

Cultural Etiquette

China

Greece

Hong Kong

India

Indonesia

Italy

Japan

Malaysia

Philippines

Singapore

Thailand

Vietnam

as taken from the following website:

http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/cultural_etiquette.htm

The Peoplehttp://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/cultural_etiquette.htm

Deeply rooted in Chinese society is the need to belong and conform to a unit, whether the family, a political party or an organization. The family is the focus of life for most Chinese. Age and rank are highly respected. However, to the dismay of older people, today's young people are rapidly modernizing, wearing blue jeans and sunglasses, drinking Coke and driving motorbikes.

Meeting and Greeting

Shake hands upon meeting. Chinese may nod or bow instead of shaking hands, although shaking hands has become increasingly common.

When introduced to a Chinese group, they may greet you with applause. Applaud back.

Senior persons begin greetings. Greet the oldest, most senior person before others. During group introductions, line up according to seniority with the senior person at the head of the line.

Names and Titles

Use family names and appropriate titles until specifically invited by your Chinese host or colleagues to use their given names.

Address the Chinese by Mr., Mrs., Miss plus family name. Note: married women always retain their maiden name.

Chinese are often addressed by their government or professional titles. For example, address Li Pang using his title: Mayor Li or Director Li.

Names may have two parts; for example: Wang Chien. Traditional Chinese family names are placed first with the given name (which has one or two syllables) coming last (family name: Wang; given: Chien).

Chinese generally introduce their guests using their full titles and company names. You should do the same. Example: Doctor John Smith, CEO of American Data Corporation.

Body Language

The Chinese dislike being touched by strangers. Do not touch, hug, lock arms, back slap or make any body contact.

Clicking fingers or whistling is considered very rude.

Never put your feet on a desk or a chair. Never gesture or pass an object with your feet.

Blowing one's nose in a handkerchief and returning it to one's pocket is considered vulgar by the Chinese.

To beckon a Chinese person, face the palm of your hand downward and move your fingers in a scratching motion. Never use your index finger to beckon anyone.

Sucking air in quickly and loudly through lips and teeth expresses distress or surprise at a proposed

request. Attempt to change your request, allowing the Chinese to save face.

Chinese point with an open hand. Never point with your index finger.

Corporate Culture

The Chinese are practical in business and realize they need Western investment, but dislike dependency on foreigners. They are suspicious and fearful of being cheated or pushed around by foreigners, who are perceived as culturally and economically corrupt. It is very difficult to break through the "them vs. us" philosophy (foreign partner vs. Chinese). In personal relationships, the Chinese will offer friendship and warm hospitality without conflict, but in business they are astute negotiators.

Punctuality is important for foreign businesspeople. Being late is rude. Meetings always begin on time.

Business cards are exchanged upon meeting. Business cards should be printed in English on one side and Chinese on the other. Make sure the Chinese side uses "simplified" characters and not "classical" characters, which are used in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

English is not spoken in business meetings, although some Chinese may understand English without making it known. Hire an interpreter or ask for one to be provided.

Be prepared for long meetings and lengthy negotiations (often ten days straight) with many delays.

The Chinese will enter a meeting with the highest-ranking person entering first. They will assume the first member of your group to enter the room is the leader of your delegation. The senior Chinese person welcomes everyone. The foreign leader introduces his/her team, and each member distributes his/her card. The leader invites the Chinese to do the same.

Seating is very important at a meeting. The host sits to the left of the most important guest.

There may be periods of silence at a business meeting; do not interrupt these.

A contract is considered a draft subject to change. Chinese may agree on a deal and then change their minds. A signed contract is not binding and does not mean negotiations will end.

Observing seniority and rank are extremely important in business.

The status of the people who make the initial contact with the Chinese is very important. Don't insult the Chinese by sending someone with a low rank.

Chinese negotiators may try to make foreign negotiators feel guilty about setbacks; they may then manipulate this sense of guilt to achieve certain concessions.

Two Chinese negotiating tricks designed to make you agree to concessions are staged temper tantrums and a feigned sense of urgency.

If the Chinese side no longer wishes to pursue the deal, they may not tell you. To save their own face, they may become increasingly inflexible and hard-nosed, forcing you to break off negotiations. In this way, they may avoid blame for the failure.

Dining and Entertainment

Dining is used to probe positions without any formal commitment. Business is generally not discussed during meals. Meals are a vehicle for indirect business references.

The Chinese are superb hosts. Twelve-course banquets with frequent toasts are a Chinese trademark.

The Chinese sponsoring organization generally hosts a welcoming banquet. Foreign guests should reciprocate toward the end of their visits. Invite everyone with whom you have dealt.

Always arrive exactly on time for a banquet. Never arrive early for dinner. This implies that you are hungry and might cause you to lose face.

Spouses are not usually included in business entertaining, however, businesspeople may bring their secretaries.

Be prepared to make a small toast for all occasions.

The first toast normally occurs during or after the first course, not before. After the next course, the guest should reciprocate.

Three glasses -- a large one for beer, soda or mineral water, a small wine glass and a stemmed shot glass -- are at each place setting. The shot glass is the one used for toasting.

It is not necessary to always drain your glass after a ganbei (bottoms up), although a host should encourage it.

Do not drink until you toast others at the table. Chinese consider drinking alone to be rude. Simply raising your glass and making eye contact is sufficient. If you are toasted, sip your drink in reply.

A toast to friendship among companies will help cement a business relationship.

Unless you are totally drunk, it is not advised to refuse a drink. Sipping your drink is perfectly acceptable.

Leave some food on your plate during each course of a meal to honor the generosity of your host. It is bad manners for a Chinese host not to keep refilling guests' plates or teacups.

Seating is very important. The guest of honor is always placed at the head of the room, facing the door. Allow the host to begin eating before joining in.

Do not discuss business at dinner unless your Chinese counterpart initiates it.

Slurping soup and belching are acceptable. Cover your mouth with your hand when using a toothpick. Put bones, seeds, etc. on the table, never in your rice bowl.

Chopsticks are used for all meals. Tapping your chopsticks on the table is considered very rude.

When finished eating, place your chopsticks neatly on the table or on the chopstick rest.

When hosting, order one dish for every person present and one extra. In addition, order rice, noodles and buns. Soup usually comes at some point during the meal. The host should tell his/her guests to begin eating a new dish before he digs in himself.

The host (the one who invites) pays the bill for everyone.

If you are the guest of honor at a dinner, leave shortly after the meal is finished, as no one will leave before the guest of honor.

Breakfast meetings are rare, but you may request one.

Guests are rarely invited to a Chinese home. It is an honor to be a guest. Be on time or a little early for an invitation, and take a small gift.

Bedrooms and kitchens are private. Don't enter these rooms unless you are invited to do so.

All dishes are served at once in a home. The host will place portions of each dish on guests' plates. Sample each dish.

Rare beef is considered barbaric by the Chinese.

Dress

Conservative, simple, unpretentious, modest clothing should be worn -- nothing flashy or overly fashionable.

Women should avoid bare backs, shorts, low-cut tops and excessive jewelry.

For business, men should wear sport coats and ties. Slacks and open-necked shirts are generally suitable in the summer for business meetings; jackets and ties are not necessary.

Women should wear dresses or pantsuits for business and should avoid heavy make-up and dangling, gaudy jewelry.

Gifts

Present a gift with both hands. Gifts are generally not opened upon receiving. Always give a gift to everyone present or don't give gifts at all.

Older Chinese usually refuse a gift at first to be polite. Offer a second time.

Never give a gift of great value until a clear relationship is established. This would cause embarrassment and may not be accepted. Never give gifts in sets (i.e., dishes), but never in sets of four (a number associated with death).

Avoid white, which is symbolic of death, especially of parents, and black, which symbolizes tragedy or death.

When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the hostess, such as brandy, chocolates or cakes.

Be prepared to exchange a modest gift with your business colleagues at the first meeting. Not giving a gift could start a business meeting off on the wrong foot.

Always give gifts to each member of the Chinese delegation that meets you in the order in which they were introduced. Suggested gifts: cigarettes (especially Marlboro and Kent), French brandy, whiskey, pens, lighters, desk attire, cognac, books, framed paintings. Give more valuable gifts — like cellular phones or small CD players — to senior level people.

Give a group gift from your company to the host company. Present this gift to the leader of the delegation.

Helpful Hints

Chinese find "no" difficult to say. They may say "maybe" or "we'll see" in order to save face.

Always refer to China as "China" or "People's Republic of China," never as "Red China," "Communist China" or "Mainland China."

Always refer to Taiwan as "Taiwan" or "Province of Taiwan," never "China," "Republic of China" (the name adapted by the Nationalist forces after they fled to Taiwan) or "Free China."

