



# INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

ARGENTINA ♦ BOLIVIA ♦ BRAZIL ♦ CHILE ♦ COLOMBIA ♦ COSTA RICA ♦ ECUADOR

## Latin America

GUATEMALA ♦ MEXICO ♦ PANAMA ♦ PARAGUAY ♦ PERU ♦ URUGUAY ♦ VENEZUELA

*What You Need To Know To Conduct  
Business Abroad with Charm and Savvy*

**Ann Marie Sabath**  
Author of  
**Business Etiquette**



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## Latin America

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By  
Ann Marie Sabath

CAREER PRESS  
Franklin Lakes, NJ

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LATIN AMERICA**

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## Introduction

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Olé! Adelante! Arriba!

No matter where you are traveling in Latin America, you can be sure of one thing: the acceptable cultural mores often will vary greatly from those to which you may be accustomed. However, when you know what to expect and familiarize yourself with the proper manners and customs based on the country you will be visiting, you will feel more confident interacting with your international contacts.

This book is the third of my International Business Etiquette series. The first two books have addressed, respectively, the customs and manners of Europe, and Asia and the Pacific Rim. This book addresses the do's and don'ts when doing business in one or more of the 14 countries covered including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Like the first two books in this series, this one has been written to assist you in overcoming concerns you may have when confronted with a particular situation. It is meant to help you get that sand out of your international social gears so that it will be easier for you and your Latin American contacts to do business together.

Each chapter begins with a list of reasons why people do business in that particular country, as well as an overview and important facts and statistics regarding the country and its people. You will find some basic information regarding where you will land, what to wear based on climate, and the telephone codes that those

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you leave behind will want to have at their fingertips. You also will learn what to expect in your business dealings as you visit these countries—entertainment, dining, basic rules of conversation, when to tip and how much, customs and manners you should respect, and so on. In each chapter, you will learn such things as the real definition of punctuality for the country you're visiting, plus rules regarding seating arrangements, gift-giving, and the use of business cards. Special concerns for women are also addressed.

The following is a summary of the entire list of topics covered in each chapter.

### **Statistics and Information**

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#### ***Air Travel***

When traveling abroad, the airport will be one of the first places you see. This section will tell you the name of the international airport where you are most likely to arrive. Many of the chapters also will suggest the most practical form of transportation for use from the airport to your destination.

#### ***Country Codes***

Among the many important facts regarding your trip that you will want to provide to both your family and your office staff are the telephone codes of where you will be. This section will give you codes for both the respective country and two or three major cities in each as well.

#### ***Currency***

If you have traveled abroad, you know that foreign currency often feels very much like monopoly money. This section offers the mean for you to familiarize yourself with the name of the bills and coins in each country. In addition, you will learn the denominations that are available for use, as well as the best places for currency exchange.

## **Dates**

You will find that there are two ways to write dates although in Latin America. One is by following the European Standard format, which consists of listing the number representing the day of the week followed by the number of the month and finally the two numbers representing the year. This section also will show you the appropriate way to write out dates, whether you are writing in longhand or are keying a letter on the computer. One thing to note: South Americans do not capitalize dates written out in longhand. For example, January would be written as *enero*.

## **Ethnic Makeup**

Many Latin American countries are made up of a variety of cultures. That includes both the descendants of immigrants who migrated to Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries and individuals whose ancestors helped to build the country they are living in today. This section will help you to distinguish the mono or multicultural makeup of the Latin American country you are visiting. You will see that the populations of many countries are made up of *mestizos*, a people whose heritage is both European (usually Spanish) and Indian.

## **Holidays and Religious Celebrations**

Most Latin American countries have several holidays that are tied to either national commemorations or religious celebrations. These dates will be especially beneficial for you when planning a trip and determining the best time of year when you should or shouldn't travel.

## **Language**

Spanish is by far the predominant language in Latin American countries except for Brazil, where Portuguese holds that distinction. This section also will tell you in which countries you will hear English, French, German, and even some Indian dialects.

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### ***Religion***

This section details the religions practiced by the majority of Latin Americans. In some cases, it also will help you to see how religion is closely tied to Latin American lifestyles and beliefs.

### ***Time Zone Differences***

Just as country codes are important, so are time zone differences. This section will help you to differentiate the time between the Latin American country you will be visiting and your home city. By knowing this information, you will be able to plan the best time to call home or inform others how to phone you at a convenient hour.

### ***Weather***

Packing for your trip is contingent on the type of climate you should expect. This section will give you an idea of the type of clothes you'll need to pack based on the countries you will be visiting, particularly where you will be in those countries.

## **Etiquette**

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### ***Business Attire***

The way you look and what you wear are as important as who you are. Because many Latinos follow European fashion trends very closely, this section stresses the importance of dressing elegantly. It also emphasizes to travelers from the United States that although business casual dress may have a place in some situations, casual dress does not.

### ***Business Card Etiquette***

Although there are no preset rules in Latin America regarding the exchange of business cards, this section stresses the importance of making sure you translate your cards into Spanish before leaving for your trip. You'll also learn what you should emphasize

on your business card based on what is deemed important by your Latino contact.

### ***Business Entertaining/Dining***

No matter where you travel in Latin America, you will find that your business relationships will be based on how well you have interacted with your contacts in social settings.

Much of this time spent together will be during meals. This section will tell you which meals are considered the main courses of the day (based on the country you are visiting) and when you should expect to eat them. Tips regarding table manners will be offered. Finally, you will learn what your Latin American contacts will expect of you when you are either hosting a meal or are their guest.

### ***Conversation***

One of the best attributes of Latin Americans is their friendly manner. As you are establishing rapport with your in-country contacts, “small talk” will be important. This section will share with you the best topics of conversation to pursue and those to avoid.

### ***Gestures and Public Manners***

Many mannerisms that are considered acceptable in your homeland may be thought of as offensive in Latin America. Conversely, you might ordinarily never consider engaging in the manners and gestures that you will be encouraged to use from this book. This section will assist you in learning what is and is not appropriate public behavior, including all forms of nonverbal communication.

### ***Gift-Giving Etiquette***

Although gift-giving is not the ritual in Latin America that it is in other parts of the world, it still is an important part of the rapport-developing process. This section will tell you the best types of



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gifts to give your Latin American contacts and when those presents should be given. You also will learn what *not* to give so that you don't unknowingly offend the person with whom you are trying to develop a working relationship.

### ***Greetings and Introductions***

First impressions make a big difference around the globe. One of the first forms of establishing rapport will be when you meet and greet your Latin American contacts. This section will share such tips as when you should prepare to shake hands and the proper distance to stand from a person. You will also learn when to expect an embrace and perhaps even a kiss, and who should initiate such gestures.

### ***Hierarchy Is Important***

Although most corporations have organizational charts, some of them may not be seen by individuals from outside the company. For that reason, this section has been created to assist you in determining who is the highest person on the totem pole or who has the most decision-making power.

### ***How Decisions Are Made***

In many Latin American countries, you will find that the person making the final decision may not even be at initial meetings. You also will find that having the best product, service, or price may not be the determining factor for who ends up winning that sought-after business. This section will help you to understand how Latin Americans draw conclusions about who should earn their business and what you should do so that you are the person who earns it.

### ***Meeting Manners***

A meeting is a meeting is a meeting, or so you would think—until you've attended a meeting in Latin America. This section will