

THE GLOBAL GUIDE TO BETTER-QUETTE  
**HOW TO MASTER BUSINESS  
ETIQUETTE AROUND THE WORLD**



## CONCEPT

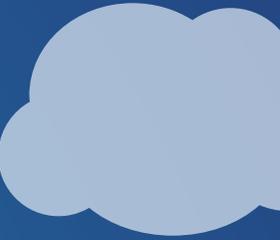
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The global business world is now more connected than ever. Advances in technology and transportation has opened up new markets, allowing us to do business with international clients and colleagues 24/7.

Research conducted by Booking.com for Business has revealed that as well as offering people the fantastic experiences of new countries and cultures, business travel isn't without its challenges.

Today's executive has to be a global chameleon, in tune with different cultures, customs and the nuances of doing business anywhere. You need to bring your 'A-Game' to every meeting.

In today's global economy you only get one chance to make that crucial, first impression. And with preferred practices varying from region to region, it's easy to make that business faux pas which could break the deal.



“ At Booking.com for Business, we pride ourselves on our tailored offering, allowing business bookers and travellers to seamlessly book and manage business trips. And in the same way, executives need to tailor their behaviour to the country they're doing business in.

To make sure you're fully armed for international business, we've partnered with etiquette experts from around the globe to bring you the ultimate guide to business etiquette. Covering the tricky waters of formal greetings, corporate entertaining, what (and what not) to wear, business meeting protocol, how to act and behave with colleagues and much, much more - your next business win is just around the corner! ”

Ripsy Bandourian, Director of Product Development,  
Booking.com for Business





# USA



“ I have a German client who describes Americans as peaches. Soft on the outside - friendly and easy to talk to - but hard on the inside, harder to get to know on a deeper level. ”

Arden Clise, Author and President of Clise Etiquette



In the US, the typical work day is 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 or 6:00 p.m.

Meetings usually take place between these hours, but 7:00 a.m. breakfast meetings or evening dinner meetings aren't uncommon, as people look to maximise business opportunities. Always remember to be punctual!



Most people will be introduced by their first and last names. It is acceptable to address a stranger by his first name. However, it's best to start with a title (Mr, Ms, Dr) and the person's family name until you are told otherwise. A woman's marital status is not important or noted in business so you should always address women as 'Ms'.



Americans value a firm handshake accompanied with a smile and eye contact. Always stand when shaking hands unless everyone is already seated. "Hello" or "Hi" are suitable greetings. "Good morning" is appropriate when acknowledging clients or colleagues for the day. "Good afternoon" and "Good evening" are used less often.



US business wardrobes are generally more casual with most companies following a business casual dress code. Suits aren't often worn and typically only in more conservative industries such as finance, law or accounting.



When it comes to business cards, these are exchanged frequently in the US. As a rule, if at a networking event, exchange cards at the end of the conversation, or after someone shows an interest in you or your company. At meetings, business cards are exchanged before the start of the meeting. The exchange is not formal.



American executives don't do a lot of socialising after work. If they do, it's typically on a Thursday or Friday to celebrate the end of the work week. Gatherings take place between 5:00 and 7:00p.m - usually "happy hour," when drinks and appetisers are discounted. But be warned that this isn't an excuse to get sozzled! People tend to only stay for one or two drinks and then head home for dinner and family obligations.



Americans are impressed by smart, creative people who get the job done quickly and accurately. Business gifts aren't common, apart from around Christmas. Useful business related gifts, wine or baskets of fruit should be well received.



# EUROPE



“ I have a German client who describes Germans as coconuts: hard on the outside—more formal, brusque and less outwardly friendly. But once you get to know them, they are soft on the inside, and they show this through their warmth and deep friendships. ”

Arden Clise, Author and President of Clise Etiquette



In Europe, meetings typically don't take place before 10:00 a.m. or after 3:00 p.m. (with some exceptions including the U.K). Make sure you arrive on time but understand that your contact in some regions may show up late to indicate their level of authority. They're the boss so don't take it personally.



Business cards are usually only given out in business settings and after formal introductions. Give your card to everyone you meet in business situations. If possible, it's best to have the second side of a card translated in the other country's language. When receiving a card, take time to review it before putting it away.