Do not in any way suggest that Taiwan is not part of China.

Show respect for older people. Offer a seat or right of way through the door to a colleague or older person as a polite gesture.

Return applause when applauded.

Refrain from being loud, boisterous or showy.

Do not be insulted if the Chinese ask personal questions such as "How much money do you make?"

"How many children do you have?" or "Are you married?" Just change the subject if you do not want to answer.

Asking about divorce would cause a Chinese person to lose face.

Forcing the Chinese to say "no" will quickly end a relationship.

Never say or act like you are starving and don't ask for a doggy bag.

Most Chinese women don't wear wedding rings. Don't assume marital status.

Especially for Women

China is a difficult place for anyone to conduct business. A woman may gain acceptance, but it will take time and will not be easy.

China is a male-dominated society. However, there are many women in business in China and some occupy high-ranking positions and important managerial jobs. One of the principles of the Chinese communist system is to work toward sexual equality.

Negotiating teams may have women members. Women may be used to decline unpopular proposals.

Businesswomen attend business dinners, but rarely bring their spouses.

Chinese women rarely smoke or drink. However, it is acceptable for Western women to do so moderately.

The People

Families are very important in Greece. Elders are highly respected, and children care for their elderly parents. Children are disciplined firmly, but parents (even those who are poor) spend a great deal of their income on feeding, clothing and educating their children. Men consider it a personal honor and responsibility to care for their family.

Meeting and Greeting

Shake hands with everyone present--men, women and children--at a business or social meeting. Shake hands again when leaving.

Good friends are most likely to embrace and kiss.

Body Language

Greeks are very demonstrative and affectionate.

Nodding your head "yes" is not polite; say "yes" instead.

"Yes" is signified by a slight downward nod of the head; "no" is a slight upward nod of the head.

The "O.K." sign is a rude gesture; "thumbs up" means O.K.

Corporate Culture

Punctuality is not particularly important in Greece, but foreigners are expected to be on time for business meetings, even though his/her Greek counterpart may be late.

Greeks want to get to know you before they will do business with you. Business meetings will usually begin with general conversation before business is discussed.

Trust is a major ingredient for acceptance and is much more important than qualifications, expertise or performance. Greeks and may be slow to trust foreigners.

Greeks distrust written communications. Put everything down on paper and get the appropriate signatures. Letters/memos are often stiff and formal.

Avoid telephoning unless it is impossible to meet. Personal, face-to-face contact in all matters is vital to communications.

There is one boss, and he/she takes complete responsibility. The boss is the owner or the owner's most trusted employee.

Meetings are often forums for expressing personal opinions (usually contrary) or to inform the group about what is taking place; they seldom have a formal agenda.

Consensus is important and meetings may last or be reconvened until unanimity is reached.

The official work day starts early, ends at lunch and may start again at 5:00 p.m.

Dining and Entertainment

Arrive at least 30 minutes late for a dinner party. 8:00 means "after 8:00."

Greeks are extremely generous hosts.

Greeks may share the bill with the host, but a foreigner should not try to do so. The person who extends the invitation pays.

Eat everything on your plate. If you cannot eat everything on your plate, you must tell the hostess that it is too much food the moment you are given your plate. At that time, your plate will either be brought back to the kitchen and some food taken off, or the hostess will insist that you try to eat what you can.

Eat more, stay longer or do whatever a host insists upon. The offer will be very sincere.

Try to join in Greek dances. It is greatly appreciated.

Business dinners are social occasions. Follow your host's lead as to whether or not business is discussed at dinner.

Be extremely careful of your wine intake.

Dress

Dress is more informal than in most European countries.

Women most often wear dresses.

Gifts

Always bring the hostess a gift when invited to someone's home. Give: expensive wines, brandy, pastries, whiskey, cut flowers. Do not give: inexpensive wines, knives, sharp objects.

Business gifts are commonly exchanged among business colleagues. Give: expensive wines, something for the home, Greek handicrafts, gifts with company logo. Do not give: inexpensive wines, sharp objects.

Helpful Hints

The Greeks "pass" time, not "use" it.

Expect Greeks to ask personal questions, such as "Are you married?" or "Do you have children?" This is not considered rude, but an attempt to get to know you personally.

Especially for Women

Foreign women will find Greece a good place to do business.

Women's opportunities in business depend on their connections, the same as for men.

It could be a problem for a foreign woman to invite a Greek man to lunch or dinner. Invite others along as well or, if for dinner, invite his wife.

A Greek man will always try to pay, but if you make arrangements beforehand and are insistent, he will

probably give in.

Hong Kong

The People

Hong Kong is very sophisticated and cosmopolitan, blending the cultures of Asia and Europe. Its people are highly educated, very motivated and westernized. Hong Kong is 98% Chinese (Cantonese), but the people view themselves as different from other Chinese. Cantonese habits and customs are dominant. An individual's actions, prestige, education, wealth and reputation reflect positively or negatively on the entire family.

Meeting and Greeting

Shake hands with everyone -- men, women and children -- upon meeting and leaving. Note that Hong Kong Chinese handshakes may be less firm than a Western handshake.

Higher-ranking persons are introduced before those of lower rank. An older person comes before a younger person, and a woman before a man. Family members are greeted in order of age, oldest first and youngest last.

It is polite to inquire about a person's health or activities upon greeting.

Names and Titles

Use family names and appropriate titles until specifically invited by your host or colleagues to use their first names.

Address the Chinese with Mr., Mrs., Miss or professional title plus family name. Example: Lau Gan Lei would be Mr. Lau or Doctor Lau or Professor Lau.

Chinese names have two parts: family name and given name. The family name comes first.

Body Language

Hong Kong Chinese may stand close when talking, however, they are reserved and uncomfortable with body contact. Do not hug, kiss or pat people on the back.

Winking at someone is considered a very rude gesture.

Request your bill by making a writing motion with your hand.

To beckon someone, extend your arm, palm down, and make a scratching motion with your fingers.

Never point with your index finger. This is used only for animals. Point with your hand open.

Corporate Culture

Many Hong Kong businesspeople have been educated in Western schools and are well-heeled, well-traveled and possess an international perspective. The business climate in Hong Kong is "wide open," with a free market and limited government involvement. Hong Kong business activities are competitive, honest and quick. Making money is the main goal. The style of business is similar to that of the United States.

Punctuality is expected and respected; be on time for all appointments. Allow "courtesy time" (30 minutes) if someone is late for an appointment with you.

Tea is served at meetings. Do not drink until your host takes the first sip. A host leaving tea untouched signals the end of the meeting.

Bring business cards printed in English on one side and Chinese on the other side. Make sure that the Chinese side uses "classical" characters, the written form of Chinese used in Hong Kong, and not "simplified" characters, which are used in the People's Republic of China. Upon introduction, present your business card with both hands and with the Chinese side up.

Be sure to look at a business card upon receiving it. Do not write on a business card in front of the person who gave it to you.

Lawyers are not included in negotiations until contracts are drawn up and signed.

Negotiations may be slow and detailed, but very efficient. Send senior people with technical and commercial expertise prepared to function as a team and make decisions on the spot. Business deals may be sealed with a handshake alone. Be prepared to compromise.

Banking contacts are very important. Use a bank to set up your meetings.

Take time to build relationships. It may take several meetings to accomplish goals. Do business face to face. Courtesy calls and personal selling are vital to success.

"Yes" may not mean agreement; it often means "I hear you." "No" is generally not said. Instead, you may hear "I will have to wait," or "This may be very difficult."

Do not attempt to open an office in Hong Kong without hiring or consulting a "geomancer"/"feng shui" professional. A feng shui professional advises on facility, moving date, opening date, entrance, etc. and positions office furniture to be in harmony with cosmic forces. Do not ignore this custom. Many Chinese will not do business without feng shui approval for fear of trouble from spirits. Ask a Hong Kong businessperson for the name and number of a reliable feng shui professional.

Make appointments for business meetings a month before arrival.

Dining and Entertainment

Tea is the customary beverage for all occasions. Your teacup will be refilled continually. Leave your cup full if you are finished. Chinese find adding sugar and cream to tea a very strange Western habit. Place teapot lid upside down (or open if attached) to signal the waiter for more tea.

Toasting is an important part of a Chinese dinner. If you are the guest of honor and are toasted, smile, raise your glass, make eye contact, drink, raise your glass and thank the host and guests.

The guest of honor rises and thanks the host for everyone present at the end of dinner. Make a simple, polite, short toast to friendship, success and cooperation.

The banquet host visits each table and makes a toast. A toast is often made in the middle of a banquet when the shark fin soup is served.

