OLEGARIO LLAMAZARES GARCÍA-LOMAS

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Practical Guide in 60 countries

- Greetings and introductions
- Names and titles
- Organizing meetings
- Punctuality and time
- Preliminary conversations
- Business meals
- Gift giving
- Business attire

GLOBALMARKETING
Business Publications
www.globalnegotiator.com
BUSINESS CULTURE AN ETIQUETTE GUIDES IN 75 COUNTRIES

The readers of this book can get in www.globalnegotiator.com website The Business Culture and Etiquette Guides in more than 75 countries with a discount of 30% using the coupon code 9009 at the time of purchase.
CONTENTS

ETIQUETTE AND BUSINESS CULTURE ........................................................................................................ 6
Who has to adapt? ........................................................................................................................................ 8
Greetings and introductions ......................................................................................................................... 9
Names and titles .......................................................................................................................................... 11
Organizing meetings .................................................................................................................................. 12
Punctuality and time ..................................................................................................................................... 14
Business cards ............................................................................................................................................. 16
Preliminary conversations ............................................................................................................................. 17
Verbal communication .................................................................................................................................. 18
Non-verbal communication ........................................................................................................................... 19
Business meals ............................................................................................................................................ 21
Gift giving .................................................................................................................................................... 24
Tipping tips .................................................................................................................................................. 26
Business attire ............................................................................................................................................... 27

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN 60 COUNTRIES .................................................................................................. 28
Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela y Vietnam.

INTERNATIONAL ETIQUETTE QUIZ ....................................................................................................... 121
Culture and tradition of each country make people behave differently and if international executives do not adapt to that behavior, they can cause rejection from their counterparts and even jeopardize the success of negotiations. This is especially important in the so-called high context cultures (countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa) in which business is done between people rather than between companies as in Western countries (UE, U.S., or Canada) that are low context cultures.

This book is a practical guide that includes the rules of business etiquette that executives must know and apply when doing business in foreign markets. After a brief discussion of who should adapt to the customs of the counterpart, the main aspects of etiquette are treated following the sequence of international negotiations: greetings and introductions, use of names and titles, organization of meetings, punctuality and time management, business cards exchange, preliminary conversations, verbal and non-verbal communication, business meals, gift giving, etc. In the second part, the guide offers some essential tips for adapting to business etiquette in sixty of the world’s major markets. Finally, an international business etiquette quiz is proposed to reinforce and apply the knowledge learned from reading of the book.

The purpose of this book is to help executives who negotiate in international markets to use business etiquette as a tool to improve relationships with their customers, suppliers and partners in other countries, respecting their culture and traditions. If this helps to conduct business successfully in international markets, I feel greatly satisfied.

Olegario Llamazares García-Lomas
Managing Director
Global Marketing Strategies
www.globalnegotiator.com
ETIQUETTE AND BUSINESS CULTURE
When doing business in a foreign country you need to have some knowledge of the rules and behaviors that are considered acceptable in social and professional relationships. The culture and traditions of each country make people behave differently and if international managers do not know how to adapt to business culture differences, they can cause rejection in the other party and even jeopardize the success of the negotiations.

The importance of etiquette is directly related to the type of culture in which we are doing business; in this sense, we can distinguish between low context cultures and high context. The first are those in which the partners clearly say what they mean: the language is direct and clear and there is no ambiguity - as North Americans say: Tell it like it is. By contrast, in high context cultures, attitudes and circumstances are more important than what is actually said. Examples of low-context cultures are Western countries like the US., Australia, and the Netherlands, while the best example of high context cultures are Asian countries like Japan or China.

The international manager must be especially cognizant of etiquette rules when negotiating in high context countries, in which culture and tradition define the character and the way people act. In these countries, including mostly all of what is known as the emerging world —Asia, Latin America, Africa and Arab countries— business is done mainly with people rather than with companies. Furthermore, evaluation of individuals takes into account the social status so that the behavior —i.e. its social compliance with etiquette rules— is particularly important when you negotiate in these countries.

Another relevant difference between low and high context cultures is that in low context cultures the behaviour with foreign managers visiting the country is very similar to local one, while in high context countries managers than visit the country for business are given preferential treatment in terms of the way people communicate (more indirect and soft), hospitality (social activities) and, above all, they are never given negative answers to their business proposals. Therefore, in these cultures the knowledge and adaptation to local etiquette is very important. The following table includes some examples of low context and high context and their relationship with business etiquette.
The importance of business etiquette: low context and high context cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAW CONTEXT (Etiquette is less important)</th>
<th>HIGH CONTEXT (Etiquette is very important)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who has to adapt?

