



Colombia



Country Overview:

Location: Northern South America, bordering the Caribbean Sea, between Panama and Venezuela, and bordering the North Pacific Ocean, between Ecuador and Panama

Size: 1,138,914 sq km

Population: 45,745,783 (July 2013 est.)

Capital: Bogotá

Export-commodities: petroleum, coffee, coal, nickel, emeralds, apparel, bananas, cut flowers

Import-commodities: industrial equipment, transportation equipment, consumer goods, chemicals, paper products, fuels, electricity

Currency: Colombian pesos (COP)

Ethnic groups: mestizo 58%, white 20%, mulatto 14%, black 4%, mixed black-Amerindian 3%, Amerindian 1%

Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%

Government type: republic; executive branch dominates government structure

Chief of State: President Juan Manuel SANTOS Calderon (since 7 August 2010); Vice President Angelino Garzon (since 7 August 2010); note - the president is both the chief of state and head of government

Language: Spanish

Colombia is the 29th largest economy in the world.



Republic of Colombia/República de Colombia

Meetings and Negotiations

-Schedule business appointments in advance. Punctuality is relaxed, although as a foreigner you are expected to be on time.

-Business cards are printed in English on one side and Spanish on the other. Present the card with the **Spanish side** facing your Colombian colleague. Important to treat business cards with respect.

-Titles are important and should be included on business cards. Address a person directly by using his or her **title only**. A person who does not have a professional title should be addressed as Mr. (Señor), Mrs. (Señora), or Miss (Señorita), plus their surname.

-Men greeting men: shake hands when greeting one another and maintain direct eye contact.

-Women greeting women: greet with a soft handshake.

-Greetings between men and women: men should wait for a woman to

extend her hand.

-Greetings should take some time - ensure you engage in some small talk, i.e. ask about family, health and business.

-Relationship building is crucial - it may be a good idea to invest time in establishing trust for the first few meetings.

-Time is not an issue in meetings - they will last as long as they need to last. Do not try and rush proceedings.

Business Attire

-Colombians value being well dressed and nicely groomed.

-Men typically wear a suit, tie, preferably dark colors, proper matching shoes and belt. No bowtie, as this is old-fashioned.

-Women will wear a business suit or a business-casual outfit.

Manicured nails are important.

Behavior

-Thumbs up is used to say things

are OK, or that you like something.

-Using your two fingers to indicate length of something is an **obscene** gesture. Instead, extend your right arm and use your left hand to mark off distance.

Gift Giving

-Gifts are **not** usually expected at initial meetings but are appreciated. If bringing a gift, a modest one is appropriate.

-Wrapped gifts are not opened when received.

Appropriate Gifts:

-Items with company logo such as pens, agendas, music CD's, flowers (roses), imported high quality spirits

Gifts to Avoid:

-Lilies and marigolds are exclusively for funerals. Foreign beer- Colombia already brews fine beer, jewelry, clothing, ties or body lotion

Business Tips continued

Conversation

-The official language of Colombia is Spanish, but English is widely used within business environments.

-Colombians tend to stand relatively close to one another while talking. Less than an arm's length is normal. It can be considered **rude** to back up or

away from someone while they are speaking.

-Colombians, quite often, use their arms and hands while conversing.

-Lunch is the main meal of the day in Latin American countries. Business is often conducted during lunch time.

-Colombians are termed as 'indirect communicators' - this means there

is more information within body language and context rather than the words. The reason for this way of communicating it to protect relationships and face.

Topics to Discuss:

-history, culture, soccer, coffee, The Gold Museum

Topics to Avoid:

-drug trafficking, politics, religion

