

COURSE MATERIAL

COMMENTS 60

REPORTS

RESEARCH REPORTS

Rina Bao

A BITE-SIZED GUIDE TO CHINESE BUSINESS MANNERS



TURUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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A WORD FROM PROJECT MANAGER

This guide has been written to enhance people's knowledge about Chinese business manners, being a part of studies in a project called "Metalli- ja koneteknologia-alan yritysten innovaatiotoimintaa ja kansainvälistymistä tukevien verkostojen ja rakenteiden kehittäminen suomalaisiin korkeakouluihin". Translated freely to English the name is "Developing innovation activities, networks and structures for internationalization in Finnish Universities to support enterprises in metal and machine technology branches" (acronym: ROCKET). Rocket is funded by South Finland ERDF Programme (European Regional Development Fund) and the funding is coordinated by Regional Council of Päijät-Häme.

Rocket is across-regional project with seven universities. Project coordinator is Häme University of Applied Sciences. Other partners are, with their own subprojects, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences and Lappeenranta University of Technology.

As the name of the project indicates, the project is founded to help metal and machine technology enterprises in innovation and internalization issues. The focus is in small and medium size enterprises (SME). These issues are very relevant to the future and growth of SMEs. The world is getting smaller and the same principles for e.g. subcontracting SMEs that worked even a decade ago no longer work as well as they should. Because the world is changing so fast, it is not sufficient regarding the vitality of enterprises just to stick with old habits, markets or products. Something new is to be found all the time. Practically every SME has to figure out continuously e.g. how they are going to add value to their business and where the markets or suppliers are. Rocket is supporting SMEs in these challenges in numerous ways.

In the internationalization parts of the project one focus of Turku University of Applied Sciences is China. The goal is to find good practices and examples for SMEs who are willing to expand their business to China and establish themselves in one of the world's biggest and fastest growing markets. This expansion could mean, for instance, starting production in China or finding Chinese partners for cooperation.

On behalf of Turku University of Applied Sciences I would like to express our appreciation for all partners in the project and especially for the ERDF programme and Regional Council of Päijät-Häme for making all this possible. This magnificent and trail-blazing project would not have been possible without your support. Thank you.

Turku, April 26, 2011

Tero Reunanen
Project Manager
Technology, Environment and Business

CONTENTS

A BITE-SIZED GUIDE TO CHINESE BUSINESS MANNERS	6
I GREETING RITUALS	7
2 BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS & GUANXI	10
3 GIFT GIVING	11
4 MEETING CUSTOMS	12
5 MIANZI & NEGOTIATION STYLES	14
6 CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS	16
7 FOLLOW-UP	17
8 DINING ETIQUETTE	18
9 CULTURAL ELEMENTS	22
10 BEHAVIOURS	24
11 FINAL WORDS	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY	26

A BITE-SIZED GUIDE TO CHINESE BUSINESS MANNERS

When you step out of the airport, China hits you with the traffic, and the incredible quantities of people around. This short guide will lead you to familiarize the main business manners in China with some detailed tips, because most often it is the small details that can make the best impression. These pieces of advice will help you to understand more about Chinese business manners, etiquette and culture; at the same time your business success will be in your own hands through your own insights and efforts. It is recommended that you write your own reference notes with the help of this guide to record cultural and individual differences through your own experiences in order to develop a rapport that builds long-term relationships through your career.

I GREETING RITUALS

GREETINGS

For business people, it is very important to understand the basics of the host culture before going overseas, such as how to make a positive first impression saying “ni hao” (Hello!) when you shake hands. Any little knowledge of greetings in Chinese will bring a smile to a Chinese face whether you are meeting with a government official, a business colleague or even ordering meals at restaurants. The Chinese appreciate people showing interests in Chinese culture and language. The most useful Chinese expressions might be: hello “ni hao”, “nin hao” (respectful); thank you “xiexie”; cheers (toast) “gan bei”; goodbye “zaijian”.

