



Canada

Canada is the second largest country in the world (after Russia). It covers an area of 9.98 million sq km, its capital city is Ottawa and the population is just over 36 million. Canada has a Head of State, Queen Elizabeth II, and a Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau.

Canada is heavily influenced by its proximity to the USA. As a large majority of Canadians live within 200km of the Canada/USA border, there are similarities in behaviour and accent. Canadians share the informality, freedom of expression, pioneer spirit and entrepreneurial imagination of the USA. Yet, Canadians tend to be more modest and indirect.

Diversity has played an important role in Canada's formative history. Today, Canada boasts the highest percentage of foreign-born citizens than any other G8 country.

Canada has a large, vibrant economy. Alongside a dominant service sector, it also has vast oil reserves and is a major exporter of energy, food and minerals. The largest trade relationship of any two countries in the world is the one between the US and Canada.

According to the HSBC Expat Explorer annual report, Canada is 6th in the world rankings for economics and family, as well as 8th for experience. Together, these rankings make Canada the 4th best country in the world overall for expats.

Canada is officially bilingual and this needs to be recognised in dealings with the country. French translations of any marketing and promotional literature should be provided when trying to enter the market (especially in the area of Quebec).

In the workplace, Canadian managers are not expected to manage in an authoritarian or paternalistic manner but are expected to be decisive. Management style is characterised as informal and friendly with managers preferring to be seen as 'one of the guys' rather than as an aloof figure who stands apart from everybody else.

Managers will consult widely when a decision is called for and expect input from all concerned parties. However the final decision remains with the manager and quick decision-making is respected by all. Before any decision has been made, speak up, no matter what your status. You might not be asked explicitly to contribute, but demonstrate initiative and self-confidence by making your voice heard. Politely yet clearly provide your opinion even when it differs from what the boss seems to be thinking.

Hierarchy in Canadian organisations is established for convenience, superiors are accessible and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. It is customary for managers and staff members to consult one another and to share information freely. With respect to communication, Canadians value a straightforward exchange.

Canada is characterised as an Individualist culture. This translates into a loosely-knit society in which the expectation is that people look after themselves and their immediate families. Similarly, in the business world, employees are expected to be self-reliant and display initiative.

While Canadians strive to attain high standards of performance in both work and play, the overall cultural tone is more subdued with respect to achievement, success and winning. They tend to have a work-life balance and are likely to take time to enjoy personal pursuits, family gatherings and life in general.

This is also indicative of the easy acceptance of new ideas, innovative products and a willingness to try something new or different, whether it's in technology, business practices, or consumer products.

At meetings, punctuality is a priority, and your business card should have both French and English translations. You may find Canadians to be initially reserved, but they usually warm up as conversation proceeds. You can expect them to be polite, easy-going, relatively informal and organised. They want sensible discussion during business and negotiate calmly and reasonably, seeking a compromise for a win-win outcome. They will not be enticed by hard tactics or tough bargaining.

Appeal to common sense during negotiations and be clear about your intentions. Support your aims with facts and figures, being careful not to make any statements that you cannot support or demonstrate.

Canadians do not like wasting time but also do not appreciate being hurried into decisions. Agreement is usually sought from everyone in the room as a unanimous consensus is ideal.

Canadians usually leave meetings with an immediate plan of action in mind. Once a decision has been made, its implementation is often rapid.

While building rapport is important, Canadians tend to make professional friendships with their colleagues instead of building personal relationships out of them. They value their privacy and like to keep a line between those they do business with and those they socialise with outside of the workplace.

Finally, while our article applies to Canadian culture overall, there are some differences between Anglophone Canadians and Francophone Canadians (the province of Quebec). French Canadians can be more formal, hierarchical, relationship-focused and expressive.