and experiences in Mexico. The Mexican host will probably reciprocate with personal stories and anecdotes. This exchange can easily dominate a three-hour dinner, with little mention of business. The following morning would be an appropriate time to get down to business. As the relationship matures, less time will be needed to establish this level of comfort, and business discussions can start more quickly.

An invitation to a Mexican home is considered an honor and a sincere offer of friendship. This is not usually an appropriate forum to continue business discussions. Likewise, if Mexican associates visit Canada, inviting them home for dinner will be regarded as an important honor.

The Meaning of "Yes"

The Mexican use of the word "yes" is the source of much confusion in cross-cultural business relationships. "Yes" can mean "maybe" or even "no". This is an area where Mexican obsession with politeness and saving face can be counterproductive. Mexicans are very reluctant to offend anyone, especially someone they do not know well. So they will often say "yes" to a question to which they actual wish to say "no". Sometimes a "yes" or a positive reaction may reflect nothing more than polite optimism that never materializes into action. Misunderstandings can be costly and time consuming. Many Canadians have been disappointed to find that there is no follow up to an apparently successful sales trip to Mexico.

Canadians doing business in Mexico must learn to distinguish between a real "yes" and a polite "yes". The following are some basic techniques:

- Ask open-ended questions rather than "yes or no" questions. Judge the level of understanding by the substance of the reply.
- Ask questions frequently. If the discussion has gone too far, the Mexican participants may be embarrassed to admit that they don't understand some of the basic elements.
- Encourage a dialogue, even when making a presentation. This will help detect real interest and understanding.
- If it appears that the Mexican recipient does not understand an explanation, repeat it in a different way to avoid the suggestion of misunderstanding.
- If you receive indications of interest and willingness to proceed to the next stage, draft a series of next steps with your contact. Make action by the Mexican party, such as a fax to you in Canada, the first step. No action will indicate a lack of interest.
- Ask your Mexican contact to volunteer his or her own suggestions on how to structure the business strategy.

- 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.

Meetings Over Meals

Conducting meetings during meals is an important part of Mexico's business culture. When a Canadian first visits Mexico, the conversation at breakfast, lunch or dinner will likely focus on personal matters. But once a relationship has been established discussing business over meals is quite appropriate, and often expected.

The most productive meal is breakfast because the chance of lateness is minimized and there is a predetermined end to the meeting. Lunches tend to be less formal and can be protracted. Lunches are a big meal, usually eaten in groups, making a one-on-one contact less feasible. Dinner is the most social meal and can last for a long time. This meal is often used to convince someone or to win a favour. Dinner is often relatively formal and it is common for the bill to be paid by the person who initiated the engagement. Otherwise, a friendly argument over who has the honor of paying the bill is quite acceptable at any meal.

Reactions to Foreign Women

Canadian women who do business in Mexico will be treated with respect. Women will rarely be denied a request for a meeting and will usually be treated with the utmost courtesy. On the other hand, they may have to demonstrate their credentials to a larger degree than their male associates. Mexicans are preoccupied with status and they are unaccustomed to dealing with powerful women. Once a Canadian woman has demonstrated status and expertise, most barriers will be dropped and she will be free to take a lead role in business discussions. All the same, she may be denied access to some informal business channels accessible to men.

Unfortunately, business women in Mexico sometimes have to endure patronizing comments that would be considered quite unacceptable in Canada. These are a reflection of the attitudes towards women in Mexican culture, not an expression of disrespect for the individual involved.

Authority and Decision Making

Time has yet another meaning in Mexico when it comes to decision making. Business decisions are made at the top levels of management, which often include the owners of the company. Decision making is often quite rapid in contrast with Canadian corporate culture, which strives for consensus.

On the other hand, if a subordinate is handling a business issue, he or she is unlikely to commit to anything without the approval of a superior. This can take considerable time. In Mexico, management structures are usually vertical and middle management wields relatively little decision-making power. To avoid these kinds of delays, Canadian business missions to Mexico should include senior people with decision-making authority and, whenever possible, they should deal directly with senior managers or owners.

