

Business etiquette, language & culture

Business and working practices in Brazil

Working hours in Brazilian cities are generally between 8.30am and 5pm, including an hour or two for dinner/lunch. Most businesses are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 7pm, and Saturday 9am to 1pm. Some larger businesses may have longer opening hours.

[Source – <https://www.communicaid.com/country/brazil/>]

Structure and hierarchy in Brazilian companies

Most Brazilian companies have a vertical structure of hierarchy, generally consisting of the business owner at the top above a series of managers making the majority of company decisions and taking control of the company employees.

Social class divisions remain commonplace within Brazilian society, as well as business culture. For the main part, class is determined by monetary status, and therefore reflected in worker's salaries. Overall, class differences within business are subtle, and there are laws in place against discrimination.

[Source – <https://www.communicaid.com/country/brazil/>, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/vertical-management.html>]

Working relationships in Brazil

In order to do business successfully in Brazil, it is important to establish close personal relationships with your business counterparts. Building trust and relationships are key elements of Brazilian business culture.

Brazilians prefer to do business with people that they know and trust, which is why you will often find numerous members of the same family working for the same company. Family relations in Brazil are very important and significant.

[Source – <https://www.communicaid.com/country/brazil/>]

Greeting and business etiquette

Brazil's official and most widely spoken language is Portuguese.

You should arrange business meetings at least two or three weeks in advance, leaving two to three hours in between if you have other appointments scheduled on the same day in case they are unexpectedly delayed or cancelled, or they go on for longer than expected. Be sure to confirm any meetings a day or two before. You will be expected to arrive punctually to meetings.

You should dress smartly and conservatively. Brazilians are somewhat fashion conscious, even though in general Brazilian culture is relatively informal.

The most common form of business greeting between colleagues is a handshake. In a more informal setting, men and women may meet with one or two kisses on the cheek or a brief embrace. You should make eye contact, which will not only give a good impression but show that you are paying attention and interested in what they have to say.

It is polite to say 'muito prazer' (my pleasure in Brazilian Portuguese) when you meet someone for the first time. Once you have met someone, you can use expressions such as 'como vai' and 'tudo bem' to say hello, which will demonstrate that you are making an effort in attempting to tackle the language and get to know them further.

When first meeting or writing to a Brazilian business contact, it is polite to address them with their title and surname. It is common to refer to them by just their first name, or even their title and first name once you get to know them. Expect to be interrupted during meetings. People are not afraid to say what they think and the Brazilian method of communication usually involves a lot of overlapping speech and people talking over each other. Remain in control and do not show feelings of frustration or impatience. This will reflect poorly on you as an individual.

In Brazil, it is commonplace to hire a middleman or 'despachante' to assist with your business affairs. For a nominal charge they will help you to navigate bureaucracy.

Brazilians are renowned for being sociable and enjoy spending time with other people. Many meetings, both formal and informal, take place over lunch or during mid-morning coffee breaks. These meetings may go on for a number of hours. You should accept any food or drinks that you are offered during social or business occasions. Coffee is often served before or in the duration of a meeting.

With an in-depth structure of regulations and the relaxed Brazilian attitude to time, business meetings can be fairly lengthy. However, it is important not to rush proceedings, and instead use the time wisely to further develop your business relationships, which will no doubt give way to successful negotiations.

[Source – <https://www.communicaid.com/country/brazil/>]

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IMA House
41A Spring Gardens
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Derbyshire
SK17 6BJ
United Kingdom
Email: info@ima.uk.com
General enquiries switchboard: +44 (0) 1298 79562
Website: www.DoingBusinessGuide.co.uk