When it comes to office wear, keep it formal in Europe, unless your research tells you otherwise. Men should wear quality suits and ties. Women can choose from a skirt suit or a stylish, but conservative dress or skirt with a jacket.



Lunch and after work socialising is very common in many European countries, offering a good way to strengthen relationships with your colleagues and clients. Dinner meetings are often focused more on getting to know you rather than conducting business.

If your client invites you out your luck is also in – as hosts will usually foot the bill, but do show willing and offer to pay for a round of drinks!



Don't rush into discussing business. It's important to socialise first. Follow the lead of your host when it comes to moving from social to business conversation. Meetings tend to be focused more on building relationships, idea exchange and discussion rather than making quick decisions.



Connect online with European clients and colleagues through LinkedIn. You can also see what associates are up to on Twitter but do stay clear of connecting with colleagues, clients or bosses on Facebook. It's too personal, so not appropriate.



# CHINA



“ In China, never, ever join in on somebody else’s karaoke song! ”

Sara Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita



In Eastern business culture, it’s also important to be punctual to meetings. Unless you fancy flying solo avoid scheduling meetings around Chinese New Year (January/February) and Mooncake Festival (September/October) when most take holiday.



When doing business in China, learn to say “xing hui” upon meeting someone (honoured to meet you) which should instantly endear you to the Chinese and is much more advanced than the stereotypical “ni hao” they would expect. Accompany this by putting your hand up, palm facing the person in question and a bow of the head and you can’t fail to be a hit with the locals!



The first cultural and business faux pas that foreigners make in China (and in East Asia generally) are to do with business cards – either forgetting to carry them, not carrying enough, or giving them out incorrectly. When travelling to China, bring plenty of extra business cards with you. These should be kept spotless and given out with both hands making sure your name is facing the person.



Chinese businessmen dress nearly uniformly in a black suit (sometimes forgoing the suit jacket) and white shirt, tie optional depending on the industry. Women dress less formally in blouses and skirts.



In China, WeChat is the go-to platform to connect online and it’s perfectly acceptable to ask at the end of a meeting. “May I add your WeChat?” and ‘scan’ your contact’s QR code. Liking or commenting on someone’s WeChat Moments is a great way to build relationships.



Twitter, and its Chinese counterpart Weibo, are used to make public broadcasts. Anyone can follow anyone – friend, work acquaintance, stranger or fan. While Twitter is still popular in the West, Weibo usage is tapering off in China, although still the go-to platform to follow a celebrity – unless you are lucky enough to get their WeChat!



In China the most senior person on the team is king of the meeting, doing the talking for everyone while his colleagues sit in silence and take notes.

Northern Chinese (typically Beijing) bosses bring an army of subordinates to meetings and meals, like an entourage. Initial meetings are usually centered on drinking tea and getting to know each other first, and often one can sit around for two hours without discussing any business or knowing the purpose of the meeting. Southern Chinese style (typically Shanghainese) is more efficient, with a boss coming on his own or bringing just one member of staff, and getting down to business immediately before any social chat.



In China, the most popular evening activity is karaoke or KTV. Unlike in the West where everyone sings together in a rowdy fashion, in China it’s just one person’s performance and you should never, ever interrupt or jump in on somebody else’s moment to shine. The most elegant way to recover from offending your Chinese colleagues is an immediate apology and a good natured smile.



# JAPAN



“ *The Japanese are polite to an extreme – you may have grossly offended them but they would never let you know it.* ”

Sara Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita



Unlike Americans and Latin Americans, Asian people are comfortable with silence. Don't be worried if they take a long pause in a meeting before replying. This is a sign of respect and doesn't mean they aren't in agreement with you. In return, remember to always give your associate time to answer so don't interrupt or try to finish their sentences.



In Japan, in all business meetings the most senior person on the team should enter the room first or greet (or be greeted first) and sit in the middle of the table. Rank is important and needs to be made clear.



When exchanging business cards, stand up, turn the text towards the receiver, use both hands, and hand them one by one to each person individually. Once you've handed it out, make a low bow from the waist and take time to read all the information on the other person's card as a sign of respect.



Gift giving is very important in business. Food like fruit or cakes is the safest bet – such as a local delicacy from your home country. But don't be offended if your gift is put aside as opening it immediately is seen as greedy.



