Switzerland

Country Overview:
Location: Central Europe, east of France, north of Italy
Size: 41,277 sq km
Population: 7,996,026 (July 2013 est.)
Capital: Bern
Export-commodities: machinery, chemicals, metals, watches, agricultural products
Import-commodities: machinery, chemicals, vehicles, metals, agricultural products, textiles
Religion: Roman Catholic 41.8%, Protestant 35.3%, Muslim 4.3%, Orthodox 1.8%, other Christian 0.4%, other 1%, unspecified 4.3%, none 11.1%
Ethnic groups: German 65%, French 18%, Italian 10%, Romansch 1%, other 6%
Government type: formally a confederation but similar in structure to a federal republic
Chief of State and Head of Government of the Swiss Confederation Ueli MAURER (since 1 January 2013);
Language: German (official) 63.7%, French (official) 20.4%, Italian (official) 6.5%, Serbo-Croatian 1.5%, Albanian 1.3%, Portuguese 1.2%, Spanish 1.1%, English 1%, Romansh (official) 0.5%, other 2.8%

Swiss Confederation

Meetings and Negotiations
- The Swiss are punctual people; arrive at precisely the appointed time.
- Always address Swiss by their professional title followed by their surname. In German-speaking Switzerland use the courtesy titles Herr to address a man and Frau to address a woman; in French-speaking areas, Monsieur and Madame; in Italian-speaking areas, Signore and Signora.
- Bring plenty of business cards, the Swiss are keen to exchange them, also good to include the founding date of your company.
- Modesty and understatement are important virtues and clarity is equated with sincerity. Business is regarded with the utmost seriousness; humor has no place in negotiations.
- Reluctance to take risks. The Swiss will require substantial information and persuasive argument before agreeing to a new plan or procedure.
- The primary goal of the Swiss is an equal partnership and mutual benefit.

Business Attire
- Men- finely tailored woolen suits, white cotton shirts and plain silk ties, with highly polished black leather shoes.
- Women -suits or skirts of a conservative length. Trouser-suits, in classic styles.
- Dress well, but modestly. The Swiss dislike ostentatious displays of wealth and appreciate clothing that is simply clean, well pressed, and in perfect condition. Jewelry [even a Swiss watch] should be elegant, but simple and understated

Behavior
- The handshake is the standard greeting.

Business Tips continued

Conversation
- Whether in social or business situations, the Swiss are polite conversationalists who prefer to assume an air of detachment. The Swiss are very private people, so do avoid asking personal questions.
- The Swiss tend to be conservative in their opinions and do not change their minds easily.
- Business dinners are occasions for formality and fine dining. Refrain from discussing business unless the host brings up the subject.
- The toast in German-speaking Switzerland is prost; in French-speaking Switzerland, it is votre santé or simply santé; in Italian-speaking Switzerland, salute.

Topics to Avoid:
- Swiss pay close attention to your general demeanor and posture so:
  - Keep your hands out of your pockets, especially when talking.
  - Do not slap your colleagues’ backs
  - Do not point with only the index finger, but use your full hand.

Gift Giving
- Its best to wait until the end of a negotiation to present gifts.

Appropriate Gifts:
- A coffee table book about your home region or some representative artifact, a bottle of fine wine, whisky or brandy
- Flowers except for: chrysanthemums, white lilies or red roses, chocolates, also good to send a hand-written thank-you note

Gifts to Avoid:
- Do not give a gift that is obviously expensive. No sharp objects of any kind

Topics to Discuss:
- World affairs, your travels in Switzerland, positive aspects of Switzerland, winter sports, questions about the Romansch culture, work
- Although, avoid the statement “what do you do?”

Topics to Avoid:
- Switzerland’s role during World Wars I and II, Swiss neutrality and its implications; the Swiss military, money and Swiss banks