Be sure to eat and show appreciation for shark fin soup if it is offered. This delicacy is offered only to special guests, and is very expensive.

It is bad manners for a host not to keep a guest's plate full, and it is even worse for a guest not to continue eating as long as the plate is full. Always leave some food on your dish after you are finished with each course. Otherwise the host will continue refilling your plate or bowl.

Be sure to reciprocate with a banquet of equal quality. Your hotel can assist you in preparations.

Rice is served as a filler. Do not eat large amounts, which implies the host has not served enough food.

Lay your chopsticks on your chopstick rest or neatly on the table when you are finished eating. Never stick them in a bowl of rice.

Don't be afraid to dirty the tablecloth. Bones, shells, etc. are put on the table; do not put them in your rice bowl. A plate may be provided for this purpose.

The Chinese find belching, slurping, clanging utensils and making loud noises at the dinner table acceptable, sometimes even complimentary.

Oranges or other fruits are served to signal the end of the meal. Leave soon after the meal ends.

Never refuse an invitation to lunch or dinner. If you can't make the date, suggest another date.

Spouses are usually not included in business dining. Do not bring a spouse unless invited to do so. If spouses are present, business is generally not discussed.

Dress

Hong Kong residents are very style-conscious and dress well. Modesty and cleanliness are very important.

All types of clothing are worn in Hong Kong. However, taste and fashion look more toward Japan than Britain or the United States. Clothing should be light for summer with sweaters and jackets for winter.

For business, men should wear conservative and lightweight Western-style suits and ties. Women should wear conservative dresses, suits or skirts and blouses.

Wear a good watch. It will be noticed.

The Chinese tend to dress up when going out in the evening. Most European-style hotel restaurants require a coat and tie in the evening. Women should wear cocktail dresses or evening pants.

Gifts

Gift giving is a tradition in Hong Kong that communicates respect and friendship. Be prepared to present a small gift at the first meeting, such as high-quality cognac, brandy, candy or pens. Unlike other Asian countries, Scotch whiskey is not special in Hong Kong.

Never go to a Chinese home without a gift.

Present and receive a gift with both hands. Do not open a gift upon receiving it.

The word for the number "3" in Chinese sounds like the word for "life," and the word for the number "8" sounds like the word for "prosperity." The Chinese word for number "9" is a homonym for the word "eternity." Give gifts in these numbers, if possible. Do not give gifts in a group of four; the Chinese word for "4" sounds similar to the word for "death."

Avoid giving white or red flowers (white is a symbol of mourning, red is a symbol of blood); clocks are associated with death, but watches are suitable gifts.

Every conceivable product can be purchased in Hong Kong. Try to bring something from your hometown or state.

It is illegal to give a civil servant a gift.

Helpful Hints

The Chinese are famous for communicating by "Saying it without saying it." You will have to learn to read between the lines.

Expect Hong Kong Chinese to ask personal questions.

Compliment Hong Kong Chinese, but expect a denial. Politely deny a compliment to show humility. Do not say thank you.

Do not speak loudly.

You may be referred to as "Gweilo" (foreign devil). While perhaps insulting, it is generally not a personal attack.

Hong Kong Chinese are very superstitious; mentioning failure, poverty or death offends them.

Especially for Women

Foreign businesswomen should have little trouble conducting business in Hong Kong.

Chinese women generally do not drink alcohol. However, it is acceptable for Western women to drink alcohol in moderation.

India

The People

India is one of the most diverse countries in the world. It is a sophisticated, modern, industrial leader that is home to many primitive tribes and millions of poor people. Religion and language separate people. The caste system limits social mobility (600,000 people belong to the lowest caste). Because of disparities in distribution of wealth, a wide gap separates the few wealthy from the many poor.

Meeting and Greeting

Westerners may shake hands, however, greeting with 'namaste' (na-mas-TAY) (placing both hands together with a slight bow) is appreciated and shows respect for Indian customs.

Men shake hands with men when meeting or leaving. Men do not touch women when meeting or greeting. Western women may offer their hand to a westernized Indian man, but not normally to others. Traditional Indian women may shake hands with foreign women but not usually with men.

Body Language

Public displays of affection are not proper.

Indians generally allow an arm's length space between themselves and others. Don't stand close to Indians. Indians value personal space.

Indian men may engage in friendly back patting merely as a sign of friendship.

When an Indian smiles and jerks his/her head backward -- a gesture that looks somewhat like a Western "no" -- or moves his head in a figure 8, this means "yes."

The Western side-to-side hand wave for "hello" is frequently interpreted by Indians as "no" or "go away."

Use your right hand only to touch someone, pass money or pick up merchandise. The left hand is considered unclean.

Do not touch anyone's head. The head is considered sensitive.

Feet are considered unclean. Feet are sacred for holy men and women. Pointing footwear at people is considered an insult.

Indians are very sensitive to being beckoned rudely. Hand and arm waved up and down (Western "good-bye") means "come here." To beckon, extend your arm, palm down and make a scratching motion with fingers kept together.

Never point with a single finger or two fingers (used only with inferiors). Point with your chin, whole hand or thumb. The chin is not used to point at superiors.

Corporate Culture

Business cards are exchanged and Indians are very conscious of the protocol. Always present business cards when introduced. English is appropriate for business cards.

Decisions are strongly influenced from the top. Usually one person makes all major decisions. Attempt to deal with the highest-level person available.

It is considered rude to plunge into business discussions immediately. Ask about your counterpart's family, interests, hobbies, etc. before beginning business discussions.

Business is slow and difficult in India. Be polite, but persistent. Do not get angry if you are told something "can't be done." Instead, restate your request firmly but with a smile. Plan on several visits before you reach an agreement.

You may be offered a sugary, milky tea, coffee or a soft drink. Don't refuse. Note that your glass or cup may be refilled as soon as it is emptied.

Indian counterparts may not show up for scheduled meetings. Be prepared to reschedule.

Dining and Entertainment

Initial business entertainment is done in restaurants in prestigious hotels. Business can be discussed during meals. Allow your host to initiate business conversation.

Never flatly refuse an invitation to a home or dinner of a business counterpart; if you can't make it, offer a plausible excuse.

Spouses are often included in social/business functions.

Strict orthodox Muslims don't drink any alcohol. Most Hindus, especially women, do not consume alcohol.

Arrive 15-30 minutes later than the stated time for a dinner party.

At a social gathering a garland of flowers is often placed around a guest's neck. Remove it after a few minutes and carry it in your hand to show humility.

Allow hosts to serve you. Never refuse food, but don't feel obligated to empty your plate. Hindu hosts are never supposed to let their guests' plates be empty.

If hosts eat with hands, assure them you enjoy doing the same. If utensils are not used, use your right hand and your first three fingers and thumb only.

Take food from communal dish with a spoon; never your fingers. Use chappati or poori (bread) torn into small chunks to scoop up food.

The host pays for guests in a restaurant.

Guests give gifts to the host and the host's children as a "thank you."

You should reciprocate invitations with a meal of comparable value. Never invite someone to a far more lavish dinner -- it might embarrass them.

Dress

For business, men should wear suits and ties. During summer months, you may omit the jacket.

Women should wear conservative pantsuits or dresses.

Gifts

Give gifts with both hands. Gifts are not normally opened in the presence of the giver.

Gifts from your country are appreciated (perfume, chocolates, small china or crystal objects).

Gifts are not normally expected at the first meeting. Gifts may be given once a relationship develops.

Helpful Hints

When an Indian answers, "I will try," he or she generally means "no." This is considered a polite "no."

Many Indians do not wear shoes inside a home. Follow your host. Make sure your socks are clean and do not have holes.

Apologize immediately if your feet or shoes touch another person.

Ask permission before smoking. It is considered rude to smoke in the presence of elders.

Do not show anger.

Especially for Women

India is a difficult place to do business, but particularly tough for women. India is a male-dominated society. Western women may be accepted, but must establish their position and title immediately to warrant acceptance.

Women might not be included in social events or conversation.

Western women may invite an Indian man to a business lunch and pay the tab without embarrassment.

Indonesia

The People

Along with unity and conformity to society's rules, honor and respect for the individual is the basis of Indonesian culture. Indonesians value loyalty to family and friends above all else. Life is simple for most people; most enjoy few modern conveniences, such as running water. Indonesia as a whole is viewed by its people as an extended family with the president, schoolmasters and leaders of business enterprises referred to as "fathers" by the public.

Meeting and Greeting

Shake hands and give a slight nod when meeting for the first time. After the first meeting, a handshake is not necessary; a slight bow or nod of the head is sufficient. Shake an Indonesian woman's hand only if she initiates the greeting.