It is more polite to greet senior leaders and elders first. Remember, the social hierarchy is one of the most important elements in China. Addressing someone by their designation or professional title is one of the utmost essential things for a formal business relationship, because Chinese highly value rank and status. In Chinese, the name precedes the title: for instance Liu Jianguo, Manager Liu, will be Liu Jingli in Chinese (Jingli means Manager). China is a high power distance culture; therefore title and status are rather crucial separating elements in many occasions. Use the title whenever possible, even during unofficial meetings or dinners unless the person asked you to call them by their first name. Director, president, manager, Professor, Dr., etc in front of a surname is often used, and sometimes they might be offended when they are called by first names. People have an expectation and acceptance that leaders will separate them from the group and it is accepted by the society as a part of their cultural heritage. Furthermore, age is also an important element to differentiate greetings, as per an old saying “the old horse will know the way”, which means older people are considered smarter than younger ones. Small gestures will make a difference, for instance, shaking hands with a little bow and not standing stiff, and offering seats to elders.

“Hugging and kissing” culture often belongs to western countries, for instance, French, Spanish, Italian and Swiss people are most likely kiss two or three times on cheeks to greet. In China, however, shaking hands is more common; people do not hug and kiss during greetings, even among families and good friends. Solid and firm handshakes in the West are common to show confidence and acknowledgement, but Chinese might prefer weaker but sometimes rather long handshakes for western tastes. A handshake between a male and a female can be awkward sometimes. A squeezing handshake of a man with a woman, especially unmarried young ladies, might appear rude. Likewise an unmarried Chinese girl is likely to have a very soft handshake with a man because she does not want to appear too forward and unladylike.

BUSINESS CARD EXCHANGE

In the business greeting, a business card is an absolute necessity before the meeting; preferably both in Chinese and English on both sides within a decent card case. After handshakes, the business card exchange is an art to keep in mind, especially for business people; always stand up and present or accept a business card with *both* hands, and do not shove someone’s business card into your back pocket. Furthermore, do not put the business card into your wallet and then stick it into your hip pocket, because it means you will sit on it with disrespect. Never use one hand to give or receive business cards or gifts. Never leave your own business cards on the desk for people to pick them up instead of presenting them yourself with two hands; otherwise nobody will take you seriously.

The Chinese state their last name first followed by the given name, for example, Wang Jianguo in Chinese would be Jianguo Wang in the western style, Wang as the family name. Women do not follow their husbands’ names after marriages; however, it is acceptable for westerners to address a married woman in the western form, such as Ms. Li can be called as Mrs. Wang (Wang tai tai in Chinese) if her husband is Mr. Wang. Interestingly, many Chinese adopt western first names, such as David Liu. In that case, they may ask you to call them David.

After receiving a business card, you need to read through it and act as if you were interested in it, and possibly start some kind of small talk by commenting on the company location, fame, or the person's position. Such small gestures that demonstrate a basic understanding of what is considered polite can go a long way towards impressing potential business partners and can distinguish you from competitors.

SMALL TALK

Before a business meeting, small talk might take place. This is an important part of business meetings in China and can feature a number of topics, including weather, art, food, shopping, places of interest, etc. They think that small talk will establish instant rapport with anyone you meet and quickly build a relationship that profits both, and small talk might also turn into important deals. A lot of time might be spent on finding common ground and understanding on minor topics, but at the very end, these few minutes might also be very valuable, so be patient.

China has a particularism culture, the focus being more on relationships and trust. Individuals from universalist cultures such as the United States, Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom should not regard personal, get-to-know-you attitudes as mere small talk, since this is concerned with developing relationships and trust. Do not be surprised when asked personal questions about age, marriage, family and income, because the questions are considered seeking common ground. Try to avoid sensitive topics such as the situation in Tibet, Xinjiang and even Taiwan, politics, the Cultural Revolution, human rights, democracy, important governors or leaders, the Tiananmen tragedy of 1989 and religion. Avoid criticizing Communism, even if the Chinese start such topics.

