



Saudi Arabia



Country Overview:

Location: Middle east, bordering the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, North of Yemen

Size: 2,149,690 sq. km.

Population: 26,939,583 (July 2013 est.)

Capital: Riyadh

Export-commodities: petroleum and petroleum products 90%

Import-commodities: machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, motor vehicles, textiles

Currency: Saudi Riyals (SAR)

Ethnic groups: Arab 90%, Afro-Asian 10%

Religion: Muslim 100%

Government type: monarchy

Chief of State and Head of Government: King and Prime Minister ABDALLAH bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud (since Aug. 2005); Deputy Prime Minister SULTAN bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud

Language: Arabic (official)



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia/ Al Mamlakah al Arabiyah as Suudiyah

Meetings and

Negotiations

- Be **punctual**, although your Saudi business partner may not. Also, **confirm** date and time prior to meeting.

- When addressing your Saudi business partner you may find names to be confusing, so it is best to use their names in **English**. Be sure to know full names and the appropriate way to address them (including title).

- A customary greeting is *salaam alaykum*. Shaking hands and saying *kaif hal ak* comes next.

- When greeting, **shake hands**. A more **traditional** greeting between men (**never a woman**) involves grasping each other's right hand, placing the left hand on the other's right shoulder and exchanging kisses on each cheek.

- Carry multiple **business cards** because they will be exchanged often. Include your title and any degrees you have received from a

university.

- Repeat your main points since it will be interpreted as meaning you are telling the truth.

Business Attire

- The Saudis are very conservative regarding wardrobe; the chest, shoulders, stomach, calves, and thighs should be covered.

- Men wear a long sleeve jacket and shirt with a collar and pants.

- Women dress modestly and loosely.

Behavior

- Alcohol and pork are **illegal** in Saudi Arabia, so do not offer either to your business partner.

- The left hand is considered **unclean** and used for hygiene purposes; avoid using it to eat or touching things.

- The thumbs up hand gesture is considered **offensive**.

- **Avoid** crossing your legs while sitting or showing the bottoms of

your feet!

- Whenever two men arrive at a doorway, the one on the **right** always enters first, regardless of respective rank.

- Your Saudi counterpart may interrupt you and leave for 15-20 minutes; this is for the purpose of **daily prayer** (total of 5 times).

Gift Giving

- When giving a gift use discretion and modesty.

- Be sure that your gift is of good **quality** and make.

- If you admire something of another's for too long they will feel obligated to give it to you and it would be rude of you not to accept it.

Appropriate Gifts:

- perfume/cologne (not containing alcohol), offering favors is a nice gesture

Gifts to Avoid:

- gold jewelry and silk for men

Business Tips continued

Conversation

- The majority of Saudis speak Arabic, but within international business companies they should have an English speaker present.

- A Saudi may want to discuss controversial topics, such as religion and politics. Give your opinion but always let them have time to rebuttal. Conversation and debate should not be a win or lose situation, but instead an

exchange of ideas and learning for both parties.

- Intelligent argument is admired and welcome, but only when it is courteous and reasoned.

- Saudis prefer to establish a personal relationship with their business partners before making negotiations.

- At a meeting, the person who asks the most questions is likely to be the least important. The decision

maker is likely a silent observer.

- Do not feel obligated to speak during a moment of silence.

- Loud speech and raucous laughter are considered **vulgar**.

Topics to Discuss:

- sports, politics (international politics), religion

Topics to Avoid:

- women (even when regarding female family members), Israel