Greet people with "Selamat" (sell-a-mat), which means peace. Say it slowly and sincerely.

Body Language

Good relationships involve a great deal of physical contact and touching. But, foreigners should allow time to be accepted and to develop good relationships before this is acceptable.

Indonesians are used to an overcrowded society; they tend to ignore inadvertent invasions of space. Allowing for personal space is a sign of respect.

A man does not touch a woman in public except to shake hands. Do not display affection in public.

The head is where the spirit resides and is considered sacred. Do not touch a person's head.

Keep both feet on the floor when sitting. Do not cross your legs, especially not with an ankle over the knee. Sitting with good posture (rigid) and both feet on the floor is a sign of respect. Don't allow the bottom of your feet to face or point at another person.

Looking someone straight in the eyes is considered staring. Avoid prolonged eye contact, which may be viewed as a challenge and may cause anger.

Point with your thumb, not your index finger. Never beckon with one finger.

The left hand is considered unclean. Do not touch food, pass or receive anything, touch anyone or point with your left hand.

Approval is sometimes shown with a pat on the shoulder, but American-style backslapping is considered offensive.

Corporate Culture

Westerners are expected to be punctual for business appointments. Call if you are delayed. It is very common

for Indonesians to arrive late.

Present your business card to the receptionist immediately upon arrival; otherwise, there could be long delays. Exchange business cards when being introduced. Present and receive the card slowly with much interest. Cards in English are acceptable.

Negotiations should start at the top of a corporation and then move down to the operating level to discuss technical matters. Later on, discussions will return once again to the top level of the company.

It is best to conduct a first meeting with the highest ranking person of a company. An introduction from a local associate or bank representative is helpful.

Indonesians don't get right down to business. An initial meeting may last 45-60 minutes without accomplishing much. After this amount of time, the visitor should initiate leaving.

Patience is a necessity when doing business in Indonesia. Business dealings are usually slow, long and frustrating. Business relationships must be allowed to develop over time. Several visits are generally necessary to complete a contract.

Indonesians love to bargain. Giving concessions too quickly will be viewed as naivete.

Clarification and feedback are a necessity throughout negotiations. Avoid disagreement and, especially, arguments with Indonesians.

To Indonesians, insisting on a written contract is a breach of trust, though many understand a Westerner's need for such documents. A contract should be viewed as a guideline rather than a statement of duties and responsibilities.

Personal visits are important to Indonesians. They do not take well to faxes, telephone calls or messages. Show up in person whenever possible.

Indonesians want very much to please. An untruthful answer may be given so as not to disappoint anyone.

Indonesians rarely disagree in public. To succeed in negotiations with Indonesians, do not apply pressure or be confrontational.

Dining and Entertainment

Social events generally start late. Indonesians usually arrive thirty minutes after the stated time.

Any business discussions at social events should be initiated by Indonesians.

A fork and spoon are used for dining. The fork is held in the left hand and the spoon in the right. Use the fork to push food onto the spoon.

Most Indonesians are Muslim and consume no liquor or pork.

Indonesians are known for their hospitality. Do not reject their hospitality, as it will be viewed as a personal rejection. Never refuse food or drink, but never finish either completely. Compliments about the food are appreciated. It is a special honor to be invited to an Indonesian's home.

The host is always the last to sit and eat. Men are generally served first. Wait to be invited to eat or drink.

The guest of honor or senior person begins the meal; this is a distinct honor. If you are asked to begin the meal, you should refuse twice and then begin.

Fingers are still used for eating in some places. Both hands are kept above the table while eating.

The person who invites is expected to pay the bill in a restaurant. Request the bill by making a scribbling gesture on the palm of your hand.

When finished with the meal, place the fork (tines down) on your plate with your spoon (down) crossed over

the fork.

If possible, reciprocate with a dinner before you leave the country. A lavish dinner may be criticized; be generous and hospitable, but don't overdo it.

Dress

Men should wear a suit and jacket for the first business meeting.

Women should wear skirts and blouses (never sleeveless) or dresses. Avoid extreme fashions. Muslim rules of modesty should be honored.

Gifts

Business gifts are generally not exchanged. A small token of appreciation may be given to secretaries. Gifts to colleagues should be given after most business has been concluded.

Receive a gift appreciatively. It is impolite to refuse a gift. Gifts are not opened in the giver's presence except at a ceremony, where the gift is opened in front of an assembled group.

Helpful Hints

Taking photographs is a way of honoring someone. Indonesians may ask to take your picture.

Civil servants are respected. Be very respectful to government workers. Never treat them as though they are your servants.

Don't assume tomorrow means tomorrow. Tomorrow may mean sometime in the future. Set specific dates and times for arrangements.

Do not chew gum or yawn in public.

Especially for Women

Indonesia is a Muslim society and very male-oriented, but most female visitors experience very few hassles with men. However, blond-haired, blue-eyed women may be hassled more often than dark women. It helps if you dress modestly.

Businesswomen may invite an Indonesian businessman and his wife to dinner. Arrange payment in advance to avoid embarrassment (loss of face) to your male guest.

A woman is expected to initiate a handshake.

Italy

The People

Cultural achievement is Italy's greatest source of pride. Inventiveness, imagination, intelligence and education are prized. Personal relations are scrupulously maintained with loyalty highly valued, especially in families. The family is the most important affiliation in Italy.

Meeting and Greeting

When being introduced during a business or social meeting, shake hands with everyone present -- men, women and children. Shake hands again when leaving.

Ladies should extend their hand first to men.

Friends may greet each other with a kiss on both cheeks.

Names and Titles

Use last names and appropriate titles until specifically invited by your Italian host or colleagues to use their first names.

Females almost always use their maiden name, especially in business and on legal documents. They generally use their married names or a combination of their married names and maiden names outside of business.

Body Language

Maintain eye contact while talking. Otherwise Italians might think you are hiding something.

To beckon a waiter or waitress raise your index finger and make eye contact.

Italians are known for using the most body language of all European nations.

Corporate Culture

Italians take punctuality for business meetings very seriously and expect that you will do likewise; call with an explanation if you are delayed. Deliberate lateness in business is viewed as sloppy.

Business cards are used only in business, not socially, unless requested.

Business cards are exchanged only at the first meeting and should be handed to recipients, not tossed at them. Do not give a business card to the same person more than once.

Present a business card to each person attending a meeting.

When receiving a business card, look at the name and title carefully, then set it on the table in front of you or in your briefcase.

English is quite common in business, but check ahead of time to find out if an interpreter is necessary. Generally, business discussions begin after a few minutes of small talk.

Establish personal relationships with Italians. Italians like to deal with people they know and trust. They also tend to believe that work should not be a burden or taken too seriously.

Relationships must be profitable and mutually beneficial to gain total cooperation.

Pragmatism and talent for improvisation are considered keys to success. Protocol, rules and organization are often ignored.

Negotiations usually take time and patience. Don't rush them. Italians may misinterpret this as a weakness.

Italian companies are fast to identify and exploit a niche without doing an in-depth study. Strategic plans are rarely written and are never long term.

Meeting style is unstructured and informal. Formal presentations are not common.

Business decisions are often made and agreed to privately before meetings. The purpose of a meeting is often to evaluate the mood, sense support and test water -- not to make decisions.

Meetings may be staged to exhibit eloquence, personality and status.

Decisions that are made and agreed to may never be implemented.

Do not call an Italian business person at home unless it is an emergency.

Dining and Entertainment

Business entertainment is generally done at lunch or dinner in a restaurant.

Dinner entertainment is more of a social occasion to get to know people. Business discussions are usually very limited.

If you invite, you pay for the meal.

Business may be discussed at a breakfast meeting, but it is not common.

Cocktails are not common in Italy. Drinking without eating is rare. Hard drinking is unusual and not appreciated. Even mild intoxication is considered ill-mannered. Women drink very little in Italy.

At formal occasions, women generally do not propose toasts.

Italians do not use bread plates. Break bread and place it next to your plate on the table.

Ask for your check when you are finished eating. It may not be brought to you until you ask.

Do not leave the table until everyone is finished.

Roll pasta with your fork on the sides of your pasta plate. Don't roll pasta on your spoon.

Keep both hands above the table during dinner -- never on your lap. Do not put your elbows on the table.

Use your knife (not your fingers) to pick up pieces of cheese to put them on your bread or cracker.

Eat fruit with a fruit knife and fork, except for grapes and cherries.

When finished eating, place knife and fork (tines up) side by side on the plate at the 5:25 position. The fork should be on the left and the knife should be on the right with the blade of the knife facing the fork.

Keep your wineglass almost full if you don't want a refill.

Burping is considered extremely vulgar.