2 BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS & GUANXI

Guanxi describes the basic dynamic in personalized networks of influence, and is a central idea in Chinese society. In Western media, the pinyin Romanization of this Chinese word is becoming more widely used instead of the two common translations – ”connections” and ”relationships” – as neither of those terms sufficiently reflects the wide cultural implications that guanxi describes. Closely related concepts include that of ganqing, a measure which reflects the depth of feeling within an interpersonal relationship; renqing, the moral obligation to maintain the relationship, and the idea of ”face” – mianzi – meaning social status, propriety, prestige, or more realistically a combination of all three.

- Wikipedia

Guanxi is literally translated as relationships, but it is not the same definition as in the western culture. It is not simply the connection with people from whom you have got some business cards, having done business with once or twice. Guanxi for the Chinese means mutually shared obligations. For example, once you have received a favor from Mr. Wang, when his friend Liu comes to you for help, you are obligated to give a hand even though you do not want to or against your interests, because you owe Mr. Wang a favor. After a while, you can ask help from Liu’s friend X, your new guanxi. This is the simplest example of how guanxi works, but in reality it is far more complicated and needs a lifetime to learn and develop it even for the Chinese. In another words, guanxi means a second way for one to get ahead through knowing someone in a position of power who can provide better opportunities and privileges. Guanxi and mianzi may very well decide whether a business succeeds or not in China.

3 GIFT GIVING

Gifts are rather important for creating and building *guanxi* in China. Gifts express friendship, and they can symbolize hopes for good future business, the successful conclusion of an effort, or appreciation for a favor. It is worthwhile to choose gifts carefully before you embark on a trip to China.

Gift such as foreign cigarettes, fine whisky and quality wines are easily acceptable, but not food items. Gifts with a company logo or a country characterization are favourable. Number 8 is the luckiest. Always wrap gifts, mostly with red and gold, but never with white paper. Gift-giving taboos are phonologically linked to “separation” and “death” in Chinese society: it is better not to give clocks, straw sandals, storks, cranes, handkerchiefs, anything white, blue or black, number 4 or 4 of anything. Anything sharp such as knives and scissors resemble threats to *guanxi*, unless the gift giver and the recipient have a strong personal relationship, and explain what meanings the special gift delivers in their own culture.

There are some other concerns as well. When you offer a gift, it is more acceptable to say you're giving it on behalf of your company. It is important to always honour the highest ranked person, so they will be the individual you actually present the gift, stating you want them to accept it on behalf of their company. This gesture, company to company, will normally avoid unnecessary embarrassment or impoliteness. If you have several gifts to present, never give the same item to people of different rank or status. The more expensive gifts should be offered to the more senior or higher ranked persons. Typically one person should not be singled out to receive a special gift, especially in front of a group. If you've established a good working relationship with someone and want to give a gift, it is wise to offer it in private as a gesture of your friendship, not business.

From the Chinese perspective, people avoid appearing too eager to receive gifts, and this is the reason why they normally do not open gifts in front of others. Likewise, do not open gifts from the Chinese unless they encourage you to do so.

4 MEETING CUSTOMS

If you are having meetings with a Chinese team of people, it is wise to make sure that your status matches theirs. If you are going over to China and you are, for instance, an assistant manager in the sales department, do not invite the CEO of a company to a meeting, because it would be inappropriate. However, you can have a meeting with people at a comparable level with yourself and ask for an opportunity to visit the head of the company in his office. Remember that this would not be a meeting, but a visit. The term “visit”, “bai fang” in Chinese, indicates a visit with respects. It will be proper to bring a gift from your home country, for such occasions, something unique and touristy, but not anything large and expensive, for instance an Iittala glass bird from Finland. Something that comes from afar can be put on their desk, so other people can see that a “foreigner” came over and gave this gift. In a sense, it means you are paying tribute to this great businessman.

