



# MUMBAI MASTI!

THE TRAVEL BUG IS SECOND NATURE TO MANY PEOPLE FROM THE NETHERLANDS - A COUNTRY SO SMALL THAT NO FOREIGN COUNTRY IS MORE THAN THREE HOURS AWAY. IT IS AWKWARD TO REALIZE THAT MUMBAI HAS AS MANY INHABITANTS AS THE WHOLE OF MY HOME COUNTRY: 15 MILLION PEOPLE. BUT APART FROM THAT NUMBER, AND HEAVY RAINS, THERE IS LITTLE THAT COMPARES. AFTER HAVING SUPPORTED THE LAUNCH OF MCI'S FIRST ASIA PACIFIC OFFICE IN SINGAPORE I TOOK UP THE CHALLENGE OF LAUNCHING MCI IN INDIA.

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Mumbai is intense! The food, the noise, the people, the smell, the traffic - it all contributes to an ever more dynamic environment. The energy to move forward and to expand is enormous. In an economy moving ahead at such an enormous pace, there is little time to learn. Instead, to keep up, India looks abroad and copies the know-how of the West. The usual development process skips a generation. The competition with China's economic growth keeps the nation going.

Interestingly, there seem to be more similarities with the lifestyle in Latin America than with Asia. The office day starts around 10am, lunch is at 3pm and dinner around 9pm. People are notoriously late for appointments and their nature is extremely expressive compared to the remainder of Asia.

Indians are truly hospitable people and relationships are the basis for everything. A friend can be anyone from a childhood neighbour to a

colleague to someone who they met the previous day. Where you come from and how socially connected you are also plays a prominent role in professional life. Knowing someone's family name and home town allows many Indians to understand social ranking immediately. Business is based on relationships. Talking to business colleagues is the basis for cooperation,

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much more so than an email exchange. One could easily drive two hours for a ten-minute meeting if it is an important relationship to be nurtured; this shows that someone is worth the

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time to be spent. The yellow pages are of very little use here and many people prefer to rely on a self-supporting cycle of references. What is difficult to understand in western business ethics is that a relationship counts more than a signed contract.

Bureaucracy is deeply entrenched and regulations change often, making it difficult to manoeuvre within the administrative system. Complex negotiations can slow down the process of doing business.

Therefore, for anyone entering the Indian market it is extremely important to invest in building relations, setting up a network, and connecting into the right sources. This is a prerequisite for any future success.

### SOME PRACTICAL DO'S:

- + Use the behaviour of others around you in social situations as a guide.
- + Ask your host how to go about a certain situation, rather than take the risk of offending someone. Religion and its rituals are very much present in daily life.
- + Upon invitation to a function or dinner, a gift is not expected but will be appreciated.
- + Dress modestly.
- + Take precautions in terms of water. Limit yourself to bottled water, tea or coffee only.
- + As in any new place, treat people with extra respect.

### AND DON'TS:

- + Poverty is very apparent but contributing to a sustainable charity is likely to be of greater benefit than giving to beggars who are often organised by gangs.
- + Don't use your left hand to eat or to hand over food, money, gifts or papers.
- + Don't shake hands, hug or kiss someone of the opposite sex as a greeting unless the contact is initiated by the Indian person.



### FIATA 2007 WORLD CONGRESS, MCI DUBAI

MCI Dubai delivered the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) World Congress in October 2007 at the Grand Hyatt Dubai. Key services underlying the event's success included:

#### Pre Congress Management

- + Revamping the main communication platform, with an online solution (WINPCO) to manage registration, tours and hotel inventory management. Delegate payments and visa/immigration were also handled online.
- + Regular communications to target audience leading up to the event
- + Pre-contracts with all suppliers to ensure a seamless delivery of services.

#### On Site Delivery services

- + Transfer of delegates,

- + Construction, creative design and audio visual management
- + Pre-registration of delegates
- + Speaker/VIP management including airport 'meet & assist,' gifts and dinner
- + Sponsor visibility during the social programmes which tastefully reflected the theme of Arabia.

#### Tools used to facilitate the event

- + Online Registration System (WINPCO)
- + Systematic financial and registration reporting
- + Pre Congress action plan for all suppliers
- + Congress Delivery Systems (onsite running orders to electronic delegate monitoring systems) The Congress welcomed a record number of 1,150 participants from 93 countries!