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## Brazil

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This month, our attention turns to Brazil. Located in eastern South America, it borders Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. Brazil has a population of 210 million and a high level of urbanisation with 82 out of every 100 Brazilians living in cities. The four most densely populated cities are Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, the capital Brasilia and Salvador.

Brazil is the eighth-largest economy in the world. It's economic and social progress between 2003 and 2014 lifted 29 million people out of poverty and inequality dropped significantly. However, Brazil is currently going through a deep recession. The economic crisis, as a result of the fall in commodity prices and an inability to make the necessary policy adjustments, coupled with the political crisis faced by the country, has contributed to undermining the confidence of consumers and investors. Brazil's medium-term outlook will depend on the success of the current adjustments and the enactment of growth-enhancing reforms.

Brazilian culture has been shaped not only by the Portuguese, who gave the country its religion and language, but also by the country's native Indians, the considerable African population, and other settlers from Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Brazil's culture is group-oriented. Asserting individual preferences may be seen as less important than having a sense of belonging to the team/group/family, conforming to its norms, and maintaining harmony among its members. As relationships with family are very important for Brazilians, it's common to hire people from the same family in the workplace too. For expatriate managers, you must be flexible and understand when family obligations emerge and even give assistance to team members if required. Showing genuine interest and compassion will win people's hearts.

Business is generally hierarchical and employees expect a paternalistic manager to whom they can be loyal and commit to. Managers are expected to manage, give direct instructions and be as clear, precise and comprehensive as possible. Ideas seldom come from junior employees and are seldom sought. Employees are given a task to complete and are expected to comply. Regulations are pretty well defined. Don't be surprised if your Brazilian team members do not offer their opinions or recommendations initially – for them this may be intrusive.

Displays of emotions are complex and you will see people embracing warmly, laughing loudly or quarrelling animatedly. However, while Brazilians are usually warm and friendly, they are also proud and may be offended by comments that leave room for misunderstandings. Be careful to 'save face' and respect everyone's honour. It is not acceptable to lose patience with others or to criticise them or the country publicly. Silence likely signals their embarrassment.

Punctuality is expected when arriving for work. However, meetings often start late (it can vary from 10 to 40 min). Brazilians tend to see time as a sequence of events (as opposed to hours and minutes). For example, if they are late because a previous engagement took longer than expected, they will view the delay with your meeting as a natural consequence. Deadlines can be flexible, depending on the situation.