



EDC GUIDE

CULTURAL TIPS FOR DOING BUSINESS IN AFRICA

How to maximize your success

Canada


TAKE ON **THE WORLD**

When it comes to business etiquette, what's acceptable in one country, may not be in another. To be successful in international trade, you need to understand the culture, traditions and business customs of your clients and partners in your target markets and adapt your communication and business strategies accordingly.

It could mean the difference between winning — or losing — a contract.

Africa is a large continent with diverse natural resources, industries and business cultures. The opportunities for Canadian companies are immense, but something as simple as being late for a meeting or trying to rush negotiations could be harmful.

AFRICA



5 KEY ETIQUETTE TIPS

- 1. Business culture is similar, but not identical:** Africa isn't a country with one market. It's the world's second-largest continent, with more than 50 countries of diverse culture, values, and traditions. When doing business in Africa, it's essential to tailor your products and services for each region, and familiarize yourself with the local business culture, economy, and political system.
- 2. Language is key:** Africa is home to about 2,000 languages and dialects. English is the dominant language used in business across most African countries. Other prominent languages include French, Portuguese and Arabic.
- 3. Don't look for short cuts:** Make sure you understand and respect local protocols, rules, regulations, and changes to legislation. Before entering a market, it's advisable to contact Canadian official representatives in the country to gauge possible legal or administrative obstacles.
- 4. Build community trust:** Be prepared to spend a lot of time in the continent. Business culture in Africa is driven by personal and communal relationships, which relies heavily on personal contact to create trust and build confidence.
- 5. Negotiate in good faith:** The pace of making decisions in Africa is slow and the outlook often long term. Decision-making relies on consensus and consultation with local stakeholders and the community. Always approach negotiations with the attitude of working toward a mutually beneficial agreement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- › Visit EDC's [country and market info page](#)
- › Visit the [Canadian Trade Commissioner Service's country](#) and sector information page
- › Visit [Canadian-Africa Chamber of Business](#) and [Canadian Council of Africa](#)
- › Watch the [Doing business in Africa](#) video
- › Reach out to [Jean-Bernard Ruggieri](#), EDC's chief representative of the Middle East and Africa and [Terry Makhubele](#), EDC's senior regional manager in Africa

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT AFRICA

- › Africa has the youngest population in the world and it's growing fast. While the rest of the world is aging, almost 60% of the African population is under the age of 25, providing a potential for a vibrant workforce and increased consumption in the latest products, services, technology, and fast-moving consumer goods.
- › Africa has the fastest-growing mobile telecom market in the world, with more than 80% of the population having cellphones. In the last two decades, an annual increase of approximately 30% in mobile phone connections has led Africa to become the world's second-largest mobile market behind Asia.
- › Africa has about 30% of the earth's remaining mineral resources. This includes more than 40% of gold and 90% of platinum reserves. Canada is a leading player in Africa's mining sector and resource development, with more than US\$3.5 billion in capital invested on the continent. This makes Canada one of the largest foreign investors in resource development in the region.
- › The highest point in Africa is Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania (nearly 6,000 metres above sea level). About 35,000 people attempt to reach its summit every year.
- › Africa is also home to the world's:
 - **Longest river:** The Nile (nearly 7,000 km long)
 - **Largest hot desert:** The Sahara (9.4 million sq. km)
 - **Tallest animal:** The giraffe (up to six metres in height)
 - **Largest land animal:** The elephant (weighing more than six tonnes)
 - **Fastest land animal:** The cheetah (runs about 100 km/h)

ABOUT EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Who are we?

Export Development Canada (EDC) is Canada's export credit agency. Our job is to support and develop Canada's export trade by helping Canadian companies respond to international business opportunities. We're a self-financing Crown Corporation that operates at arm's length from the Government of Canada.

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