Once we have highlighted the importance of etiquette when conducting business in international markets, the first question that arises is this: Who should make the effort to learn and adapt to the culture of the other party? There are three possible answers: the traveller, the one who has more negotiating power, or introducing a relatively new concept, the manager who has more cultural intelligence.

The first answer is well reflected in the British saying *When in Rome do as the Romans do*. It is the most logical behaviour and what applies in most international business environments, but also it is necessary to know that there are cultures, such as Latin culture, which are much more flexible than others, perhaps because they come from a mix of cultures. On the opposite of the spectrum, the culture that is less able to adapt is the Islamic culture as it is with a high religious component and does not allow a flexible way to behave.

A second possibility is to use the negotiation power to decide who should adapt to the other’s business etiquette. Normally there is always a party —for example, the seller in an international sales negotiation—who is in a position of inferiority and therefore has to use certain techniques of negotiation to convince the other party when negotiating with people of different cultures. For example, when a Western company receives buyers from high context cultures, they should make the effort to adapt the visitor’s country etiquette: greet them at the door of the building when it comes to senior Chinese executives; give the visitors a gift if they are Japanese; or not drinking alcohol during business meals with Islamic managers.

A third criterion to decide is who should adapt to the other business culture is the
preparation and experience of international business people. There are executives who have travelled a lot and even have lived in different countries —the so called expatriates— and therefore have a greater understanding of other cultures and the ability to adapt to social customs and practices of different countries. This is what American professors Christopher Earley and Elaine Mosakowski called *Cultural Intelligence* in an article published in the Harvard Business Review. They note that one of the most important challenges facing international negotiations is to ensure that messages and positions are well understood for the other party and that negotiators are able to adapt to the other business culture as a request to reach successful negotiations. Cultural intelligence is a must, especially when dealing with very little adaptive cultures —for example the Japanese culture whose executives apply, when negotiating in other countries, their cultural values so it will be the local executive who shall adapt, especially if he has less negotiating power—.

**Greetings and introductions**

In the first encounter with a person from another country, you should take special care and pay close attention to what is done and said. The first impression only happens once but usually is remembered for a long time. In the words and expressions of greeting and farewell, it is very positive to use the language of the other party, even if not completely understood in their cultural context. Thus, the desire to learn the culture of the country you are visiting is transmitted. When English language is used it must take into account the degree of formalism, from the British, *How do you do?*, to the less formal *How are you?* or even *Hi?*, used by Americans and Australians. The answer to the first is equally *How do you do?*, while for the second is *Fine, thank you* or *I'm pleased to meet you*. These expressions are really a ritual and you should not think that they are asking about how we are? (literal translation) and, therefore, must be answered with a description of our state of health, like in Germany.

The physical distance between people greeting each other is also different. In the Western countries the distance is about one and a half meters, so you can shake hands without taking a step forward. In Asian cultures, the distance is higher (two meters), while in Arab countries, the distance tends to be shorter —it is said that the proper distance is one that allows the breath of someone be felt on the other’s face. It is important not to offend your interlocutor by stepping back if he stays too close—.

As the title of one of the most comprehensive books on international business etiquette — *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*, by T. Morrison, G. W. Conaway and Borden— there are three possibilities to greet our foreign clients: kiss, bow, or shake hands. Western culture has been imposed its culture and even in countries where the kiss or bow is
usual between compatriots, the handshake is used as a form of greeting and farewell with foreign negotiators.

The intensity of the handshake differs between countries. For example, in Germany, the US, and Japan it is very strong; in the UK, it is softer; in France it is light and fast (no more than three seconds). In Asia, it is smooth, except in Korea, which is firmer; in Arab countries it is soft and long (up to 10 seconds). In almost all countries the handshake is usually accompanied by a slight nod.

The practice of kiss as a way to greet is not widespread in international business. Nevertheless, in Arab countries it is very common among businessmen or with friends and family, but not with foreign negotiators. In Latin countries, it is used among women, and between women and men when they already know each other. There is actually no kissing, but contacts between the cheeks —what is known as les bises in France; three kisses in France and two in Spain, Italy and Latin America—.

Bows are the most common form of greeting in Japan, and somewhat less in China. In both countries bows are combined with handshakes, so that each culture shows respect for the other culture. The degree of inclination in the bow shows the status to be granted to the other party. For Westerners, it is best to respond with a slight inclination. When doing the bow you must keep the glance low and place the palms on the side of the legs. Women should place the hands crossed in front.

**Tips for International Handshake**

International etiquette establishes that everybody present in a meeting shall be greeted; omissions are noted and are considered as rejection.