Contracts and Written Agreements

A handshake can go a long way in Mexico. Mutual trust underlies most business agreements. Nonetheless, written agreements are taken quite seriously, because they set the parameters by which the business will be conducted.

The contents of a written agreement may be taken as an indication of the level of trust that one side has for another. A proposed agreement that is one-sided, aggressive and written in legalese can be interpreted as a lack of trust and could harm the business relationship. Nonetheless, Mexicans realize the necessity of contracts and legal agreements, and are usually quite objective about them.

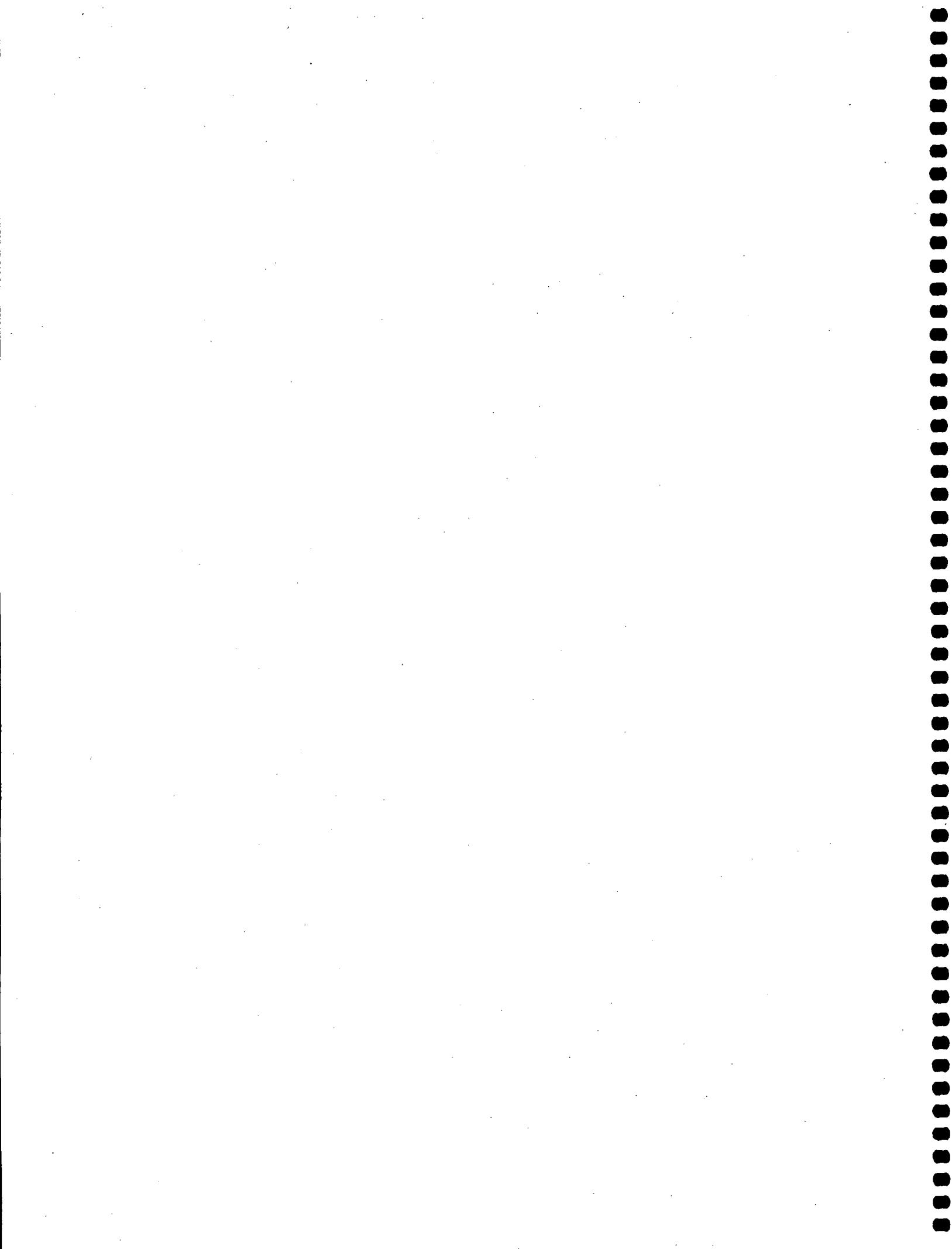
Business Ethics and Corruption

Mexico is gradually ridding itself of the corruption that was once one of its most prominent features. Nonetheless, requests for pay-offs and bribes are still an obstacle to international business. Many companies participate in such arrangements only because they think it is necessary for survival.

