

Business Etiquette In China

Cultural Facts

- ❖ Very exact rules about **human relationship**.
- ❖ Proud of their culture and **Zonghua concept**.
- ❖ Correct names, correct placement and correct etiquettes paramount to Chinese.
- ❖ Naming culture.
- ❖ Hand things with two hands.
- ❖ The **written word** is the highest art form.
- ❖ Very aware of other cultures and on foreign trips represent their country.
- ❖ Avoid **political comment**.
- ❖ **Concept of leader**.





Hillary Clinton with Yang Jiechi

Business Dress

- ❖ **Men:** Jackets for meetings and dinners
- ❖ **Women:** Business suits, blouses with high neckline, low heels to avoid being taller than the host



- ❖ White is used in funerals so wear other colors in important occasions
- ❖ Avoid too much of **perfume**

Conversation

Non Verbal Communication Customs

- ❖ When talking to each other, Chinese people **stand very close**. Personal space is less important to the Chinese .The main reason is that it is a sign of **politeness and trust**
- ❖ Less usage of **hand gestures**
- ❖ While having a conversation if there is a conflict, the important thing to remember is **to not get upset or angry** because to the Chinese, only the lower class or uneducated cannot control their emotions.

While Conversing

- ❖ During introductions, overly strong handshakes are avoided
- ❖ Following introductions, conversation begins with **small talk**
- ❖ In conversation, they avoid politics.
- ❖ If pressed for an opinion on a political or controversial issue, express your **personal opinion**, but acknowledge that it's not the viewpoint of the entire company
- ❖ One should try to avoid saying "**no**" when answering questions. Instead, one can respond with "I'll look into that" or "I'll see what I can do in this matter", etc.
- ❖ When one's Chinese counterparts say 'No big problem' or 'The problem is not serious', they usually mean '**There are still problems**'



Do's and Don'ts

- ❖ If asked intrusive questions about age, salary, etc. they give **unspecific answers**
- ❖ Don't express **irritation** with the questioner, since '**losing face**' has such negative implications in this culture.
- ❖ One shouldn't ask his/her Chinese hosts about their family directly but can ask 'How old is your child?', 'How long have you been in the work force?' or 'Where is your child studying?' as a means of determining their marital status and age.

Chinese Meetings

The Importance of Hierarchy



- ❖ People are expected to enter the meeting room in **hierarchical order**
- ❖ The Chinese assume that the person entering the meeting room **first** is the **head of the delegation**

The Business Card



- ❖ Cards should be printed in **Chinese** on the reverse and offered Chinese-side up.
- ❖ The business card is treated with **utmost respect**

- ❖ Business cards are always exchanged on **first meeting** a new contact.
- ❖ Cards are held in **both hands** when exchanging and then scrutinized in detail.



What Happens at a Meeting



Series of Meetings



Building Consensus

- ❖ Series of meetings, rather than just one
- ❖ Meetings are about building **relationships** and exchanging **information**
- ❖ Decisions are made in **consensus style discussions**
- ❖ This approach to meetings requires **patience**

Other Unique Features

- ❖ Boasting and exaggerating are investigated
- ❖ The Chinese do not directly say “no”
- ❖ Tendency to **extend negotiations** till the very end
- ❖ Patience, humility and less display of emotion are vital
- ❖ At the end of the meeting, **the Chinese leave the room last**



Dining Etiquette

Before Arriving at the Table



- ❖ **Eating together** is the best way to socialize and honor guests in China
- ❖ When invited to someone's house, always take a **gift**
- ❖ In Chinese culture, using correct table manners is believed to bring "**luck**" while incorrect use will bring shame
- ❖ There is an elaborate **seating arrangement** for a Chinese business meal
- ❖ When the **guest of honor** enters into the room, the **hosts stand** until the guest of honor is seated
- ❖ The diners should not sit down or begin to eat before the host (or guest of honor) has done so

While at the Dining Table



- ❖ With some exceptions, **hands should never be used** to handle food
- ❖ All kinds of food must be brought to mouth with **chopsticks** and eaten
- ❖ **Conversations are best avoided** during meal as it is indecent for one to talk with food in the mouth
- ❖ **Tea** is almost always served. Water and other non-alcoholic beverages may be consumed at anytime
- ❖ **Drinking a lot** (and even drunkenness) may earn you respect or trust, since many Chinese believe that alcohol causes barriers to come down and true intentions to be revealed
- ❖ Throughout the dinner, **toasts** are made, but never to women

Interpersonal Behaviour

Key Factors

- ❖ The Chinese prefer hand gestures to be kept to a minimum
- ❖ Personal contact like **hugging** should be avoided
- ❖ Shaking hands is acceptable
- ❖ Colleagues are addressed with title and last name only
- ❖ Direct **eye contact** is avoided



Key Factors (Contd.)



- ❖ The **most senior person** should be acknowledged first
- ❖ Unusual facial expressions and expansive gestures are best avoided
- ❖ **Bowing** is seldom used, except in ceremonies