Women should take the initiative, reaching out to both men and women, except when they greet senior people.

In the Central European countries shake hands when meeting again in the same day, even when separation time has been short (e.g. after a meal).

Japanese shake hands with a firm gesture. The handshake is accompanied by a slight bow or reverence - depending of the status or the other person - which must be corresponded. This gesture shows respect for the other party.

In Arab countries the handshake is less firm and lasts longer; withdrawing the hand too soon can be interpreted as a rejection.
In Latin America handshakes are longer than in Western countries. When the partners are acquaintances, they are often accompanied with a hug and two pats on the back.

Names and Titles

One of the most sensitive issues in international business etiquette is the use of names and professional titles. In traditional cultures, such as Chinese or Japanese, you shall always call people by their family name; in the US or the UK first names are quickly used, and even diminutives thereof (Tom for Thomas, Will for William or Bob for Robert) while in Germany, Italy and Latin America is more common the use of professional titles.

In Asian countries (China, Japan, Korea) the order of the names is the opposite of that used in the Western countries. Family names come first, then the generational name and in third place, the first name. For example, in the name of Chang Wu Jiang, Chang is the family name, Wu is the generational name, and Jiang is the first name. The correct way to approach this person is Mr. Chang, not Mr. Jiang.

The Arab and Russian names, follow the same order as in the West (first name and then family name) but with the need to insert a patronymic name —derived from the family name— between them. For example, in the Arabic name of Shamsaddin bin Saleh Al Batal, the first name is Shamsaddin, the patronymic name is bin Saleh — which means son of Saleh— and the family name is Al Batal. Following the same rule, in the Russian name Mijailevich Tachenko Sergei, Sergei is the first name, Mijailevich is a patronymic which means son of Mikhail and Tachenko is the family name. In both cases the right thing is to address these people as Mr. Al Batal and Mr. Tachenko, though in Arab countries is usually to use the first name (Mr. Shamsaddin) to address people in a business environment.

In the Hispanic culture it is common to use the first name and two family names, the father first, and then the mother. In conversation only the father family name is used, while in the written documents and for legal purposes, both family names should be used.

In some countries it is advisable to use university and professional titles when introducing people. For example in Latin America, Italy and Portugal graduates and professors are called Doctors (Dottore in Italy) while this word in most Western countries is reserved for medical professionals. In Latin America it is customary to use professional title preceding family name (engineer Ramirez, architect Benegas
or lawyer Ibáñez). In Mexico, managers that hold a university degree are called Licenciado (Licenciado Martinez). In Germany it is common the use of titles: the managing director of the company is presented as Herr Direktor and an engineer as Herr Ingenieur. In Asia, the only country where titles are used is India.

When English language is used in writing there are four abbreviations that precede the family name: Mr., Mrs., Miss and Ms; Mr. for men; Mrs. for married women or women of a certain age; Ms. for women whose marital status is not known; and Miss for young unmarried women, although this one is seldom used. When introducing women most of the times Ms. is used.

### Titles in Six Countries of the European Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNITED KINGDOM</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
<th>GERMANY</th>
<th>ITALY</th>
<th>SPAIN</th>
<th>PORTUGAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mister</td>
<td>Monsieur</td>
<td>Herr</td>
<td>Signore</td>
<td>Señor</td>
<td>Senhor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistress</td>
<td>Madame</td>
<td>Frau</td>
<td>Signora</td>
<td>Señora</td>
<td>Senhora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss</td>
<td>Mademoiselle</td>
<td>Fräulein</td>
<td>Signorina</td>
<td>Señorita</td>
<td>Senhorina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organizing Meetings

There are important differences between cultures on how to organize a business meeting. These differences concern the preparation of the meeting, reception and placement of visitors to the negotiating table, or the turn of speaking during negotiations. All these matters are especially complicated in the case of complex negotiations in which each party is represented by a negotiating team of several people.

The first issue to consider is the agenda of the meeting. In some cultures (Germany, Japan) having a prior agenda is a prerequisite for conducting a negotiation and the negotiators must follow strictly the agenda; other behavior is considered unprofessional. In other countries, such as US, the need for an agenda is accepted but it is handled with considerable flexibility. For example, while a Japanese shall comply strictly with each of the items on the agenda and will not negotiate aspects that are not included in it, an American manager will be more flexible and have no problems jumping from one point to another, breaching the established order as it considers
spontaneity and agility are important to reach an agreement. There is a third group of cultures—Latin America, Africa or Arab countries—when the meetings do not have a prior agenda. At the beginning of the meeting the parties introduce their ideas and proposals with a general approach and flexibility and, above all, adapted to the circumstances.