A Canadian firm might encounter corruption in a situation where a Mexican competitor had offered a bribe to a government official. The Canadian company might be asked by its Mexican partner to meet this "competition". This would be both illegal and poor business practice. If the business is not based on sound principles, it will not survive in the long run.

Corruption is diminishing in Mexico because it wastes resources and leads to inefficient, uncompetitive outcomes. For this reason, requests for bribes are most common where government departments or state-owned enterprises are involved. As the process of privatization and deregulation proceeds, corruption will become less of a factor in all aspects of Mexican society.

Canadian companies that move into Mexico should be prepared to adapt to many aspects of Mexican culture. But corruption is not one of them. This is one area where the Canadian partner should insist that Mexican partners adapt to the Canadian way of doing things.

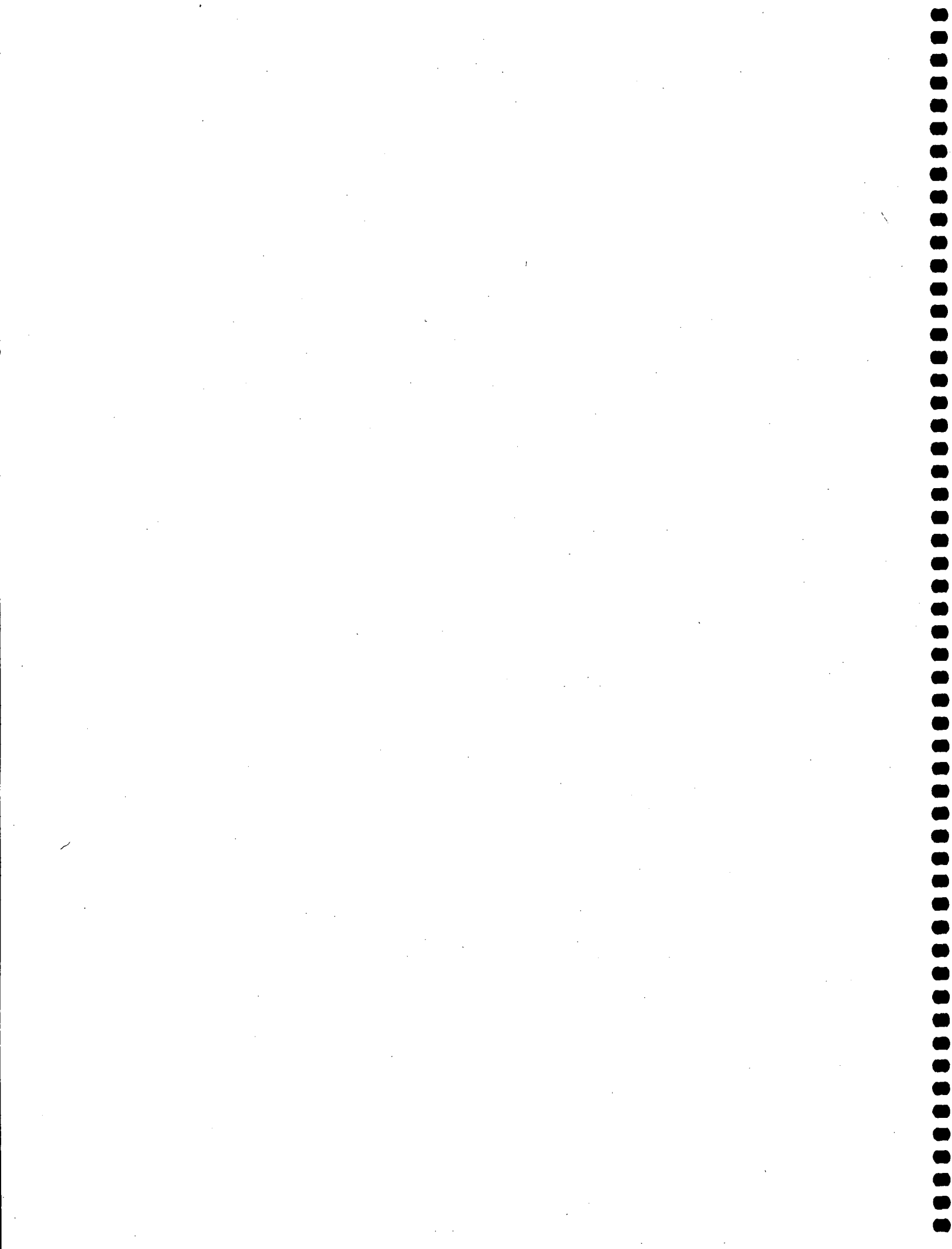


Bridging the Cultural Gap

This guide has described many aspects of Mexican culture, with particular reference to their effects on methods of doing business there. The Canadian executive who visits Mexico on business is advised to be prepared for many cultural differences. Although most of the differences are not very important in themselves, a bad reaction to them can convey an unintended message and undermine the business relationship.

Mexico is a rapidly changing society, and the generalizations described here cannot be attributed to any particular individual. Nonetheless, the Canadian business visitor is likely to encounter most of them when dealing with a cross-section of Mexicans.

Canadians arriving in Mexico will find that they enjoy a good advance reputation, based on general perceptions of Canada and Canadians. For the most part, they can live up to this reputation simply by keeping an open mind, and striving to understand and adapt to Mexican ways of doing things.



Key Contacts

Canadian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)

DFAIT is the Canadian federal government department most directly responsible for trade development. The **InfoCentre** should be the first contact point for advice on how to start exporting. It provides information on export-related programs and services, acts as an entry point to DFAIT's trade information network, and can provide copies of specialized export publications and market information to interested companies.

InfoCentre

