

Italy's cultural



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Business communication in Italy Culture plays a very vital role in shaping attitudes and thus it is absolutely imperative to know the cultural peculiarities and related idiosyncrasies of a particular nation prior to soliciting business in that country. What might be perfectly normal and totally acceptable in United States might actually be considered reprehensible in Japan or Italy. So, it is necessary to have a clear idea about cultural nuances about this country before the first letter soliciting business is drafted (Mitchell, 2000). The following points need to be clearly borne in mind before drafting sales letters for Italian office:

Italian society highly values individuality and is comfortable interacting with individuals in their personal capacity rather than as representatives of a company. Hence, it is always advisable that sales letters prominently display the name of the person who is sending the letter rather than a faceless designation. But it must be remembered that however important personal relations might be to strike a successful business deal, such relations take a long time to develop and need interactions over long periods of time. So, it might be necessary to write several letters before one can expect any sort of response from an Italian company (Gorrill, 2005).

Italian companies have strict norms of hierarchy and almost all business decisions are generally taken by the top management. Our company solicits business outsourcing which is most certainly a very vital decision for any form of business. Thus, it is only natural that the topmost managers of a company will come to a decision after a lot of thought and numerous interactions among themselves and with our company representatives. This is a long drawn out process and polite patience will be the key to success in such a scenario. Any quick decisions from prospective clients or quick closing

of a deal with a new client is usually not possible in Italy. The situation is made even more critical by a general sense of lethargy about taking any type of decision that permeates all forms of bureaucracy in Italy (Priest, 2008).

Italian culture accords tremendous respect to positions of authority and the power that goes with it and also the age of the person wielding that authority. White hair over black and experience over exuberance of youth is always given more importance in Italy. Therefore, all sales letters should be signed by the highest authority available simply to provide an accentuated sense of seriousness and urgency to the whole issue. Keeping in mind Italian obeisance for authority, it is always a good idea to clearly state the educational qualifications and other achievements of the person sending the sales letter as high levels of qualification always attract an additional respect in Italian society (Salacuse, 1991).

Italians are known for their love of beauty and finesse in every sphere of life, right from how they dress to what they eat and how they speak and how they present themselves in front of others. In such a scenario, opinion of others, quite obviously, plays a huge role in how Italians perceive anything. So, the first key to crack the Italian market would be to aesthetically design the sales letter in such a way that it prompts the addressee to involuntarily let slip an exclamation of admiration the moment they see it for the first time. This is an extremely important point that must never be forgotten when sending sales letters to prospective Italian clients. Attractive designs and innovative formats topped by crisp and clear fonts surely create a good impression about the company. But, it must also be remembered that Italians as a nation do not like beating about the bush and prefer to come

directly to the point. So, irrespective of how beautifully the letter is designed, the content should be specific and address the subject matter as cogently as possible without any unnecessary or irrelevant digressions (Gorrill, 2005).

Italians are by nature an emotional group of people and are never shy of openly expressing their emotions. While in meetings it is common for Italians to resort to elaborate and hyper expressive hand gestures and they often interrupt others to put forward their point of view and very often more than one speaker is heard talking at the same time each as passionate about his opinion as the other. It would be wonderful if sales letters are able to exude some similar emotion as that would immediately strike a tender chord in an Italian heart (Hall & Hall, 1990).

References

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