Responsibility for the organization of the meeting is for the host. The visitor takes a passive role and do not take any initiative because could provoke a breach of the etiquette. In this preparation stage the host has to take into account three basic aspects: Who will negotiate? How are the visitors going to be received? and what kind of table shall be use for the negotiations?

- **Who negotiate:** especially in traditional cultures, the host will want to know very precisely the seniority and qualifications of persons representing the visitor company in order to meet with people of equivalent rank. Even in the first minutes of the meeting questions about than can be asked to confirm the status of the people that represent the other party. This is crucial in countries like India, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

- **Reception of visitors:** depending of the culture are differences in this respect. Normally, visitors are received in the lobby and by a person of lower rank that will not be present in the negotiations. This person takes the visitors to the meeting room where they encounter the members of the negotiating team of the host. But to this general rule there are some exceptions: when the visitor company is represented by its CEO (Chief Executive Officer) is the CEO of the host company who should meet them at the lobby and accompany to the meeting room. According to Chinese etiquette business delegations should be received not in the lobby, but outside, in front of the main door of the building.

- **Tables to negotiate:** it is an important aspect that has to do not only with business etiquette but also with negotiation strategy. When negotiating on rectangular tables, members of the negotiating team of the host must be seated back to windows: in the center the most senior manager, on his right the second highest rank, on the left the third highest rank and so on. However, in China, the place of higher rank is the seat in front and nearest to the entrance of the room (the same happens in restaurants). This seat will be occupied by the head of the Chinese delegation although sometimes as a sign of deference can be assigned to the head of the foreign delegation. When only two people negotiate and the table is rectangular or square should be decided, whether to sit opposite each other (rather competitive negotiation) or in right angle, the host at the head of the table and the visitor to his left (cooperative negotiation).
As regards the beginning of the meeting and the speaking turns, there are important cultural differences. Distinction shall be made between countries with culture of group and individualistic countries. In the first group (especially Asian countries) the person doing introductions and holding the weight of the negotiations is a second-level executive; high rank executives, seldom participate in the discussions and especially never confront members of the other party. By contrast, in individualistic cultures (United States, Australia, United Kingdom) the protagonist from the beginning is the higher rank executive: he will make introductions, intervenes more often and even confronts the other party during the meetings.

**Punctuality And Time**

Another important cultural dimension that has to do with business etiquette is the use of time: there are flexible cultures and other very rigid and this affects in first place at punctuality in meetings.

Regarding punctuality, three types of countries can be distinguished. Firstly, those that consider punctuality essential as it reflects the behavior in business. In these countries —Germany, Switzerland, Japan and also China— is better to arrive a few minutes before the appointment time because is indicative of reliability and fulfillment of compromises in the future (quality, term of delivery, etc.). In a second group of countries that belong to the Western world (France, United Kingdom, United States Union, Australia) and the Eastern European countries (Russia, Poland) business visitors should be on time (o’clock as the Englishmen say), even a short delay (five minutes) is not significant. Finally, in areas such as Latin America, Africa and Arab Countries, delays up to thirty minutes or more are common, especially when is a high rank executive who receives foreign visitors, so making the visitors wait is a way to demonstrate his power. In these circumstances, once you enter the meeting you must not be show dislike for the time waiting as it is a common practice in these countries and thus must be understood.

Also, the time required to achieve agreements and outcome expectations also differ across cultures. For example, negotiations with Japanese and Chinese are time consuming but once the decision is made, implementation is very fast. On the contrary, Western companies, even when they make decisions quickly, take longer to implement them. Except in very low context cultures (US, Netherlands) is not positive to pressure the other side to get agreements; especially in Asia and Latin America, pressuring the other party to take decisions will provoke the opposite effect as they will feel annoyed.
Differences also exist in the time management. This behavior refers to monochronic cultures (Time M) in which the tasks or problems are treated separately and polychronic cultures (Time P) in which different activities are performed simultaneously. Germany is an example of the former and the Latin countries of the latter. Therefore, from the perspective of business etiquette will be convenient to adapt the use of time to the other party habitue.

