



BUSINESS FAUX PAS & HOW TO RECOVER

**It's happened to us all at one point in time or another.
An embarrassing misstep in behaviour right in the middle
of a professional setting.**

In fact, one-third (32%) of business travellers have committed a cultural faux pas when travelling internationally for business, while nearly half (45%) have seen colleagues or business associates from other countries make a cultural faux pas when visiting their office¹.

Here are some common mistakes in business etiquette and how you can recover with grace and style from Etiquette Expert Elaine Swann, Sarah Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita and Arden Clise, Author and President of Clise Etiquette.

Mistake 1 - Incorrect attire

When travelling to another country, never assume what the appropriate attire might be. With over a third (36%) of business travellers not wearing the correct attire, do a bit of research on the business and its culture before travelling¹.

Call in advance and ask about the attire. Or take a look at the company's social media pages. You might find photos of employees in a variety of settings. If you find your wardrobe is not quite right, just apologise and make the necessary adjustments the next time you come into contact with them.

Etiquette Expert Elaine Swann



36%

of business travellers don't wear the correct attire.

Mistake 2 - Improper gestures

In many instances, the “okay” sign means that all is well. A business partner from another country or culture may not view the gesture as the same. In fact, hand motions like the “okay” sign and “thumbs up” symbol are quite offensive in some nations. The best way to recover from an improper hand gesture is to ask for pardoning and move on quickly. Most international partners will understand variations in culture and are willing to forgive such errors.

Etiquette Expert Elaine Swann



Mistake 3 - Jokes that fall flat

You can always tell when a joke isn't well received in a business setting because of the awkward silence and motions of discomfort that attendees give. Should you say something that is less than humorous during a business meeting, don't continue and instead, act as if you never presented the joke and move the conversation along to more professional matters. If you fear a relationship might be negatively affected, speak to the individual in private and offer a personal apology.

Etiquette Expert Elaine Swann



Mistake 4 - Incorrectly greeting a business associate

43% of global business travellers feel that not greeting a colleague appropriately is a common global faux pas¹. As a rule of thumb, it is always appropriate to address a superior by their last name in a business setting. You should refrain from referring to an individual by their first name unless they give you permission to do so. If you make this slip, just correct your mistake and continue with the conversation at hand.

Etiquette Expert Elaine Swann

43%

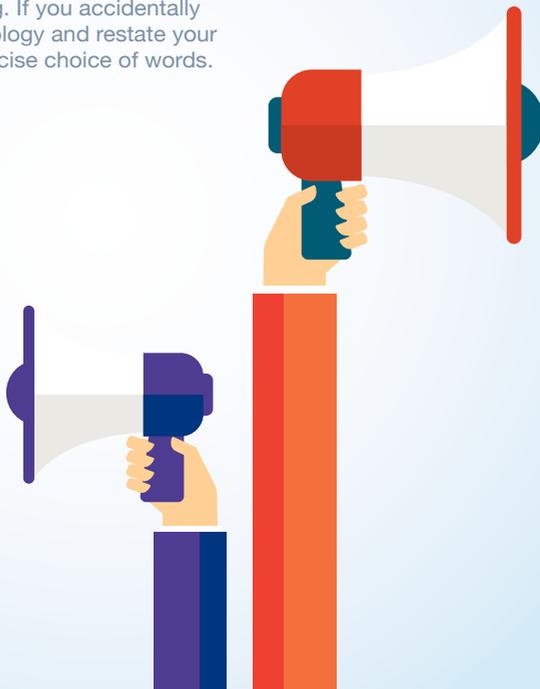
of global business travellers feel that not greeting a colleague appropriately is a common global faux pas¹



Mistake 5 - Using slang language or phrases

Slang phrases generally don't travel well. They are either not understood or viewed as insulting. If you accidentally use slang language, offer a quick apology and restate your sentence using a more clear and concise choice of words.

Etiquette Expert Elaine Swann



Mistake 6 - Handing out business cards

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 and have them handy upon meeting people in business or social situations.

Sarah Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita

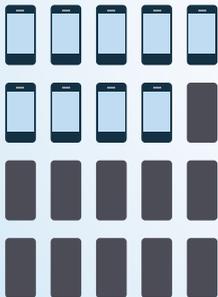


Mistake 7 - Being on your mobile phone during meetings

Globally, when it comes to what people think are the biggest business etiquette faux pas, almost half (46%) of business travellers feel that being on your mobile device during a meeting is the most offensive¹.

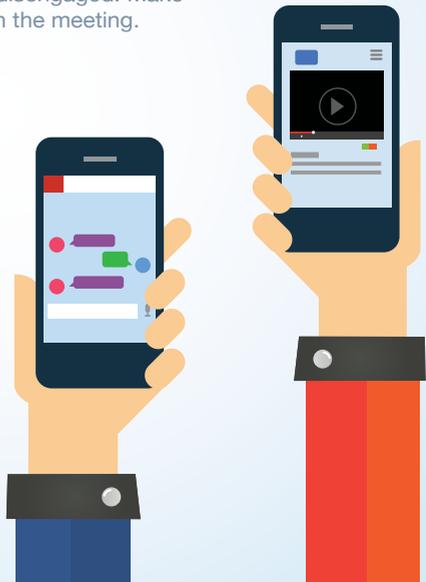
Being on your digital device makes you appear disengaged. Make sure you ask questions and take an active role in the meeting.

Arden Clise, Author and President of Clise Etiquette



46%

of business travellers feel that being on your mobile device during a meeting is the most offensive



Mistake 8 - Stealing the limelight

Over a quarter (27%) of Chinese business travellers feel that people most commonly commit a faux pas when socialising with colleagues or business associates¹.

In China, the most popular evening activity is karaoke or KTV. Unlike in the West where everyone sings together in a rowdy fashion, remember that in China it is literally one person's performance and you should never, ever interrupt or jump in on somebody else's performance.

The most elegant way to recover from offending your Chinese colleagues is an immediate apology and a good natured smile.

Sarah Jane Ho, Director of Institute Sarita



27%

of Chinese business travellers feel that people most commonly commit a faux pas when socialising with colleagues or business associates¹.



Did you know ?

When doing business in China, learn to automatically say “bu hao yi si” (excuse me, pardon me) which will endear you to all Chinese present, and you may accompany the phrase with a gesture of putting your hand up, palm facing away, and making a slight bow of the head at the same time. This is a conciliatory gesture.



不好意思

*Research commissioned by Booking.com and independently surveyed 4,555 men and women aged 18-65 who have travelled internationally for business four times or more in the past year across USA, UK, Germany, France, Spain, Japan, China and Italy. Research took place between 29th January - 11th February 2016.