Japanese people are methodically neat and tidy at all times. Bear this in mind if your contact invites you out to a restaurant. Don't be surprised if you're asked to take your shoes off to step on a special mat (tatami) for cleanliness. When it comes to sitting down as a guest you'll be given the most comfortable seat!



Watch out for one particular gesture that confuses a lot of Westerners – waving your hand in front of your face actually signals refusal!



With Japanese food comes its own set of rules. Hold your rice bowl with your left hand and bring it up to your mouth while scooping food into your mouth with your chopsticks in the right. Unlike other cultures where noisy eating is seen as rude, making slurping noises is actually a sign of appreciation for the local food. So go for it and slurp away to your heart's content!

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# LATIN AMERICA



“ *South Americans are full of energy, warmth, dynamism – return it to them.* ”

Sara Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita



In all Latin American countries, arriving up to half an hour late is common as the attitude towards time is less rigid. When making appointments, try your hand at the local lingo by asking ‘la hora inglesa’, ‘o la hora español?’ (English or Spanish time?) – just make sure you perfect that accent beforehand!



In Brazil, Portuguese is spoken and speaking Spanish will show you up as a tourist! Learning a few phrases can make all the difference. Try “Ola, tudo bem?” (Hello, is everything well?) and “Como vai?” (How are you?). When leaving say “Tschau” (Goodbye).



In Latin America your business card should be printed in English and Spanish. At any meeting, exchange business cards with everyone. Present your card with the Spanish side up. In Brazil, use Portuguese instead of Spanish.



Be aware that business style can differ throughout South America. In Latin America for example, Argentina is the most formal while Brazilians are more casual dressers. In general they’re keen followers of fashion so you can adopt a more contemporary style.



South American culture is warm and passionate with friends greeting each other with an embrace and kiss on the cheek. Formal greetings in business settings start with a handshake and a slight nod to show respect. Use ‘Senor’ and ‘Senora’ (Spanish), followed by the surname. In Argentina ‘Buenos dias’ (good morning) and ‘Buenas tardes’ (good afternoon) are most commonly used.



Latin Americans expect you to make small talk before a business meeting as they want to get to know you on a personal level by warming up with social conversation. Come prepared to offer details of your personal life. Show photos of your family, talk about your favourite sport (ideally football), or tell a funny story about something that happened to you on your trip.

And make sure you can keep up with them! South Americans speak quickly so expect things to be fast paced and highly animated, with frequent interruptions, exclamations and a lot of physical contact (standing close to you with frequent touching during the conversation).



Don’t shy away from eye contact (which can be intense), flinch from their gestures or be offended by interruptions. These are all seen as a sign of chemistry and enthusiasm so you could be on the right track to sealing that deal!



# THE MIDDLE EAST



“ *In the Middle East, indulgence is a sign of respect and luxury. Expect to be spoiled by your host – or if you are host, then you should spoil them* ”

Sara Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita



Warmth in personal relations is important to Middle Eastern cultures, and greetings are often elaborate. In business, men will handshake and generally a man greets a woman with a handshake if the woman extends her hand first. If meeting for the first time in a formal setting you'll probably be referred to as 'Mister X' or 'Miss X' as a sign of respect.



Business visits usually start off with light conversation over coffee or tea to establish confidence and trust.



In the Middle East, as in most countries, guests should not arrive empty handed. Gifts are a reflection of your financial position as well as your relationship. Similar to Asian cultures, you should give and receive gifts with both hands or only the right hand, as the left is considered unclean in the Arab world. Don't be offended if your gift is unopened – it's generally left aside, so business can begin.



One important rule of business is to NEVER contradict an elder in front of others. This is considered a sign of disrespect and is a big faux pas.



Accept the invitation if you're asked out for dinner. Those in the Middle East prepare elaborate and expensive meals when they have guests so you'll be in for a real treat. When it comes to dining etiquette, be prepared to get stuffed!



If you're really full, don't feel you have to finish everything. Left-over food is seen as a big compliment to the host for providing so well. Your host will literally keep feeding you by putting food on your plate! In restaurants, food is left as a sign of wealth (indicating one can afford to leave food behind).