When invited to a home, guests arrive 15 to 30 minutes after the stated time.

Allow hostess to begin eating before guests.

Wait for hostess to offer second helping.

Italians are proud of their homes and love to give tours. Feel free to ask for a tour when invited into

someone's home.

Dress

Italy is a major center of European fashion. Italians are chic. Even people in small towns spend a great deal of money on their wardrobes and dress well at all times.

Dress elegantly but conservatively.

Jackets and ties are required in better restaurants.

Old, torn, dirty clothing are seldom seen and not appreciated.

Men and women dress conservatively and formally for business (men: suits and ties; women: dresses or suits). Women should wear feminine clothing.

Gifts

Italians are very generous gift givers. You may be very embarrassed if you give a "cheap" or practical gift.

Gifts should be beautifully wrapped.

Gifts are opened in front of the giver when received.

Gifts are generally not exchanged at initial business meetings, however, having a gift in your briefcase in case your Italian hosts give you one is recommended.

Gifts may be exchanged at the end of negotiations, but not necessarily.

High quality liquor, gifts with company logos, desk accessories, music and books are appreciated.

When invited to someone's home, always bring a small gift for the host or hostess.

Send flowers or a gift to the host's home the day of or the day after a party.

Give chocolates, flowers (an uneven number) and pastries.

Chrysanthemums are a symbol of death, red roses are symbols of love or passion.

Don't give knives or scissors, which are considered bad luck.

Do not wrap a gift in black with gold ribbon, which symbolizes mourning.

Helpful Hints

Italians are open, curious and tolerant of others' uniqueness and manners. They will tolerate lateness, inefficiency and sincere mistakes, but dislike arrogance and rudeness.

Italians enjoy a lot of good humor and can be self-deprecating.

Send a thank you note after being entertained or given a gift.

Stand when an older person enters the room.

Give attention to or bring a small gift for children.

Cover your mouth if you must yawn, but try not to yawn.

Men should always remove their hats when entering a building.

Don't remove your shoes in public.

Refrain from asking personal questions.

Epecially for Women

Foreign women can do business without great difficulty in Italy. Being a woman may even be considered an advantage in some circumstances.

Only 38% of Italian women under 65 are in the labor market -- one of the lowest percentages in Western Europe. Few Italian women hold managerial positions.

The Italians are generally not inhibited when interacting with the opposite sex. Flirtation is part of the spirit of life in Italy.

Do not pour wine if you are a guest. This is considered "unfeminine" by Italians.

Japan

The People

Japan is a highly structured and traditional society. Great importance is placed on loyalty, politeness, personal responsibility and on everyone working together for the good of the larger group. Education, ambition, hard work, patience and determination are held in the highest regard. The crime rate is one of the lowest in the world.

Meeting and Greeting

A handshake is appropriate upon meeting. The Japanese handshake is limp and with little or no eye contact.

Some Japanese bow and shake hands. The bow is a highly regarded greeting to show respect and is appreciated by the Japanese. A slight bow to show courtesy is acceptable.

Body Language

Nodding is very important. When listening to Japanese speak, especially in English, you should nod to show you are listening and understanding the speaker.

Silence is a natural and expected form of non-verbal communication. Do not feel a need to chatter.

Do not stand close to a Japanese person. Avoid touching.

Prolonged eye contact (staring) is considered rude.

Don't show affection, such as hugging or shoulder slapping, in public.

Never beckon with your forefinger. The Japanese extend their right arm out in front, bending the wrist down, waving fingers. Do not beckon older people.

Sit erect with both feet on the floor. Never sit with ankle over knee.

Waving a hand back and forth with palm forward in front of face means "no" or "I don't know." This is a polite response to a compliment.

Never point at someone with four fingers spread out and thumb folded in.

Corporate Culture

Punctuality is a must in all business and social meetings.

Any degree of knowledge of Japanese culture is greatly appreciated.

Japanese may exchange business cards even before they shake hands or bow. Be certain your business card clearly states your rank. This will determine who your negotiating counterpart should be.

Bear in mind that initial negotiations begin with middle managers. Do not attempt to go over their heads to senior management.

It is acceptable to use a Japanese company interpreter in the first meeting. Once negotiations begin, hire your

own interpreter.

Both business and personal relationships are hierarchical. Older people have higher status than younger, men higher than women and senior executives higher than junior executives.

It is very important to send a manager of the same rank to meet with a Japanese colleague. Title is very important.

Work is always undertaken as a group. The workgroup is strongly united with no competition; all succeed or all fail. Decision-making is by consensus. Everyone on the work team must be consulted before making decisions. This is a very slow process.

The first meeting may focus on establishing an atmosphere of friendliness, harmony and trust. Business meetings are conducted formally, so leave your humor behind. Always allow ten minutes of polite conversation before beginning business meetings.

It takes several meetings to develop a contract. When the time comes, be content to close a deal with a handshake. Leave the signing of the written contract to later meetings.

Etiquette and harmony are very important. "Saving face" is a key concept. Japanese are anxious to avoid unpleasantness and confrontation. Try to avoid saying "no." Instead, say, "This could be very difficult," allowing colleagues to save face.

Proper introduction to business contacts is a must. The introducer becomes a guarantor for the person being introduced.

Do not bring a lawyer. It is important to build business relationships based on trust. The Japanese do not like complicated legal documents. Write contracts that cover essential points.

Dining and Entertainment

Restaurant entertaining is crucial to business. A person is judged by his/her behavior during and after business hours. Seldom is a business deal completed without dinner in a restaurant.

Drinking is a group activity. Do not say "no" when offered a drink.

An empty glass is the equivalent of asking for another drink. Keep your glass at least half full if you do not want more. If a Japanese person attempts to pour more and you do not want it, put your hand over your glass, or fill it with water if necessary.

An empty plate signals a desire for more food. Leave a little food on your plate when you are finished eating.

When drinking with a Japanese person, fill his glass or cup after he has filled yours. While he is pouring, hold your cup or glass up so he can fill it easily. Never pour your own drink and always pour your companion's.

Toasting is very important in Japan and many toasts are offered during the course of an evening. At dinner, wait for the toast before you drink. Respond to each toast with a toast.

Wait for the most important person (honored guest) to begin eating. If you are the honored guest, wait until all the food is on the table and everyone is ready before you eat.

When offered food, it is polite to hesitate before accepting. You do not have to eat much, but it is rude not to sample each dish.

It is acceptable to slurp noodles. Some Japanese believe that it makes them taste better.

Do not finish your soup before eating other foods. It should accompany your meal. Replace the lid of the soup bowl when finished eating.

Dress

Dress is modern and conservative. The Japanese dress well at all times. Dress smartly for parties, even if an invitation says "Casual" or "Come as you are."

For business, men should wear dark suits and ties (subtle colors).

Women should wear dresses, suits and shoes with heels. Subtle colors and conservative styles are best for business.

Gifts

The ritual of gift giving is more important than the value of the gift.

Allow your Japanese counterpart to initiate the gift giving. Present a gift in a modest fashion, saying, "This is just a small token," or "This is an insignificant gift."

It is very important to receive a gift properly. Give a gift and receive a gift with both hands and a slight bow. The Japanese may refuse a gift once or twice before accepting it.

Do not give anyone a gift unless you have one for everyone present.

Correct wrapping is very important. Appearance counts for as much or more than the contents.

Be prepared to give and receive a gift at a first business meeting. Gifts are frequently given at the end of a first meeting. Not giving a proper gift could ruin a business relationship.

Helpful Hints

Avoid using the number "four" if possible. It has connotations of death to the Japanese.

The Japanese may ask personal questions. This is not intended to be rude, but rather a polite way to show interest. You may give vague or general answers if you feel a question is too personal.

The Japanese do not express opinions and desires openly. What they say and what they mean may be very different.

Do not expect a Japanese person to say "no." "Maybe" generally means "no."

Especially for Women

Non-Japanese women are treated very politely in business and it is understood that Western women hold high-level positions in business. Western women must establish credibility and a position of authority immediately.

A non-Japanese woman is viewed first as a foreigner and then as a woman and is treated accordingly.

Businesswomen can invite a Japanese businessman to lunch or dinner. Allow your Japanese colleague to pick the restaurant.

Malaysia

The People

Malays are proud of their country, their ancestral background and their economic success. Ethnic tensions exist between Malays (60%) and Chinese (31%) over preferential quotas. Chinese feel these policies make them second-class citizens; Malays support these policies, which they feel are their only way to overcome traditional dominance. The Chinese dominate the business community and live in urban areas, while ethnic Malays generally inhabit rural areas.

Meeting and Greeting

Shake hands with men at business meetings and social events. Shake hands again when leaving.

