

CULTURAL INSIGHTS SINGAPORE



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

QUICK FACTS

- Group Oriented & Relationship Focused**
 In Singapore the notions of family, nation, and community are primary. Development of strong personal relationships with partners and customers is crucial and can take a considerable amount of time.
- Competition / Cooperation**
 Singaporeans can be intensely competitive between groups and individuals, but always within the constraints of in-group harmony and cooperation.
- Hierarchy**
 Status and rank determine the structure of all groups and organizations within the country. Management style tends to be authoritarian with upward dependence and not much tolerance for initiative.
- Tolerance for Ambiguity**
 Strong social rules and public laws create a safe environment in which there is plenty of room for individual competition and commercial risk taking.
- Exact Time**
 A strong business culture demands strict scheduling and punctual behavior. Tardiness is perceived as a sign of disrespect and all business and social functions start on time.

FUN FACTS

Singapore has one of the world's busiest cargo seaports with **37 million cargo containers** passing through the Port of Singapore compared to the USA's busiest seaport in Los Angeles at 6.5 million cargo containers

Singapore has 4 official languages: Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and English, plus an unofficial dialect, Singlish, which is based on English with elements from the other 3 languages

Freedom of worship is constitutionally granted, and you may encounter Singaporeans discussing religion openly

WATCH OUT!

Showing emotions, interrupting, or raising one's voice is considered improper and disrespectful.



COMMUNICATION IN SINGAPORE

INDIRECT



Focus on relationship development and the concept of face translate into preservation of harmony and dictate an indirect style in public. Disagreement and negative replies are muted, especially with superiors. Disturbing information may be conveyed in nonverbal channels or via a third party. There are many ways of saying "no" without uttering the word. Relationship determines the nature of the communication and the level of directness.

EMOTIONALLY RESTRAINED



Deference to harmony and cooperation require self-control and restrained emotional expression. Losing one's temper causes loss of face to both the offended and the offender. Negotiations proceed slowly, cautiously, patiently, without emotional display, seeking compromise. A signed contract does not preclude later re-discussion of "settled" points.

FORMAL



In formal settings, titles and family names are used, but business among acquaintances is conducted on a first name basis, although hierarchy is always respected and acknowledged. Meetings are typically formal with reserved behavior, limited emotional display, and attention to hierarchy in the room. Singaporeans prefer formal recognition of space, particularly with the elderly, who are treated with reverence. Eye contact is intermittent, and holding a gaze is considered very challenging and impolite.



THE

DETAILS

SINGAPORE CULTURAL PROFILE



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