# INDIA



“ Indians are known for their mysterious head wobble which can mean anything from “good” to “I understand” – it is commonly used to respond in the affirmative. ”

Sara Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita



Meetings should be arranged well in advance. Avoid meetings near, or on national holidays such as Independence Day, Diwali or either of the two Eids and avoid the heat by scheduling between October and March.



Similar to Chinese people, Indians avoid saying ‘no’ directly. Look out for them not answering, or agreeing but then not following up. This is their own way of saying no.



Impress Indian business associates by surprising them and greeting them with their own traditional greeting. Press your palms together, give a slight bow and simply say ‘Namaste’.



When doing business in India, business cards should be exchanged at the first meeting. It is a good idea to have it translated on one side into Hindi. Be sure to receive and give with your right hand. Make sure the card is put away respectfully and not simply pushed into a pocket.



Women's privacy is held in high regards in India and cross gender touching is a no-no. However, Indian men will shake hands with Western men and women, and educated Indian women can shake hands as a courtesy. Politeness is very important and titles such as Professor, Doctor, or the suffix – ‘ji’ with a surname are used to show respect.



Meetings should always commence with some conversation. This is part of the ‘getting to know you’ process. Favourable topics of conversation are the latest business news, the fortunes of the Bombay Stock Exchange or cricket.



# SOUTH KOREA



“ Koreans care greatly about their external appearance, which explains their huge beauty and cosmetic surgery industry. Show up to your meeting well groomed. ”

Sara Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita



Ensure you book meetings well in advance and schedule between 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Avoid holidays like the Lunar New Year (around January/February) and the Moon Festival (around September/October) when many people are on holiday.



Don't forget to bring a gift. You'll likely receive one (although be sure to offer some resistance to accept!) from your South Korean business associates so bring something from home, such as local craftsmanship.



When doing business in South Korea men and women greet each other with a slight bow sometimes accompanied with a handshake. When handshaking, the right forearm is often propped up by the left hand. Western women doing business in South Korea will need to instigate a handshake with Korean men, as out of politeness, a hand will not be forthcoming!



In South Korea personal relationships generally take precedence over business. It could take many business trips to South Korea to reach an agreement or close a deal. The first meeting is generally used as a time to get to know each other, rather than focusing on business matters.



Business cards are exchanged frequently in South Korea, so bring a lot! When presenting it, use both hands. When given a card, study it before putting it away carefully. South Korean's view this as respectful.



# AUSTRALIA



“ My Australian client says Australians may be laid back but they are very outspoken. They are happy to voice their opinions, even if they lead to uncomfortable situations. ”

Arden Clise, Author and President of Clise Etiquette



The Australians are warm, friendly and unpretentious. It is perfectly acceptable to introduce yourself rather than needing to be introduced by someone else. “Hello” is the preferred greeting. Avoid “G’day,” which the Australians tire of hearing tourists overuse. Use full names when you first meet and introduce Australians. They will most likely ask you to call them by their first name rather quickly.



A firm handshake accompanied with strong eye contact at the beginning and end of a meeting is customary. Women may opt for a cheek kiss with one another rather than a handshake.



For initial meetings dress in formal business attire. However, because of the warm climate in most of Australia, business attire tends to be more informal. Jackets are typically not worn in the summer months and clothes may be made of lightweight fabrics. In the more tropical areas you may even see businessmen wear Bermuda shorts with a dress shirt and tie.



When interacting with Australians, it’s best to be modest. They aren’t easily impressed nor will they tolerate hype and high-pressure sales. Be direct, and keep presentations short and to the point.



Business cards are typically exchanged at an introduction, but don’t be offended if you don’t receive one. The business card exchange is not an important ritual like it is in much of Asia.



Gifts are rarely given in a business situation. However, if you happen to be invited to an Australian’s home you can bring a small gift such as flowers, chocolates or artisan food. Appreciated gifts from foreigners include something made in your home country, such as local craft.



Australians enjoy meeting after work any day of the week. Socialising at the pub is very common. Just be sure you take your turn buying a round. Be warned, business is rarely discussed in social situations. If you’re invited to dinner, assume it’s a social event and don’t bring up business unless your host does.



The Australians love to talk about sports. You’ll be impressive if you become familiar with Australian sports teams!