When you do host a business meeting with a team of Chinese people, the respectable appearance of the meeting’s surroundings is paramount in private settings. It will reflect your own dignity as well as theirs. It is even better to serve hot tea (by someone else, not you), unlike the Finnish style of self-service tea or coffee before or during meetings. When the Chinese group arrives for the meeting, give the seat of the honour to the first person who coming in, since they most probably have the highest rank. Of course, greetings come first. As a start, you need to give a speech to express your appreciation for their attendance and time. Using titles is crucial, for example: “Welcome Wang President and his delegation group! I am honoured to have a chance to meet you today” and so on. For the meeting, PowerPoint in Chinese is highly recommended, because many Chinese businessmen do not speak English.

What do you need to remember during informal meetings? Westerners might invite business partners to golf courses, but typically in China, informal meetings mean lunch or dinner. During lunch you can discuss work, but dinners are more elaborate and a must for building a stronger relationship. Even for informal meetings, it is always polite and wise to use personal titles and greet formally. If you are a host for a dinner, you can behave as in formal meetings; make sure you have ordered sufficient and decent dishes for your guests and toast from time to time to express your appreciation of them or other similar sentiments. However, if you are a guest, you can just relax and enjoy the meal.

Smoking is allowed in almost everywhere in China. Do not be surprised if someone is smoking without permission during meetings and meals. Many Chinese people consider smoking, usually among men, the right thing to do in a business environment. Let them do it! It is considered rude to tell your host not to smoke when he intends to. Moreover, the Chinese often offer others cigarettes before they smoke, otherwise they are considered impolite. Women smokers are not widely welcomed. Traditionally, female smokers used to be considered uncivilized. Although nowadays the general attitude might be changing, it is still not favorable.

5 MIANZI & NEGOTIATION STYLES

There are no other terms more important than "mianzi" when interacting with Chinese people. The term literally means "face", mainly in relation to respect or pride. When you embarrass, put down, insult or demean a Chinese person, especially in front of others, you have made them to lose mianzi – "face". Never make your business partners, or anyone you want to have further contact with, lose face! Frankly speaking, guanxi and mianzi are the two golden keys to open the business gates to China.

Negotiators may use much more time in China to build up guanxi and trust, discussing only broad objectives during the first meetings. Chinese believe that a good relationship must be established before task issues can be discussed and that as the social relationship develops, those issues will be resolved.

Negotiation in Chinese business is quite different from the western style, which is one of the most crucial elements to be taken into careful consideration for achieving a successful deal. Whoever you are dealing with wants to feel that they have come out on top. That means there has to be some room for negotiation. You cannot just give someone a price and expect them to take that price, but instead you should allow them to negotiate. They will be satisfied only if they have negotiated and feel that they have "won". So a Chinese person likes the western "win-win" concept to be "I win". In order to accomplish that, you need to start with a higher price than expected and give them some leverage to cut it down. Try not to set an unrealistic price, but a price including products services and extra flexible space. If you are talking to the owner of the company, he wants to cut the price just to save money; however, if you are talking to a manager, then this process is even more important since it is a good chance for them to show their boss that they saved money for the company. You need to consider this negotiation style before you give an initial proposal to anyone in the Chinese realm of business.

People tend to avoid public conflict and confrontation, but they also tend to put less emphasis on the written word. Instead of saying “no” directly, Chinese people might say “we will see,” or “let us think about it”. Chinese have many ways of saying “no” without saying “no”. An objection can be a request for more information before making a decision. In my point of view, two objections mean that there is a disagreement, but on the other hand anything but a straight “yes” might represent a “no”.

Chinese negotiators tend to use language that is indirect and ambiguous. They expect their partners to pick up on it and to understand unarticulated intentions and feelings, subtle gestures, and other nonverbal or environmental cues. When the negotiators are criticized directly by their partners, they will take it personally and might refuse to continue and even stop the cooperation if the “losing face” situation is serious.

Communication is centered on emotions and persuasion. Speech is unhurried, as persuasion takes time. The main emphasis is not laid on the passing on of information, but in the context of both speaking and listening.