Tel.: 1-800-267-8376 or (613) 944-4000

Fax: (613) 996-9709

FaxLink: (613) 944-4500

InfoCentre Bulletin Board (IBB):

1-800-628-1581 or (613) 944-1581

The Latin America and Caribbean Branch promotes trade with Mexico. There are several trade commissioners at the Embassy of Canada in Mexico City, as well as in the satellite offices in Monterrey and Guadalajara. Trade commissioners can provide a range of services including introducing Canadian companies to potential customers in Mexico, advising on marketing channels, assisting those wishing to participate in trade fairs, helping to identify suitable Mexican firms to act as agents, and compiling strategic business intelligence on potential foreign customers.

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International Trade Centres

International Trade Centres have been established across the country as a convenient point of contact to support the exporting efforts of Canadian firms. The centres operate under the guidance of DFAIT and all have resident trade commissioners. They help companies determine whether or not they are ready to export, assist firms with market research and planning, provide access to government programs designed to promote exports, and arrange for assistance from the trade commissioners in Ottawa and trade officers abroad. Contact the International Trade Centre nearest you:

Newfoundland

International Trade Centre
P.O. Box 8950
Atlantic Place
215 Water Street
Suite 504
St. John's, NF A1B 3R9
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Fax: (709) 772-2373

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also responsible for
Northwest Territories*

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9700 Jasper Avenue
Room 540
Edmonton, AB T5J 4C3
Tel.: (403) 495-2944
Fax: (403) 495-4507

International Trade Centre
510-5th Street S.W.
Suite 1100
Calgary, AB T2P 3S2
Tel.: (403) 292-6660
Fax: (403) 292-4578

British Columbia
**Vancouver office is also
responsible for the Yukon*

International Trade Centre
300 West Georgia Street
Suite 2000
Vancouver, BC V6B 6E1
Tel.: (604) 666-0434
Fax: (604) 666-8330

World Information Network for Exports (WIN Exports)

WIN Exports is a computer-based information system designed by DFAIT to help Canada's trade development officers abroad match foreign needs to Canadian capabilities. It provides users with information on the capabilities, experience and interests of more than 23,000 Canadian exporters. To register on WIN Exports, call (613) 996-5701, or fax 1-800-667-3802 or (613) 944-1078.

