

# BUSINESS ETIQUETTES AND CUSTOMS



## AUSTRIA

### WORKING HOURS

- 8.00am to 17.00pm – with one hour for lunch (Monday to Thursday) and 8.00am to 16.00 pm (Friday).

### PUNCTUALITY

- Time, therefore, is managed carefully, and calendars, schedules and agendas must be respected.

### BUSINESS CLOTHING

- Appearance and presentation is very important to Austrians, particularly in business. Even when dressed informally, they are neat and conservative and their clothes are never ostentatious.

### BUSINESS MEALS

- Sharing a meal is intended to help establish a personal acquaintance as a precursor to doing business.
- As with all countries, there is an etiquette you are expected to follow, when dining out in Austria. The following highlight the most important elements of restaurant etiquette:
  - Austrians insist on punctuality for social occasions.
  - They remain standing until invited to sit down and you may even be shown to a particular seat.
- Do not begin eating until the host / hostess starts or someone says “Mahlzeit” or “guten Appetite” (have a nice meal).
- Do not rest your elbows on the table.
- Do not put your left hand in your lap when you eat.
- Indicate you have finished eating by laying your knife and fork parallel on your plate with the handles facing to the right.
- The most common toast with wine is “Zum Wohl” and with beer is “Prost” (good health).
- The person who extends the invitation pays the bill in a restaurant. Austrians will not appreciate a struggle over the bill. Reciprocate with a lunch or dinner invitation before you leave the country.
- In many places in Austria, including restaurants, there is a strict ban on smoking. Try to smoke only when the people around you are doing so.



## BUSINESS MEETINGS

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- Business meetings follow a formal procedure. Appointments in Austria are necessary and should be made 3 to 4 weeks in advance when meeting with private companies. You are advised to avoid making business appointments for the months of July and August as well as around the dates of Austrian national holidays. Punctuality is taken extremely seriously. If you expect to be delayed, telephone immediately and offer an explanation. It is extremely rude to cancel a meeting at the last minute and it could jeopardise your business relationship. Meetings are generally formal and initial meetings are used to get to know each other. These allow your Austrian colleagues to determine if you are trustworthy. This process is often very time consuming. Letters should be addressed to the top person in the

functional area, include the person's name as well as their proper business title. Do not forget the importance of rank in Austrian business. Never set up a meeting for a lower ranked company employee to meet with a higher ranked person. In Austrian business dealings, it is important to provide solid facts and examples to back up proposals, given the Austrian preference for analytical thinking and rational explanations. Do not use exaggerated or indirect communication styles during business meetings with your Austrian counterparts since this creates an impression of insincerity and dishonesty. In formal Austrian business meetings, it is customary for the highest-ranking person to enter the room first. However, in more informal business situations this is less important.

## ADDRESSING A PERSON

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- Use the formal word for you: "Sie" unless invited to use the informal "du". Address people by their academic title and surname.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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- Austria has a relatively good work-life balance, being above the EU average in all of the three work-life balance (Eurofound 2015).

## NATIONAL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

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- Approx. 15 days.

## GIFTS AND PRESENTS

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- Gifts are not expected in business except on special occasions. Gifts should be moderate and unassuming. Suitable gifts include brandies, spirits, or something that reflects your homeland or the personal tastes and preferences of the recipient, as long as the gift is of high quality and not normally obtainable in Austria.