Nod or give a slight bow when greeting a woman or an older person. Introduce higher ranking people or older people first. Introduce women before men.

Western women should greet Malay men with a nod of their head and a smile.

Body Language

Never touch anyone on the top of the head (home of the soul), especially a child. Avoid touching anyone of the opposite sex. Affection is not shown in public.

Use your right hand to eat, pass things and touch people. Do not pass objects with your left hand. Do not move objects with your feet or point at another person with your foot.

Giving a slight bow when leaving, entering or passing by people means, "excuse me."

A smile or laugh could mean surprise, anger, shock, embarrassment or happiness.

It is impolite to beckon adults.

Single fingers are not used for gesturing.

Hitting your fist into a cupped hand is obscene.

Hands in pockets signify anger.

Corporate Culture

Business cards are generally exchanged after an introduction.

Westerners are expected to be punctual for social occasions and business meetings. Call if you are delayed. Do not get frustrated if a Malay is late or your business meeting does not begin on time.

Business counterparts will want to get to know you personally before doing business with you.

Decisions are made slowly. Patience is required. Malays will probably involve you in polite conversation for a lengthy period before getting down to business. Discussions will be long and detailed.

A letter of introduction from a bank or a mutual acquaintance will help establish a business relationship.

Without an introduction, your request for a meeting might be ignored.

Once an agreement is reached, don't be surprised if counterparts try to renegotiate, even after a written agreement has been drafted. Malays view written contracts as less important than personal trust. Expect requests for escape clauses.

Malays will pressure you to make concessions, but won't give up much themselves in the beginning of negotiations. Plan on several trips.

Malays admire good etiquette and do not appreciate bluntness. They are polite and go for the soft sell.

Listen carefully to Malays. They will avoid saying things directly. You must learn to read between the lines.

Dining and Entertainment

Entertaining is an important part of doing business. Most business entertaining is done in restaurants.

Most important meetings are followed with lunch or dinner. Be sure to reciprocate any dinner with a dinner of equal value.

Spouses may be invited to dinner when the meal will not involve business discussions. Do not bring spouses to a business lunch.

Drinks are offered and accepted with both hands. Drinks are not served before dinner.

Malays use only their right hand to eat, pass, touch or handle anything. Never use your left hand to eat.

Food is cut in bite size pieces, making a knife unnecessary. Hold the spoon in your right hand and the fork in your left hand. Push your food onto the spoon with the fork and eat from the spoon. When finished, put the fork and the spoon on your plate.

Allow the host to order all dishes in a restaurant.

Dress

For business, men should wear pants and white shirts, with ties for executives. Conservative suits should be worn when meeting with government officials. You may be more comfortable wearing a jacket to a first meeting.

Women should wear sleeved blouses with skirts or pants.

Yellow is reserved for royalty.

Gifts

Gifts are not exchanged at the first meeting, or in general, but have one with you in case you are given one. You should reciprocate with a gift of equal value if one is given to you. A dinner invitation can substitute for a gift.

Give company products with logo or gifts made in the U.S. (pens, books, desk attire). Do not give money, liquor, knives, scissors or images of dogs.

Giving or receiving gifts with both hands shows respect. Never use your left hand to give or receive a gift. Never open a gift in the presence of the giver.

Always bring a small gift for the hostess when invited to someone's home. Give fruits, sweets, perfumes or crafts from your home country.

Helpful Hints

Malays judge people by who they are rather than what they do. Family background, social position and status are all important.

Never smoke around royal family members. Many are in business and may be in attendance at meetings.

Compliment sincerely, but expect Malays to deny out of modesty.

Show respect for the elderly and never smoke around them.

Understand that Malays believe that successes, failures, opportunities and misfortunes result from fate or the will of God.

Don't be surprised if Malays ask personal questions about your income, religion, etc. You may ask the same questions. There is no obligation to answer these questions.

Especially for Women

Women are generally accepted in business, where they hold many influential positions.

It is perfectly acceptable for a woman to invite a Malaysian businessman to dinner. She may or may not invite his wife.

Women may dine alone in hotel restaurants or bars.

Philippines

The People

Filipinos are casual, fun loving, sensitive and hospitable people. Personal and family honor are stressed, as well as dignity and pride. Education is highly valued and families make great sacrifices to educate their children. Hiya (shame) is instilled in Filipinos at an early age. To be shamed is the greatest form of disgrace.

Meeting and Greeting

Men and women shake hands with everyone present at a business meeting or social occasion and when saying "goodbye." Handshakes should be friendly and informal, but limp. Men should wait for women to extend their hand.

Body Language

If Filipinos don't understand a question, they open their mouths. Raised eyebrows signify recognition and agreement.

Laughter may convey pleasure or embarrassment; it is commonly used to relieve tension.

"Yes" is signified by a jerk of the head upward. "No" is signified by a jerk of the head down. Since the Filipinos rarely say no, the non-verbal sign for "no" is sometimes accompanied by a verbal yes, which would still indicate "no."

Staring is considered rude and could be misinterpreted as a challenge, but Filipinos may stare or even touch foreigners, especially in areas where foreigners are rarely seen.

To Filipinos, standing with your hands on your hips means you are angry.

Never curl your index finger back and forth (to beckon). This is an insult.

To indicate two of something, raise your ring and pinkie fingers.

To beckon, extend arm, palm down, moving fingers in scratching motion. Touch someone's elbow lightly to attract attention. Do not tap on the shoulder.

"Eyebrow flash" -- a quick lifting of eyebrows -- is a Filipino greeting.

Corporate Culture

Filipinos are relaxed about time. Meetings and appointments often begin late. Foreigners are supposed to be on time.

A personal introduction by a mutual friend or business associate makes business arrangements much smoother.

Establishing a personal relationship is important to the success of a business relationship. Trust and loyalty are central to developing relationships. Insincerity is easily detected and can ruin the relationship.

Filipinos often have a "take it or leave it" attitude when it comes to selling prices. They may also may place

less stress on the absolute selling price and place more emphasis on percentages, unit cost or rounded figures.

Casual conversation may precede business discussions during meetings.

Negotiations and business deals move slowly. A third-party go-between may be a good idea to relieve tension or give criticism. Do not allow meetings to go too long. Filipinos love to eat and their enthusiasm wanes when they are hungry.

Communication is indirect, truth is diplomatically presented, manner is gentle, and the perception of the recipient is considered in all communications. All communication should be courteous, regardless of its content. The Filipino attempt to please may result in many unfinished projects.

Filipinos find it difficult to say "no," disagree, reject or be confrontational, especially when a superior is involved. Expect an ambiguous or indirect answer -- not to deceive, but rather to please and avoid confrontation.

Face-to-face meetings are preferred. Written communications might not be answered. Communication by mail or telephone is unreliable at best.

Small bribes are occasionally used to cut through bureaucracies. This is illegal, but done quietly and often. Participate with caution.

Dining and Entertainment

Most business entertaining is done in restaurants or clubs, preferably a good restaurant in an international hotel. During business entertaining, you may be asked to sing. Try to join in.

A dinner invitation to counterparts and their spouses is appreciated before you leave the country. Don't bring your spouse to a business lunch. Lunches are generally for business discussions.

Filipinos may view a dinner/party invitation as just a passing thought. They may answer "yes," but not take an invitation seriously. Phone to re-invite and remind. An R.S.V.P. may not be answered. It must be reiterated to be taken seriously. Don't accept an invitation unless repeated at least three times.

People who have not been invited may turn up at dinner. They should be included graciously.

Punctuality is appreciated but not demanded when attending social affairs.

Getting drunk is considered greedy and rude.

Toasts are common in the Philippines, especially at business meetings. Usually the host or lead of the visiting party initiates a toast.

It is polite to decline the first offer of seating, food, drink, etc. Accept the second offer.

Keep your hands above the table during dinner.

Leave a small amount of food on your plate when you are finished eating. When finished eating, place your fork and spoon on your plate.

The person who invites pays the bill.

Dress

Filipinos are some of the smartest dressers in Asia. Dress well for most occasions.

Men should wear a jacket and tie for initial meetings.

Women should wear western dresses, skirts and blouses.

Gifts

Gifts are not expected, but are appreciated. You may want to bring a small gift to your first meeting. Gifts are not opened in the giver's presence. Thank the giver and set it aside.

Helpful Hints

Speak softly and control your emotions in public. Make requests, not demands.

Don't be offended by personal questions. These are asked to show interest. Feel free to ask the same questions in return, especially about family.

Verbal assault is a crime for which you can be charged.

Never bring shame to a person. This reflects on his family. Personal goals are sacrificed for the good of the family.