6 CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

Contracts and agreements reached may be changed in the last minute. It is crucial to check all content of the contract before signing the agreement, of course similarly to all business. The Chinese legal system is unique, newly-developed and constantly changing. In 2008 alone, the employment law in China and the entire tax code were both revised. In the field of foreign investment, various changes to the laws significantly altering the way transactions must be structured have been going on since 2005. Therefore, some negotiation procedures might bring surprises and take longer than expected.

In most western countries, the signature of a senior executive or a company officer is sufficient to make the document legal and binding. In China, however, a signature by someone does not make anything legal; instead, the company must also “chop” all contracts, invoices and other legal documents. A chop is a stamp pressed into an ink pad with the company’s or person’s name on it. Each company authorises one person to keep their unique chop for sealing. In practice, there is still a chance to see contents added to a multi-page contract after the company seal has been utilized. Many Chinese executives consider written contracts as virtually less meaningful than personal commitments between associates.

7 FOLLOW-UP

Doing a follow-up with potential business partners after your delegation's visit is essential for building strong and long-lasting business relationships. This is especially important in China, where being business partners usually means having a good personal connection as well.

Most often, the schedules of business delegations are carefully arranged beforehand by coordinators. However in China, one meeting is often not enough to warrant a steady cooperation – a few extra steps are required. It is also important to send your Chinese business associates a token of gratitude of some kind after the trip. Follow-ups might be postponed or even neglected due to hectic schedules; this means that the efforts made to identify the best potential customers before and during the visit will go largely unrewarded.

A successful follow-up is something that keeps you on your partner's mind, projects the feeling that you're a useful person to know and shows the importance of your business and personal relationship in a very subtle way. Of course, in China you cannot be too blunt and direct about it – it might come off as begging and being a nuisance. Give an occasional phone call, send a fax or an e-mail with something potentially interesting to them, or better yet, a letter or a package. This extra step most probably won't take much of your time, but will benefit you greatly in building a much stronger business and personal relationship.

8 DINING ETIQUETTE

“Food in China is tradition, folklore, mythology, ritual, and religious observance as well as nutrition. Nowhere else in the world is the daily table so entwined with, so much a part of, a people’s national fabric.”

- Eileen Yin-Fei Lo, *Chinese Kitchen*, 1999

Some Chinese use to say: “When foreigners are happy, they dance. When we are happy, we eat!” It is fair to say that one of the most traditional pastimes in China is eating. The form of the meal is ancient, and thus there are rules and etiquette to follow. The Chinese do not expect you to know everything about proper banquet manners, but they will certainly appreciate it if you are able to express some knowledge on the subject. Do not underestimate the importance of participating in dining and after-dinner entertainment. It is an excellent way to build and strengthen *guanxi*.

INVITATION

Invite your Chinese counterparts to elaborate meals to show your generosity and willingness to strengthen your *guanxi* with them. If it is an unofficial private invitation to your business partner or a Chinese friend, you need to understand that a Chinese person’s polite refusal does not mean a real rejection. For instance, when you invite President Wang to a lunch or dinner, at first he might “refuse”, but you need to insist around three times to show your sincerity. It is a cultural way to show that they are not greedy but humble, not jumping into the invitation. As a westerner, you do not need to do the same thing when invited, but to remember to reciprocate the favour. For an official banquet invitation, however, there is no refusal. In these cases, the invitations are sent and place cards will show your seat.

THE ENTRANCE

When you are acting as the host and going together to the meal, remember to hold open the door wide to let your Chinese counterpart to walk through before you. In China, it is more like “important people first” as opposed to “ladies first” in the west. In the case of an appointment or arranged meeting where you are going to meet at a restaurant while you are the host, most importantly you should arrive before your guests and have everything ready. On the other hand, do not arrive early when you are the guest. If you invite a General Manager of a company, expect them to bring along a couple of deputies and assistants to the event. If your delegation is invited by the Chinese the head of your delegation should enter the room first on most occasions.