Program for Export Market Development (PEMD)

PEMD is DFAIT's primary export promotion program. It supports a variety of activities to help Canadian companies expand into export markets.

PEMD shares up to 50 percent of eligible expenses. Program financial assistance is a repayable contribution, not a grant, and must be approved in advance. Funded activities include:

- Market Development Strategies, which consist of a package of support for visits, trade fairs, and market support initiatives, under one umbrella of the company's marketing plan.
- New to Exporting Companies, which provides a vehicle for these companies to seek out individual export opportunities, either through a market identification visit or participation in an international trade fair.
- Capital Projects Bidding for specific projects outside Canada involving international competition/formal bidding procedures.
- Trade Association Activities undertaken by non-sales national trade or industry associations on behalf of their member companies.

Support is provided for certain types of government-planned activities, such as outgoing trade missions of Canadian business representatives and incoming missions to Canada of foreign business persons and officials who can influence export sales. For general information, call the InfoCentre at 1-800-267-8376. For applications for assistance, call the International Trade Centre nearest you.

International Financing

DFAIT helps Canadian exporters interested in pursuing multilateral business opportunities financed by international financing institutions (IFIs). Canadian exporters and trade associations can access market data, obtain a better understanding of the competition, and determine if an IFI-funded market opportunity is practical and worth pursuing. DFAIT can provide information and advice on the availability of Canadian government-funded assistance programs and can assist companies in developing effective export marketing. For further information, contact:

International Financing Division

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Lester B. Pearson Building
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2
Tel.: (613) 995-7251
Fax: (613) 943-1100

Technology Inflow Program (TIP)

Managed by DFAIT and delivered domestically by the National Research Council, TIP is designed to help Canadian companies locate, acquire and adopt foreign technologies by promoting international collaboration. The Department of Industry (DI) also helps in program promotion. TIP officers respond to requests to identify technology sources and opportunities for cooperation between Canadian and foreign firms. The Program also helps Canadian firms make exploratory visits abroad to identify and gain first-hand knowledge of relevant foreign technologies, as well as how to negotiate to acquire them. For information, call (613) 993-5326.

Investment Development Program

The Investment and Technology Bureau (TID) promotes Canada as an attractive, competitive destination for business investment to potential foreign investors. It actively encourages investments that take the form of new plant and equipment, joint ventures or strategic partnerships. The Bureau is especially interested in attracting investment that introduces new technology into Canada, which is key to creating new jobs and economic opportunities. It also helps Canadian companies to find international investment partners and to access international sources of capital and technologies. TID provides support to the chief executive officers of Canadian subsidiaries of multinationals which are seeking to attract manufacturing and R&D mandates to Canada. It also monitors and analyzes investment trends and perceptions of Canada as an investment site. TID works closely with the "geographic" branches of DFAIT and the investment counsellors at Canadian missions around the world, as well as with provincial and municipal authorities, and professional and business organizations. For more information, contact:

Investment and Technology Bureau (TID)
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Lester B. Pearson Building
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2
Tel.: (613) 995-4128
Fax: (613) 995-9604

**Canadian Government
Departments and Services
in Mexico**

*Commercial Division
The Embassy of Canada in Mexico*

The Commercial Division of the Canadian Embassy in Mexico can provide vital assistance to Canadians venturing into the Mexican market. The trade commissioners are well-informed about the market and will respond in whatever measures possible to support a Canadian firm's presence in Mexico.

Note: to telephone Mexico City, dial 011-52-5 before the number shown. For contacts in other cities in Mexico, consult the international code listing at the front of your local telephone directory for the appropriate regional codes.

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Col. Polanco
11560 México, D.F.
México
Tel.: 724-7900
Fax: 724-7982

Canadian Consulate
Edificio Kalos, Piso C-1
Local 108-A
Zaragoza y Constitución
64000 Monterrey, Nuevo León
México
Tel.: 344-3200
Fax: 344-3048

Canadian Consulate
Hotel Fiesta Americana
Local 30-A
Aurelio Aceves No. 225
Col. Vallarta Poniente
44110 Guadalajara, Jalisco
México
Tel.: 15-8665
Fax: 15-8665

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