Never directly criticize anyone, especially in public. Never offer insincere comments or compliments.

Especially for Women

Foreign women will have little problem doing business in the Philippines.

Men may make comments about women walking on the street. These should be ignored.

A foreign woman should not pay a bill for a Filipino businessman. It would embarrass him and might harm the business relationship.

Singapore

The People

Singapore is a conglomeration of Chinese (76%), Malay (15%) and Indian (6%) cultures. In the past, this racial mixture has led to some conflict. However, today most Singaporeans enjoy racial harmony and national unity. Each group works hard to maintain its cultural traditions while building a modern, cohesive society. Singaporeans of the younger generation think of themselves as Singaporean first, and as Chinese, Malay or Indian second.

Meeting and Greeting

Shake hands with everyone present at a business meeting or social occasion. Shake hands again when leaving. Your handshake should be firm.

Singaporeans may bow slightly as they shake your hand. Many Westerners are generally taller than Singaporeans, so it would be polite to give a small bow. A slight bow for Chinese or older people is polite.

Body Language

Never touch a person's or child's head. The head is considered sacred.

The foot is considered the lowest part of the body, and is thought to be unclean. The foot should never be used to point at someone, and you should never show the bottom of your feet. Tapping your foot or fidgeting your legs denotes feebleness and lack of interest. When crossing your legs, do so only by placing one knee over the other.

Raise your hand to get someone's attention. Never signal or point at a person with the forefinger. Do not pound your first on an open palm; this is obscene. The forearm jerk is a rude gesture.

Corporate Culture

Westerners are expected to be punctual for social occasions and business meetings. Call if you are delayed. Tardiness is viewed as a sign of disrespect.

Business cards are exchanged upon being introduced. Exchange business cards with both hands after you are introduced.

The government finances many of the large corporations in Singapore. This bureaucratic system is known for its high efficiency and corruption-free business style. Western-style management is evident in large firms managed by Singaporeans.

Personal contacts are important in business. It takes several years to develop business relationships. Take time to know people before discussing business.

Singaporeans tend to get right down to business in meetings. Singaporeans are fast-paced and can make decisions quickly.

You are expected to deliver reports, correspondence, packages, etc. when promised.

Always talk straight and get right to the point with Singaporeans. You can be direct when dealing with issues of money.

Dining and Entertainment

Dinner is the most common form of business entertainment, but it is a time to socialize and build relationships rather than discuss business. Don't be surprised if business dinners are scheduled for every night of the week. Most entertainment is done in restaurants.

Food is usually put on the table with all dishes served at once and to be shared by all. Drinks and appetizers are uncommon, though they are available in Western restaurants.

Allow the host to order all the dishes.

Chinese may offer a banquet. A Westerner should always reciprocate with a banquet of equal value before departing.

Chinese use chopsticks for most food and porcelain spoons for the liquid part of soup. Western style utensils are used, but are not as common as chopsticks.

Allow a Chinese host to invite you to start your meal and begin eating before you start to eat.

When finished with your meal, place chopsticks on the chopstick rest (setting them on your plate means you are not finished).

Be on time for dinner in a Malay home. The dinner is usually served immediately with no drinks or appetizers beforehand.

Indians always wash their hands before and after a meal. In a Malay home, you will be given a small bowl of water and a towel. Use the water to wash your hands.

Malays and Indians use a spoon along with their hands to eat, but never use your left hand to eat (unclean). If given a spoon and fork, hold the spoon in your right hand and use your fork (left hand) to push food onto the spoon.

Never let the serving spoon touch your plate and never share your leftovers. Indians believe that anything that touches someone's plate is tainted.

It is impolite to refuse initial offers of food or drink. To refuse seconds, place your hand above your plate and say, "No, thank you." When finished, place your spoon and fork together on your plate. If they are not placed together, you will be offered more food.

After a meal with Indians, expect to stay for approximately one hour of conversation.

Dress

Due to different ethnic groups and the modern character of Singaporeans, there are many different attires acceptable. Dress is normally very casual. Western clothing is most common.

For business, men should wear white shirts, tie and slacks. Jackets are usually not required.

Women should wear blouses with sleeves and skirts or pantsuits.

Gifts

Each ethnic group shares different gift giving traditions.

Business gifts are generally not exchanged.

Use both hands to give someone a gift. A gift given to a guest or the host is not opened in the presence of the giver.

Be careful of the gift being misinterpreted as a bribe, even a small gift. Never give a government official a gift, which might be considered a bribe.

Always bring the hosts a gift when invited to someone's home.

Helpful Hints

Singapore has strict regulations which carry stiff fines, possible jail sentences or even death. You should never do the following: jaywalk; smoke in public or in air-conditioned buildings (except country clubs); enter the country with drugs; litter, or import, manufacture, sell or use chewing gum.

Avoid public displays of affection.

Do not show anger or emotions or raise your voice. Remain disciplined and in control.

Avoid discussing religion or politics.

Avoid jokes until you know someone well. Few jokes will be understood or appreciated.

Especially for Women

Western women may confront a small bias when doing business in Singapore. Being taller than Singaporeans may be advantageous to women.

Singapore has an official policy against discrimination of women, and Singaporean women are gaining a wider acceptance in business.

Thailand

The People

Thais are tolerant of individualism, but find comfort and security in being part of a group. Mai Pen Rai (never mind) is the Thai expression which characterizes the general focus of life - "it is to enjoy." Thais are productive and hard working while at the same time happy with what they are and what they have materially. They are smiling, pleasant, humble and patient people who laugh easily, speak softly, are slow to anger, and never try to cause anyone to lose face. Thais are very proud of their cultural heritage and enjoy talking about it with visitors. Thais are proud that they have never been ruled by a Western power.

Meeting and Greeting

When being introduced or greeting someone, men say Sawatdee-krap and women say Sawatdee-kah.

Thais greet each other with a "wai." Foreigners are not expected to initiate the wai gesture, but it is an insult not to return the wai. If a wai is not offered to you, shake hands with men and smile and nod to women. A Thai businessperson may shake hands with a foreigner. Offer a wai only to a person of equal or greater status. Subordinates should offer a wai first.

Wai (why) - a person places the palm of his or her hands together, with their fingers extended at chest level close to their body and bows slightly. The higher the hands are placed, the more respect is shown. Subordinates might raise their fingers as high as their nose. However, the tips of their fingers should never be above eye level.

A wai can mean "Hello," "Thank you," "I'm sorry," or "Goodbye." A wai is not used to greet children, servants, street vendors or laborers. Never return a wai to a child, waiter, clerk, etc. Simply nod and smile in response.

Monks do not return a wai.

Thais say "Where are you going" rather than "Hello." A polite response is "Just down the street."

Introductions are common only in a formal situation. Introduce yourself by your first name. Feel free to introduce yourself or ask for someone's name. When introducing your business partner to an important Thai, mention your partner's name first.

The inferior or lower-status person is always addressed first in an introduction. Thus, a child is introduced before its parents, a secretary is introduced before her boss.

Names and Titles

Thais address one another by first names and titles and reserve last names for very formal occasions and written communications. Last names have been used in Thailand for only the past fifty years and are difficult even for Thais to pronounce. Two people with the same last name are almost certainly related.

Foreigners are often addressed by their given names because it is easier for Thais; it does not imply familiarity. Thais will probably call you Mr. Joe or Mrs. Mary.

Titles, rank and honor are very important. Introductions require only the given name and title. Mr., Mrs., or Miss + family name are appropriate for visitors to use in formal situations.

Thai given names are preceded by Khun (Mr. Mrs. or Miss), unless they carry a higher degree, such as doctor. Khun is used for men and women, married or single. If you don't know a person's name, address them as Khun.

Example: Anuwat (Given) + Wattapongsiri (Family) is Khun Anuwat.

Correspondence: Use Dear + Khun + given name. Example: Dear Khun Mary.

Nicknames are common in Thailand

Corporate Culture

Thailand has a pro-business attitude. Business decisions are slow. Decisions pass through many levels before being decided upon. Planning is short-term. Top management is often family. Who you know is important. Powerful connections are respected.

First meetings generally produce good humor, many smiles, polite conversation and few results. The second meeting should include a meal invitation. Meetings begin with small talk. Discussing business before becoming acquainted is impolite. Degrees, especially from prestigious universities, bring status. Thais may list these on their business card. Thais respect foreigners with powerful connections.

Negotiations may be lengthy. Process takes precedence over content. Slow information flow may delay discussions and decisions.

Thais prefer to work later in the evening rather than early in the morning. Business is kept separate from work. Family comes first before business.

Frankness is not appreciated. Be subtle in responding with a negative reply.

