



EDC GUIDE

CULTURAL TIPS FOR DOING BUSINESS IN INDIA

How to maximize your success

Canada

 **EDC**
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 habits 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.

India is a key trading partner for Canada and continues to offer investment and exporting opportunities for Canadian businesses, as our economy recovers from the impacts of COVID-19. Cultural differences vary from country to country, but by adapting your negotiation and communication strategy, you can optimize your success for doing business in India.

INDIA



5 KEY ETIQUETTE TIPS

- 1. Language and appearance:** While there are more than 20 recognized languages in India, English is an official language and is preferred for all business dealings. It's customary to exchange business cards during the first meeting. The dress code for business is formal attire, although a suit isn't always necessary. A handshake is a prescribed form of greeting. Conversations may move between business and personal topics, so don't be alarmed if the discussion steers toward your family and their well-being. Always greet the most senior person first.
- 2. Pricing is key:** With its abundance of skilled workers and vast size, the world is knocking on India's door. With a lot of options to choose from, Canadian companies hoping to do business there face stiff competition from corporations around the world and need to price their goods at the correct price point. In order to succeed in India, it's imperative to have a deep understanding of the local cultural landscape. Be careful about speaking too bluntly as this can be perceived as insulting in a country that prizes relationships.
- 3. Persistence and presence:** The largest democracy in the world, India is a crowded and competitive country. In almost all aspects of life, Indians have competed for resources, attention, and opportunities to survive and, in business, it's no different. In order to close a deal and consistently have business success, Canadian companies need to be strategic, perform due diligence and be patient. Having a representative in market can be extremely beneficial.
- 4. Finding the right partner and scale:** Building a global partnership requires networking and business partnerships. In India, it's imperative to have the right purchaser, business partner, or local associate. Having the right counterparty will determine the success of your business and the entire experience in the market. The Indian consumer market has the fastest-growing middle class and Canadian companies must be prepared for high demand and be mindful that they may have to scale up significantly.
- 5. Diversity and strategy:** India is one of the most diverse countries on the planet from its people, race, geography and consumer preferences to languages and food. It's important to select the specific sector and region and then build and develop your strategy around it. Business development strategies for different regions across the country may be different. There are numerous religious holiday, so check the calendar when scheduling a meeting.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT INDIA

- › India has given the world various sports and indoor games, including badminton, polo and chess, as well as board games *Snakes and Ladders* and *Ludo*.
- › Cows are sacred in India, so don't be surprised if you see one walking down the street. It's estimated that up to 30% of the Indian population follow a vegetarian diet, while many consume fish and no animals.
- › Indians are very hospitable with tea (chai) and coffee being offered to every visitor and business associate. India is the second-largest producer of tea in the world and rank first as the top producer of spices on the planet, including turmeric, cumin, saffron and chili powders.
- › Bollywood, India's film industry, produces more than 1,000 films every year, almost double that of Hollywood.
- › India is a land of temples with more than two million Hindu temples and 300,000 mosques. The holy city of Varanasi, referred to as the "oldest living city in the world" and the birthplace of yoga, boasts more than 23,000 temples. With its majestic architecture, the Taj Mahal is the country's most iconic and beloved landmark.
- › India gave the world the numeral: Zero. Although Babylonians used zero to signify the "absent," Indians were the first to use it as a symbol and in math.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- › India is an important market for EDC. Visit EDC's country and market info page about [India](#).
- › Visit the [Canadian Trade Commissioner Service pages](#) about India.
- › Visit the [Canada and India pages](#) from the Government of Canada.
- › Reach out to Ladislau Papara (LPapara@edc.ca) EDC's chief representative of India and [read his blog on business opportunities in India](#).

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.

Disclaimer

This document is a compilation of publicly available information. It's not intended to provide specific advice and shouldn't be relied on as such. It's intended as an overview only. No action or decision should be taken without detailed independent research and professional advice concerning the specific subject matter of such action or decision. While Export Development Canada (EDC) has made reasonable commercial efforts to ensure that the information contained in this document is accurate, EDC doesn't represent or warrant the accurateness, timeliness or completeness of the information contained herein. This document or any part of it may become obsolete at any time. It's the user's responsibility to verify any information contained herein before relying on such information. EDC isn't liable in any manner whatsoever for any loss or damage caused by or resulting from any inaccuracies, errors or omissions in the information contained in this document. This document isn't intended to and doesn't constitute legal or tax advice. For legal or tax advice, please consult a qualified professional. EDC is the owner of trademarks and official marks. Any use of an EDC trademark or official mark without written permission is strictly prohibited. All other trademarks appearing in this document are the property of their respective owners. The information presented is subject to change without notice. EDC assumes no responsibility for inaccuracies contained herein.

Copyright © 2021 Export Development Canada. All rights reserved.