

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN JAPAN

*by Olegario Llamazares**

The Japanese monarchy is the world's oldest (dating back to 660 BC). This explains and justifies the rigid traditions and customs of Japanese society, probably the most ceremonial culture of the world. In this article we offer some tips on business etiquette in Japan:

- The business culture is very formal. People are addressed by Mr or Mrs followed by their surnames. When you know the person you can use the suffix *san* –meaning Mr– after the surname. For example, *Obuchi-san* (Mr *Obuchi*). You must never use first names.
- Professional cards (*meishi*) are a key factor. These are exchanged at the beginning of the meeting and it is considered impolite not to offer them. During all the meeting the cards must be on the table. If you put them away before the end of the meeting it may be misinterpreted. You must not write on them.
- In conversation you should not speak about yourself or express too many personal opinions. The Japanese consider that the group is more important than the individual
- In the business context it is usual to dine in restaurants or go to karaoke bars. You must let them invite you first.
- Japan is the country par excellence for company gifts. Most often, they are offered at initial meetings. When a certain relationship has been established, it is almost compulsory to exchange gifts twice a year: in the second half of December (*Oseibo*) and mid-July (*Ochugen*).
- The Japanese are very conservative in their dress: dark suits, white shirts, ties with not much detail. At business meetings you must not wear striking clothing or casual clothes, except if you are selling fashion.

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To obtain the complete *Negotiation and Business Etiquette Guide in Japan* click [here](#).

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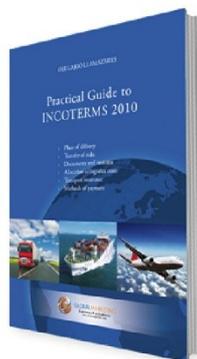


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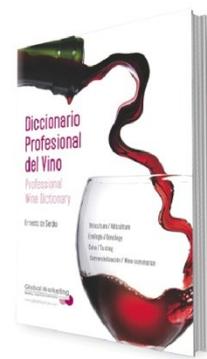
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