Body Language

Touching between people of the same sex is more common in Thailand than in many other Asian countries. However, touching someone of the opposite sex is taboo. Do not show affection in public.

Never touch or pass anything over anyone's head. The head is considered sacred in Thailand and must be respected.

Never point your feet at anyone or use your feet to move anything or touch anyone. Feet are regarded as unclean and symbolically (as well as physically) the lowest part of the body.

Do not put your hands in your pockets while talking to someone. Never put your arm over the back of the chair in which someone is sitting.

A smile is often used for many different emotions. It may be an apology, a thank-you, a greeting, or to show embarrassment. Be aware: A Thai's smiling assurance does not mean you will in fact get what you want, when you want it. It simply reflects the Thai appreciation of harmony and their "never mind" attitude.

Don't wave your hands about as you talk, giving Thais the impression that you are angry. Never pass anything with your left hand. Never point with your hand and never, never with one finger.

Do not cross your legs in the presence of the elderly or monks.

To beckon someone, extend your arm with the palm of your hand down and flutter your fingers up and down.

Dining and Entertainment

To attract a waiter, wave quietly with your palm down or say "Nong" (brother or sister). Never snap your fingers or raise your voice to attract a waiter.

Thai food is eaten with a fork and a tablespoon rather than with chopsticks. The spoon is held in the right hand and the bottom of the fork pushes the food into the spoon.

All Western hotels serve Western and continental cuisine for all meals.

Never drink tap water unless it is boiled. Avoid eating salads that haven't been washed in purified water. Always peel fruit before eating.

Many Thai dishes are hot and spicy with herbs, lemon grass, and coriander, but most are not especially aggressive. Food is always sweet, sour, hot, salty or spicy never bland. Each region has its own specialties.

Food may be transferred to your rice bowl, where it can be mixed with rice. Rice is eaten with almost every meal.

Leave a small amount of food on your plate when you have finished eating, to show you are full. Place your spoon and fork on your plate at the 5:25 position to indicate you are finished eating.

The host pays the bill. Never offer to split a bill in a restaurant.

Dress

Thai society is divided into upper and lower classes. At formal occasions, dress is expected to match one's social station. Appearance is very important. Wealth is greatly admired. High-status Thais often overdress, especially considering the hot climate.

Western clothing is very common. Modest clothing is recommended. General dress is informal but always neat and clean. Clothing should be stylish and cool.

For Businessmen: Pants and shirts (white or colored) with or without a tie. A light suit or jacket adds status. In the evening, dark business suits or formal traditional Thai shirts are worn. Senior executives wear light weight suits to work.

For Businesswomen: Conservative dresses or skirts and blouses (not sleeveless). Simple blouses and calf-length loose pants and long wrap-around or tube skirts are common.

Gifts

Gift giving in Thailand is Westernized with less formality than elsewhere in Asia.

Bring a small gift for anyone who works for you regularly. Items such as books, special food items and pens are appropriate.

Give a gift with your right hand and receive a gift with your right hand. You should also offer a wai.

Do not open a gift you've been given unless invited to do so. Thais generally do not open a gift in front of the giver.

For the hostess give: Fruit, flowers, cakes, brandy/liquors, candy.

In business, give Brandy, liquors, American crafts, books and desk attire are appropriate gifts.

Helpful Hints

Show great respect for the royal family. They are highly respected by most Thais. Stand in respect when the Thai national anthem is played.

Step over the threshold, not on it, when going through a doorway. Thais believe a spirit resides in the threshold.

Take off your shoes before entering a home, wat or building which has a Buddha image within.

Use your right hand only for passing, eating, touching, etc.

Never touch the head of a Thai or pass an object over it; the head is considered sacred in Thailand.

Do not speak in a loud voice. Do not show your temper. Never criticize anyone publicly.

Especially for Women

Men conduct most business. However, many traditional sex-barriers are disappearing. More and more women are holding executive positions in the workforce.

Ladies may not enter a bot, the restricted area of a wat (temple). Never touch a monk, hand him anything or sit next to or higher than him. When visiting a mosque, cover your body. Wear slacks, a long skirt, a long sleeved blouse with a buttoned neck, and a headscarf.

Traditional Thais believe a woman can lose face if a man touches her in public.

Vietnam

The People

A long struggle for independence has given the Vietnamese a deep sense of national pride. Vietnamese value their independence and history and offended by people who ignore or violate either. Most Vietnamese have an interest in all things American. They believe all past hostilities were part of the natural defense of their national territory. Families are very strong and help each other in all needs.

Meeting and Greeting

The Vietnamese generally shake hands both when greeting and when saying good-bye. Shake with both hands, and bow your head slightly to show respect. Bow to the elderly who do not extend their hand. Vietnamese women are more inclined to bow their head slightly than to shake hands.

When greeting someone, say "xin chao" (seen chow) + given name + title. The Vietnamese are delighted if a Westerner can properly say "xin chao" (because Vietnamese is a tonal language, "xin chao" can have six different meanings, only one of which is "Hello").

Body Language

Summoning someone with a curled index finger, as is done in the West, is only done by the boss. To beckon someone, extend your arm, palm down, and move your fingers in a scratching motion. Only beckon someone who has a "lower" status than you.

Men and women do not show affection in public. However, members of the same sex may hold hands while walking.

Always use both hands when passing an object to another person.

Touching children on the head is only done by parents, grandparents, etc.

Corporate Culture

Business cards are usually exchanged when meeting for the first time. Give and receive a business card with both hands.

The Vietnamese are generally quite punctual and expect foreigners to be the same. That said, the Vietnamese can be very flexible and accommodating when situations occur that are beyond the control of one of the parties involved (for example, a washed-out street, traffic jam, etc.).

Few Vietnamese speak English well. An interpreter is usually necessary.

A foreigner doing business in Vietnam will have to deal with government officials. You may have to go through the same slow procedure dozens of times to obtain the necessary permits to operate a foreign-owned company in

Vietnam. Continual, direct contact with the ministry officials responsible for granting or approving your permits and licenses is very important. Difficulties may arise when one official refuses to honor an agreement concluded by another official.

Most decisions are made by committee in Vietnam. Individual connections are not as important as in many other Asian countries, because no one holds absolute power to make a decision. You can not rely on one person in a particular organization to safeguard your interests.

The Vietnamese willingness to avoid unpleasantness can sometimes lead to great misunderstandings. "Yes" may not mean "yes." When the Vietnamese say "No problem," you can take it to mean "Yes, there is a problem." Double and even triple-check all commitments, and then monitor them closely.

Your local partner in Vietnam is very important and should be chosen very carefully.

Corruption is widespread. All manners of payoffs, kickbacks and "gifts" are quite common. Be aware that corruption will not only affect your costs, but also may contribute to unexpected delays in delivery and the processing of licenses.

Dining and Entertainment

A small dish or shaker of white crystal on the table is more likely to be monosodium glutamate (MSG) than sugar or salt.

The Vietnamese style of dining is chopsticks and rice bowls. Hold your rice bowl in your hand; it is considered lazy to eat from a rice bowl that is on the table.

The host may serve guests, but will usually just invite everyone to begin helping themselves. Food is placed on dishes in the center of the table from which each person helps him/herself.

An offer of tea at a reception or meeting is a ritual form of hospitality and should not be refused.

Dress

The Vietnamese dress very well.

For business, men should wear conservative but casual suits and ties.

Women should wear a conservative dress or a businesslike blouse and pants.

Gifts

Flowers are normally given only by men to women.

Always wrap a gift in colorful paper.

When visiting a Vietnamese home, bring a gift for the hostess. A gift for children or an elderly parent is also appreciated.

Give items useful for daily activity, like designer soaps, cosmetics, lamps or framed pictures for the home.

Don't give handkerchiefs (symbols of a sad farewell). Most Asians consider the Western habit of using a cloth handkerchief and then returning it to your pocket to be barbaric.

In business, give whiskey. Giving a gift in an office setting may be misinterpreted as a bribe. Try to save your business gift giving until you are invited to your colleague's home.

Helpful Hints

Walk quickly, and avoid eye contact on the street.

Refer to Ho Chi Minh City as Saigon. Local people prefer Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City, which was imposed by the government in Hanoi.

Especially for Women

In the major cities, little sexual discrimination exists, and Vietnamese women receive equal pay for equal work. In the country, men are still boss.

Western women should dress conservatively in Vietnam. Women who wear heavy makeup and revealing clothing are viewed as prostitutes.

When dining with a Vietnamese man, a western businesswoman should arrange to eat in a public place and should insist upon hosting. If the Vietnamese man hosts, the Western woman is obliged to reciprocate with a meal of equal value.