

BUSINESS ETIQUETTES AND CUSTOMS



FINLAND

WORKING HOURS

- Working hours are agreed in the employment contract. The most common regular working hours in Finland are 7,5 hours a day and 37,5 hours a week.
- From Monday to Friday office hours are usually between 8 am and 5 pm. Lunch is eaten between 11 am and 1 pm and it lasts 0,5-1 hours.

PUNCTUALITY

- Punctuality in business is generally regarded as a virtue, although apologies for a late arrival will be accepted good-naturedly.

BUSINESS MEALS

- Business can be discussed also during meals.
- Alcohol is rarely consumed during lunch time but for dinner you can expect alcohol to be served. Over dinner, conversation tends to concentrate more on other issues than business.
- As a rule, service is included in restaurant bills. Many people add an extra gratuity but this is at your discretion.

BUSINESS CLOTHING

- A wide variety of formality levels can be observed in clothing but overall impression is rather smart and modest than flashy. Casual wear such as jeans and T-shirts can be found in many of the more hi-tech industries.
- Be aware of the climatic changes in Finland. Take lots of layers of warm clothes in the winter – It's cold outside, but warm in the office. Hats, scarves, gloves and rubber-soled shoes are advisable in the winter months.

GREETING

- When greeting, the parties shake hands and make eye contact. A Finnish handshake is brief and firm, and involves no supporting gestures such as touching the shoulder or upper arm.
- When introducing themselves, Finns will say their forename followed by their surname. Finns rarely mention official titles they may have when introducing themselves.



BUSINESS MEETINGS

- Meetings begin and end on time. Expect a bare minimum of small talk before getting into the business discussion.
- Avoid hype and exaggerated claims in your presentation.
- Finns seldom ask questions. The presenter is expected to make his/her case with sufficient detail that their Finnish colleagues do not need to ask many questions.
- Listen to the speaker, wait for him to finish and then reply. Interrupting is considered rude.
- Humour is no taboo in the business environment.

GIFTS AND PRESENTS

- Gifts are rarely given in business relations, with Christmas gifts being the exception. Small gifts (books, local items or liquor) can be acceptable after successful negotiations.

OFFICE FACILITIES

- With the rise of network-based work in Finland, an increasing amount of entrepreneurs are utilising shared 'cowork' spaces and virtual spaces for their enterprises.
- Open-plan offices are common especially in bigger companies.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- Finland is known for having a high participation rate of both men and women in working life. Options for family leave are numerous. Every child under school age is entitled to municipal day care, which is organized in day care centres or in family day care. There are also various private day care services available. The possibility to have the children taken care of allows workers to have a better work life balance in Finland as they can create a family and manage their work life.

ADDRESSING A PERSON

- The familiar form of address in Finnish is commonly used, not just between friends and acquaintances but among strangers too. However, young people still tend to address elderly people by the formal second person plural if they do not know the persons well.

HOLIDAYS

- For each month of full-time working Finns earn at least two days of annual leave. The most common time for summer holidays starts at the end of June when Finns celebrate the Midsummer holidays. You shouldn't plan any business meetings to take place in the holiday period lasting from mid-June till mid-August.

CONVERSATION

- Finns are better at listening than at talking, and interrupting another speaker is considered impolite. A Finn does not grow nervous if there are breaks in the conversation; silence is regarded as a part of communication. Having once got to know a stranger moderately well, Finns are quite willing to discuss any topic; generally not even religion or politics are taboo. Finland is one of the world's leaders in the reading of books and newspapers and the use of libraries, and thus the average Finn is fairly well informed on what is happening in Finland and in the world.

