

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Brazilians conduct business only through personal connections, and there must be an implicit understanding that the relationship will be long-term. Always emphasise that you value people and relationships over business. Indeed, changing a negotiating team is a major breach of protocol and can jeopardise the entire contract.

SPEAK WITH DR. CARLOS

In Brazil, people quickly move to a first-name basis, sometimes using titles as well. Before handing you a business card, a Brazilian might underline one name and cross off a title, indicating that you use only what is underlined. During conversations, often fast-paced and highly animated with frequent interruptions, exclamations of “no!” and a tremendous amount of physical contact, don’t be unnerved by the fact that Brazilians often stand very close to each other.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Everyone wants to enjoy the party, so avoid scheduling appointments around Carnival. When you’ve set your meeting, remember that poor punctuality is typical of Brazilian business culture. Brazilians always expect to begin a meeting with good-natured small talk, and this banter is an important part of interaction with partners. Afterwards, never leave as soon as a meeting ends, which your business partners would find very insulting. Instead, remain for more informal chat.

WORKING MEALS

For a lunch or dinner meeting, you are expected to be on time. Brazilian dinners start between 19.00 and 22.00 and last until 02.00 or later. As at any gathering, shake hands with everyone upon arrival and before leaving. Dining formalities are closely followed: If you are toasted, raise your glass and propose a toast in return. Be sure to drink after the toast, before replacing your glass on the table. Never touch food with your fingers, but rather cut all food with your knife, even fruit and sandwiches. During meals, small talk is expected, and business is discussed when coffee is served. Wait for your Brazilian counterparts to turn the conversation to more serious topics.