

Date: 3-29-2012
To: Jane Smith, Vice President of Sales
From: Michael Jones, Vice President of Human Resources
Subject: Planning for success for your upcoming trip to Mumbai, India

I am writing to you at the request of our CEO, Check Barret. Because this is the first time we've sent anyone from our company to India, we hope to give you some information that you can prepare yourself with to help your trip run smoothly.

Before you leave your house, prepare for warm to hot weather

First off, pack for the climate you are going to. According to The Weather Channel, highs should range from 85-91 degrees Fahrenheit, with lows in the mid-70s. Pant suits and long skirts in conservative colors would be deemed appropriate for foreign business women in a professional setting. Typical casual wear for women would include jeans and a t-shirt, or, if you are feeling adventurous, a sari or salwar-suit worn by a foreign woman can be seen as a sign of friendship. In addition to clothing, if you are invited to a dinner at an Indian home, you should bring a gift, such as chocolates or flowers (check with local florist to determine what is appropriate), as well as something for a child if there will be one present. Prepare yourself with more than enough business cards, in English, as they are exchanged regularly, even in non-business situations. Also, bring something for the plane ride, as flights from Des Moines to Mumbai will have you traveling between 23 and 39 hours according to priceline.com listings.

Avoid conversing about religious differences, Pakistan, and the divide between rich and poor

Indians regularly engage in small talk with strangers, and are likely to inquire about personal matters that may seem inappropriate to an American. Think of this conversation as an exchange of views, as well as a chance to gain rapport and trust with the people with whom you are doing business. Do not openly disagree with someone unless you have built up a very trusting relationship, instead, side step with the point by saying you will consider their statement and get back to them.

Encouraged topics of conversation

- Politics. Especially learn local political issues in Mumbai. Right now, a city leader is critical of water usage at a cricket stadium (<http://daily.bhaskar.com>).
- Cricket. A working knowledge of cricket players, teams, or recent cricket-related events.
- Films. Watching a recent successful Hindu film can show great interest in Indian culture.
- Economic reforms. India's economy changed drastically in 1991 and it affected nearly all Indians. Find out some of the recent, local issues regarding the economy.

Indian's plans and schedules rely on other people and events, not just the clock. Exercise patience and remain flexible.

Indians appreciate punctuality. However, sometimes their own schedules will change on short notice. If possible, have someone confirm your appointments before you board your plane. Northern India follows the same titles and naming conventions as is expected in western society. Also, gift giving is a part of Indian culture, but is generally inadvisable during the first meeting. Something small and inexpensive would be advisable in the second or third meeting as a sign of friendship. Use red, green or yellow wrapping paper, and don't pressure the recipient to open it in your presence. Avoid giving jewelry or leather gifts. Greet people by holding your palms together as if praying and saying, "Namaste". Avoid Greeting with hugs and kisses. It is normal for guests or women to proceed before hosts or men.

Understanding India's business culture can lead to completing sales

English is the primary business language in India, so do not stress over cramming to learn a new language. However, in my personal experiences overseas, people have delighted when I've shown interest to learn parts of the native tongue with their assistance. Consider using this as a method to build rapport. According to www.cyborlink.com, saying "no" as a flat out refusal is considered rude. Instead, something evasive like "I'll try" is more acceptable. According to Google Translate, "I'll try" is pronounced "Mair̄m kōśiśa karatā hūṁ" (the audio sounds like: maim koshish kortah). Many Indian businesses are family owned, though there are also public-sector, government owned businesses as well. Government run businesses will tend to be more hierarchical and bureaucratic. Newer industries, such as businesses in the IT and insurance sectors, will be more flexible and egalitarian, and may practice a more relaxed dress code.

Build your confidence in dealing with Indians by adhering to these quick tips

- To beckon someone over, use a palm down, scooping motion with the fingers. To point, use the whole hand, palm, or chin. Pointing with one finger is considered accusatory.
- Avoid standing with hands on your hips as it will be seen as a dominating or aggressive gesture. Don't be afraid to use your hands while talking or explaining something.
- In both business and public life, seniority, age, and authority are respected. Do not make direct, continuous eye contact, but expect Indians to make eye contact with you out of curiosity of foreigners.

Keep your spirits up to ensure success for Techtronics in India

As the company's pioneer into India, you must be very excited, and we will all be waiting to hear about your travels upon your return. We all believe in your abilities to bring in new clients to our business. Good luck in dealing with a new customer base, and if you need anything give me a call (just remember Mumbai is 10:30 ahead of Des Moines time).

Michael Jones, VP Human Resources