



... connecting you to the Latino Community

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A TASTE OF CULTURE AND HISTORY

In each of us specific dates, times and/or events have a special place in our minds, hearts and souls. Some have individual meaning or are just amongst friends, while other events represent great sacrifice and at times seem larger than life. For the people of Mexico, the events that took place on “Cinco de Mayo” represent the latter.

For the purposes of gaining a better understanding, we begin by providing some background information that actually led to the events of “Cinco de Mayo”; Mexico’s independence is September 16, 1810 and the events of “Cinco de Mayo” took place in 1862. Between these years several countries provided Mexico with economic relief. However, due to political instability and uprisings, Mexico ran out of funds. Some countries suspended their debt while others demanded payment.

Spain, France and England continued to demand payment from Mexico. Unfortunately, Mexico was unable to meet their demands. In 1862 France decided to invade Mexico. Napoleon Bonaparte sent troops who began their invasion via the Gulf coast of Mexico. They continued by marching toward Mexico City. Their goal would lead them through Puebla. It was here that a poorly armed and trained Mexican militia of approximately 4500 troops, led by General Ignacio Zaragoza would unknowingly create history.

On the 5th of May in 1862, General Zaragoza and his troops found themselves outnumbered. By most given accounts, the French army was well armed and better trained. Nonetheless, the Mexican militia defeated the French and brought the invasion to a halt. It was this battle at Puebla that would become famous and would become the source for today’s “Cinco de Mayo” celebrations.

However, Mexico’s victory at Puebla would be short lived. In a year’s time, the French would occupy Mexico and implement Maximilian as ruler of Mexico.

Having provided a snapshot of history, I’d like to address a recurring scenario that may have an impact on local businesses. As the Hispanic/Latino population continues to increase and progress, more business entities find themselves in a face to face situation with a monolingual Spanish speaking person.

Reaching this market, obtaining a share and being successful within it, is a major goal of more and more businesses. It need not be said, communication is key! On the other hand, the manner in which we communicate is also important. Being caught up in the moment of a cultural and language experience can be stressful. When we realize we are dealing with a monolingual Spanish speaking client or potential client and we ourselves do not speak Spanish, our heart rate starts to climb, our hands start to sweat and we allow our bodies to go into automatic to assist us. The result, we realize they may not SPEAK English, but we somehow interpret that as they being DEAF. Therefore, we speak slower and louder, repeating our actions because the results aren’t favorable.

In order to avoid this outcome, I offer the following as helpful reminders; both the non-Spanish speaker and the monolingual Spanish speaker are nervous, out of their comfort zone and may even find the situation frustrating. Both hope the other knows a little about their language and culture. Both are grateful if that’s the case. Everyone wishes for a favorable



outcome. Neither purposely intends to offend the other. Most of all, positive communication will take place, if we simply take a moment to focus and treat each other with respect. And yet, there are those that allege we have nothing in common.