

## Help us with our cultural communications! She says tomăto, I say tomăto! Part 1 of 2

Disclaimer: The names of exporters and their stories have been changed to protect their identity. The names and expertise of our advisors are very real and often understated. The story is funny, the advice is authentic.



Dear Betty Sue Export Queen,  
Did you know there are over 300 types of seaweed? We manufacture a line of spa products using our local seaweed here in Steilacoom (pronounced STILL-a-come), WA. Last month an executive from a Colombian company tried our product while visiting on vacation. It made her look ten years younger. She loved it! Little did we know she is the Sr. VP of marketing for one of the largest beauty companies in Colombia. She wants to bring the CEO to meet us! We are so excited but so nervous. This is bigger than big and we don't want to mess up. What do we need to know to start off the meeting right and carry it through? Please help!

Rhonda Rhodophyta

Dear Rhonda Rhodophyta,  
We are as proud as plump peaches for your success! Being from the Dallas area, home to Mary Kay, we all know her famous quote, "You have only one chance to make a good first impression", so of course, that is what we want you to do! As my Mama said, if you don't know how to dance, best find ya an expert to teach ya before ya step on any toes. My friend and colleague Patricia Moore, CEO of Sentrum International has had years of protocol experience serving as Consul of Colombia to Norway and Iceland. She handles all aspects of export services for her clients. Patricia knows how to make a great first impression and seal the deal.  
Betty Sue Export Queen, a proud plump peach ready to try your seaweed facial

Dear Rhonda Rhodophyta,  
There are many points to address so we will do it in two parts. Mary Kay is absolutely right; this is your only chance to make the right first impression. First, get rid of any stereotypes you may have about the Columbian culture and start researching.

Most South Americans will not take a cold call from an unknown person, but since you met the VP of Marketing you can email her for the initial contact. When emailing, the subject line should be friendly and direct. The proper salutation is imperative. Use courtesy titles until invited to do otherwise. Open with an honest concern for a safe return home. Request a date and time for a conference call and specify the reason and time needed. Foreign representation is a delicate subject, so take your time with details.

Prior to the conference call, contact the company to confirm the call. Punctuality in Latin America is not as important as it is here, so if she is late or wants to reschedule, don't take it personally and be cordial. If others have been invited to participate in the call without letting you know in advance, remember their names and be polite. You might end up working directly with one or all of them. In Part 2 we will address cultural protocol during in-person meetings.

Best regards, Patricia Moore, CEO, Sentrum International  
P.S. Also want to try your seaweed facial!

#BettySueExportQueen

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