

CULTURAL INSIGHTS ITALY (ITALIA)



a culture crash course every other month, sent right to your inbox!

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Group Orientation and Trust

Italy's identity is shaped by a strong sense of community and family. Cooperation is highly valued and expected amongst friends and family, but competition with others can be strong. Trust is the cornerstone of business and social interactions; once it is established, opportunities that seemed out of reach become attainable.

Relationship Orientation

In Italy, relationships are essential for both social and business interactions, often holding as much importance as professional qualifications. Italians usually start meetings by engaging in personal conversation, inquiring about each other's well-being and recent activities. Establishing a strong personal connection requires time and dedication, and both parties are expected to make an effort to get to know one another as building these relationships fosters trust and mutual understanding.

Hierarchy

In Italy, hierarchy is deeply ingrained in societal structures and reflects a respect for authority and seniority. Within families, the eldest members often hold significant influence, and their opinions are highly valued. In business, Italian companies often feature a top-down hierarchy where decisions are made by senior executives and managers. Communication typically flows from the top down, with junior staff expected to defer to senior leadership.

Need for Certainty with Preference for Exceptions

Generally, there is a strong preference for certainty and stability, which is reflected in the detailed regulations governing various aspects of life and business. Rules and policies are in place to form the ideal, but it's the relationships and the dynamics of a situation that determine the degree to which rules will be followed.

Fluid Time

Italians tend to prefer a more fluid approach to time, particularly in social settings and informal business interactions. Meetings may start later than scheduled, and delays are often tolerated as part of the emphasis on building personal relationships and ensuring that interactions are comfortable and harmonious.

FUN FACTS

- Italy was unified into a single nation-state in 1861 under the leadership of figures like Giuseppe Garibaldi, Count Camillo di Cavour, and King Victor Emmanuel II.
- Italy was the heart of the Roman Empire, one of the most powerful civilizations in history, which dominated much of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East for over a millennium.
- As a founding member of the Eurozone, Italy is the second-largest manufacturing country in Europe, with a particular focus on machinery, fashion items, food products, automotive parts, and pharmaceuticals
- Expatriates tend to be employed in such sectors as healthcare, technology and hospitality

BE AWARE!

Refrain from comments about Italian crime, corruption, the Mafia or Italy's involvement in World War II.



COMMUNICATION IN ITALY

INDIRECT



In Italy, communication is often characterized by a blend of indirectness and nuance, especially in contexts where maintaining harmony and relationships is valued. Italians may use subtle hints, idiomatic expressions, and expressive gestures to convey their messages. The context of a situation plays a large part in determining the style of communication. Also, dress, mannerisms, and presenting a positive image – "bella figura" – form part of the message.

EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE



Italians generally accept and even expect open expression of emotions such as anger, affection, or disagreement. Heightened emotion is viewed as a sign of strong commitment to one's perspective and a way to demonstrate engagement and sincerity. However, upon first meeting, Italians may appear reserved or distant until a personal connection is established. Once this rapport is built, they are more likely to engage openly and warmly.

FORMAL



In Italy, formality in social interactions is highly valued and reflects good manners and respect. Third party introductions are appreciated and addressing people with appropriate titles, such as "Signor" for men and "Signora" for women, is important. Professional titles such as "Dottore" (Doctor) or "Professore" (Professor) are often used. In meetings, men typically greet other men with a handshake, while women may choose to offer a handshake or greet with a kiss on both cheeks, depending on the level of familiarity and regional customs.

THE

DETAILS ITALY CULTURAL PROFILE