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Does it matter where you sit? Yes, it is stricter in China than in the west for a formal banquet. Westerners usually sit at a long table and the host sits at the head of the table. Have you been to a Chinese restaurant in China? Chinese tables are almost always round, so where is the head of the table?

Seating arrangements are normally based on rank. The guest of honour will be in the place facing the entrance and furthest from the door, usually with their back to the wall. The principal host will sit to the principal guest’s immediate left. Lower-ranking delegation members are seated in descending order around the tables, alternating with Chinese hosts.

As a host, you must think in advance and make sure that the most senior and important people have the prime seats at the table and are seated next to people of equal stature. You should also try to ensure that they will find their dinner companions entertaining and engaging. Consider their language, personality and background. Being a guest will be much easier – you will be personally guided to sit or find your seat by your name patch in a formal banquet.

ORDERING MEALS

If you are invited, it is most often the case that by the time you arrive, the host has already ordered all dishes. Even when you arrive at the same time, let the host do the ordering! When you are asked, you can naturally tell the hosts your preferences. However, if you invite others to an elegant meal you need to arrive earlier and order before your guests' arrival. Make sure to order more than enough food for everyone to eat, otherwise it is not polite. As a host, your main objective is to take extremely good care of everyone else. From the minute they enter the room, you should make sure they are guided to their seats and have something to drink. Another worthy tip to remember is that it is more prestigious to order some sea food, not only beef, pork or vegetables, because sea food means luxury in Chinese cuisine. Chinese people do not have dessert after meals like westerners. Nowadays, it is more popular to have a platter of various fresh fruit as a dessert.

Do not order the rice and noodles until the very end. All other dishes are served and eaten first, and in the end you have either noodles or rice to make sure that everybody gets full. This is a better way to do it, because it is an indication to your guests that you are going to give them a nice meal, not just fill them up with cheap rice and noodles.

DO NOT FORGET TOASTING

Whether you are the host or a guest, toasting is a valuable way to build stronger bonds and strengthen guanxi with Chinese partners during meals. Toasting takes place throughout the meal. Toasting in Chinese dining etiquette is different from that of most cultures in the west; do not try to get attention with a spoon on a glass to make a speech. Normally, you can toast to the whole group or a specific individual anytime during the meal and share your appreciation of your partners, positive feelings of cooperation and so on. It is an excellent time to network, so be active!

Everyone toasts to everyone else at the table. However, toasting is an art to practice. For instance, when you toast to President Wang who is higher ranked than you, it is considered polite to stand up and look at him, and make sure your glass rim is slightly lower than his when offering the toast. It shows you are humble and inferior to him. If there are multiple tables

in the room, go from table to table offering the toast. Safe topics for toasts are friendship, pledges for cooperation, the desire to reciprocate hospitality and mutual benefit. Do not underestimate the importance of participating in dining and after-dinner entertainment. It is an excellent way to build guanxi.

WHO PAYS THE BILL?

If you are hosting a dinner, it is your duty to intercept the bill before it reaches the table in order to assure others that you are willing and able to pay for it. Others will show their respect and appreciation for you by being insistent that they pay. During a formal meal, it is better to either arrange the bill to be paid by your assistant or to leave the room shortly by the end of meal and pay at the counter. Thus the “fight” for paying the bill is avoided.

If you are a guest at a formal meal, it is impolite for you to wrestle for the bill. Regardless, for an informal dinner with business partners or friends, it is a point of pride to “fight” for the bill from the waiter and pay for it. Winning the right to pay the bill demonstrates your goodwill and affection toward the people who shared the meal with you. The guests should not get the chance to pay the bill, as normally turns are taken to invite each other to meals. However, it also depends on your social relationship between your Chinese counterparts. In any case, it is very rude to split the bills; either you pay or others do instead.

NOT TO DO!

