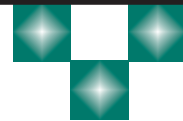


BY PAMELA EYRING



It's All About 'Saving Face'

“Saving face” is the most essential piece of information that businessmen and women need to keep in mind when dealing with the Chinese. This term implies that you should never surprise your Chinese counterpart with the unexpected.

Remain very formal in conversation, introductions and overall social interaction; do not ask personal questions that could cause embarrassment or discomfort.

Meeting and Greeting

- When greeting, always acknowledge the eldest or most senior person first; then proceed with greeting the rest of a business party.
- Shaking hands is widely accepted. Most Chinese businesspeople will shake hands rather than bow. Expect a light grip that may include pumping, which shows pleasure in the greeting.
- Introductions should be very formal, introducing the lesser authority to the higher authority by saying the higher authority's name first.
- There is a correct protocol for the exchange of business cards. You must offer your card with both hands and, in return, receive a card with both hands, keeping it in front of you during conversation. It is also very important to have a bilingual business card—English on one side and Chinese on the reverse. Another helpful tip is to include all of your titles on the card. Additional titles confer more respect and credibility.
- Be punctual. The best advice when working with Chinese business associates is to be early.
- The Chinese dislike being touched by strangers. Maintain a healthy dis-

tance of personal space, approximately 24 inches.

The Business Meeting

- It is very important to memorize the names of your Chinese counterparts before meeting with those individuals.
- In order to “save face,” Chinese businessmen and women will not say “no” to something up front. Instead, they will likely respond “maybe” or “we will see.”
- Be prepared to spend social time with your counterparts prior to discussing business.
- Negotiations will be long and exhausting. For Americans, a two-hour negotiation may be standard. But in China, a negotiation can last for days and will be discussed even beyond the signing of an agreement.

Business Dining

- If you have the opportunity to toast, toast to friendship with your new business contacts. This is considered a very effective way to cement a business relationship. (Remember, one does not drink to one's self. So if the toast is to you, you should not drink.)
- Learn chopstick etiquette. Never stand chopsticks in a bowl of rice or point them at someone. Don't cross the chopsticks. When not in use, place them side-by-side on the chopstick rest.
- Don't eat all of the food presented to

you; always leave behind a small amount. This is a way to show appreciation for your host's generosity.

- Try not to refuse any food or drink from your host. Trying something new is considered a way of appeasing him or her.
- Never discuss business at a meal unless invited to do so by your host.
- If you are the guest of honor, leave shortly after dinner. You need to do this because your guests will not leave until the guest of honor exits.

Gift Giving

- Be sure to give a modest gift to your Chinese counterparts at your first meeting.
- You may have to offer the gift a number of times before your Chinese business contact will accept. This is a show of politeness and humility.
- Appropriate gifts include books, Scotch, regional U.S. gifts and company products. Inappropriate gifts include clocks, U.S. currency, food and lavish gifts.
- Red is a safe color to use when wrapping a gift. However, do not write a note in red. This has a negative connotation.

Pamela Eyring is director of The Protocol School of Washington.

The World is Flat

The accompanying articles on China are the first in a series about staging meetings and events in various regions of the world.



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Pamela Eyring is Owner and Director of The Protocol School of Washington, the leader in etiquette and protocol services. Armed with more than two decades of operational protocol and educational development, Ms. Eyring brings in-depth knowledge and skill to the international protocol and etiquette industry. Formerly the Chief of Protocol at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio, she

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Ms. Eyring has presented seminars and briefings to corporate and government executives, Fortune 500 companies, academia and numerous government and industry organizations. She is a Washington Business Journal columnist with a monthly advice column titled Biz Etiquette. Ms. Eyring blends a professional and direct approach with her topics and presents them in an interactive and entertaining format. She has been interviewed by multiple radio and international television stations and featured in national publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Real Simple Magazine*, and the American Society of Training and Development's *T&D Magazine*.

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