If you are eating in a group and there is a dish everyone is sharing (which is customary), try not to use your chopsticks or the spoon you are eating with to get food from common dishes. Use the serving spoon to get the food into your bowl or plate and then use your own spoon or chopsticks to eat. This is a part of the required etiquette for a formal banquet, but in fact many Chinese use their eating chopsticks for this purpose. It is wiser to watch your host to determine your action. After the meal, when using a toothpick in public, cover your mouth with your hand. Never leave your chopsticks sticking up in the left-over rice in the bottom of your bowl. This is what people do at shrines when offering a meal to their ancestors’ ghosts.

9 CULTURAL ELEMENTS

CHINESE MODESTY

Modesty is one of the most important cultural characteristics in China and the Chinese are taught to be modest from a very early age. In China, when someone is praised “you speak English very well”, they would probably say “oh, I’m not that good” rather than “thank you”.

Many Chinese people are embarrassed by compliments, and when complimented, they quickly deflect it by playing it down. This is part of the modesty that rules Chinese behaviour and makes Chinese people appear more humble than most westerners.

THE SYNCHRONIC CULTURE

Chinese people usually do several things simultaneously. Time is flexible and intangible. It is also a past-orientated culture, and there is always talk of the nation’s glorious history, for example. Chinese people sometimes address some meetings with short descriptions of history like “China has five thousand years of history...” In the Chinese culture, people tend to do more than one activity at a time, appointments are approximate and may be changed at a moment’s notice, and schedules are generally subordinate to relationships and guanxi. They can often stop what they are doing to meet and greet individuals coming into their office, or even change all plans according to the orders or commands from the upper level of the workplace hierarchy.

Normally the Chinese are punctual and they have learned a lot from westerners in recent years. Here are some Chinese sayings about time: “Time is money”, “Time flies. Time and tides wait for no men” and “I spent the time on my work while others are having coffee”.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE

The Chinese culture is diffused. Both public and private spaces are similar in size and individuals guard their public space carefully, because the entry into the public space affords entry into the private space as well. Therefore work and private life are often closely linked. In addition, when those from other cultures do business with the Chinese, they should respect a person's title, age, and background connections. They also should not get impatient when someone is being indirect. In the daily Chinese life, going out for some official dinner at any time of the week is quite normal, especially if you are an ordinary employee in the workplace and invited to a meal, since then you better show up; otherwise it means you are not "giving face" to your boss.

10 BEHAVIOURS

BODY LANGUAGE

Eye contact is not necessary during a conversation with the Chinese. In fact, it may be considered too direct and rude. Lacking of eye contact does not mean they are less honest or focused as in the western culture.

Touching or pointing at the tip of one's own nose with a raised forefinger means "it is me and I am the one". Using an open hand to cover one's mouth while speaking means confidentiality and secrecy. Using both hands when offering something to another person means respect.

The Chinese comfort zone regarding distance may be somewhat too close for many westerners' comfort. Do not be surprised if the Chinese will simply step closer.

IMPROPER BEHAVIOUR

Do not hug, backslap or put an arm around someone's shoulder unless you have a rather good relationship with them. Don't lose your temper. You can be firm as long as you remain polite, but to lose one's temper is an absolute loss of face.

Pointing or calling someone with the index finger, finger snapping and whistling are considered rude both in China and the west. In general, proper western manners are often enough in China. Meanwhile, be aware that you might be annoyed by these kinds of behaviour by the Chinese themselves: belching or spitting on the street, lack of consideration when smoking and failure to ask permission to smoke, slurping food, and talking while eating.

II FINAL WORDS

A quote from an unknown source might conclude this short guide properly: “In the end we are all separate: our stories, no matter how similar, come to a fork and diverge. We are drawn to each other because of our similarities, but it is our differences we must learn to respect.”

It is not directly related with business etiquette and success, but as human beings, it is common sense for us to treat others the same way as we expect to be treated. Do not try too hard to “go Chinese.” Chinese people do not expect you to know all about their etiquette and they make allowances for foreigners. Keep the guidelines found in this book in mind, but above all, be yourself.

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