Use of Time by Executives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monochronic Cultures (Time M)</th>
<th>Polychronic cultures (Time P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- One thing is made at a time.</td>
<td>- Several tasks are made simultaneously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commitment to dates and deadlines are a priority.</td>
<td>- Dates and deadlines are reviewable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commitment to the task performed.</td>
<td>- Commitment to the people rather than to the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A lot of information will be requested.</td>
<td>- Providing information is not so important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Work methodically and at steady pace.</td>
<td>- Work in an intense way but at an irregular rhythm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explanations based on numbers, causes and consequences.</td>
<td>- Explanations based on reasoning rather than figures and facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respect to appointments and punctuality.</td>
<td>- Flexibility in appointments and punctuality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Business Cards

An important aspect of international etiquette is the custom of exchanging cards. If you travel for business and you are going to visit several companies in the same country you should bring enough cards for each visit may be left two or three. On the other hand, one should not rush to deliver business cards. In a first meeting you should deliver cards to people that you are in keeping contact and therefore need to find you. In this sense, it is better to deliver the cards at the end of the meeting rather than at the beginning.

Given the importance attached in many cultures to position and rank of people, it is essential that the business card includes the name, professional title, position in the company, logo and contact details. It is a common practice to write on one side of the card the text in the language of the company’s country and in the other in English. For executives who travel frequently to Asian markets such as China or Japan, it is advisable that the language used is English on one side and the Chinese or Japanese on the other. Currently, more and more executives include his photograph on the card and a QR code for that through a mobile application contact data can be recorded.

The way we give and receive cards also changes across cultures. In Europe and America it is normal to take the card, look at it quickly and put it in a briefcase or jacket pocket. However, this behavior would not be considered polite in Asian countries. In Japan, it is necessary to look closely at the card, read the company and the person firsts name and family name, nodding as a sign that the information is understood perfectly and perhaps make a comment or ask a question which denotes interest. In Japan and Korea, business cards are delivered using both hands so that each thumb hold a corner of the card, to be placed in front of the other person so that it can, hypothetically, read the information when he bows to greet you.

Keep in mind that while in the West business cards are just a way to transfer contact data and remember a name or a position, in the East, business cards are a representation of the person himself, so you must treat them with respect and pay attention to the information that contain.
Ceremonial for delivering business cards in Japan

- Stand up to make the exchange of cards.
- Start the handshake with the person of higher rank or position, then to the next higher level manager, and so on.
- Deliver the card with both hands, using both thumbs to hold the corners. Also receive the card with both hands.
- Deliver the card with the text facing the other party so he/she can read your name and position in the company.
- Make a slight bow or nod to each person you greet, before or after exchanging cards.
- Take time to read and recognize the full name and position of the other person. You can even pronounce the name of the other person for correction in case of error.
- Place the business cards on the table (in the upper right corner) or in a card holder, which are widely used in Japan. The cards should not be stacked one above another.
- Do not place the card into the jacket, pants or briefcase.
- Do not write or make notes on the card in the presence of the other person.

Preliminary Conversations

Before starting a business meeting, especially if it is the first meeting, the parties often spend time talking about trivial matters to know each other—is what in English is called small talk—. This time can vary from just two or three minutes in countries such as U.N. United States and Australia to more than thirty minutes in Asia or Arab countries. It is important to be aware of these conversations, trying to be friendly, and above all, do not disturb the other party with whom you are going to negotiate immediately. For these conversations ate topics favorable and other unfavorable that can be considered taboo. These unfavorable topics are often similar in most countries.
Among the favorable topics, with no negative consequences, are the weather (very usual in the UK) or the trip, and others in which the visitor demonstrates some knowledge of the country of the other party. Among the topics best suited to connect with the other party are history and culture, attractions (all countries, even those that are not particularly beautiful have some of them), food and sports. These are safe topics in which is difficult to put one’s foot in it.

By contrast there are topics that is better to avoid such as: political matters (especially in no democratic countries), religion (in Muslim countries), ethnic and racial conflicts, human rights, the role of women, etc. On these subjects, the other party could have a deep-rooted opinion, completely opposite to ours, so a conflict may arise.

One issue that may be particularly troublesome is the comparison with other countries, especially neighboring countries. Throughout history almost all countries have maintained wars or suffered invasions from other countries in the same area, so they have bad memories that last over time, especially in the country that has been invaded or dominated; on the other hand, the invading country does not usually have these negative perceptions. Therefore, in these preliminary talks is not convenient to mention these neighbouring countries, even mentioning that we do business with them. For example, when doing business in Ireland is better not to mention the UK, in Austria to Germany, in Poland to Russia, in Peru to Chile or in China to Japan. Even within a country there may be rivalries between main cities that are best avoided as is the case of Madrid-Barcelona (in Spain), Dubai-Abu Dhabi (UAE) and Bogota-Medellin (Colombia).

**Verbal Communication**

The way people communicate is also related to education and courtesy and in this sense must be adapted to each country´s etiquette. Among the aspects of verbal communication that deal directly with business etiquette can be distinguished: the tone of the conversation, respect to speaking turns and the use of impersonal and plural forms.

There are countries where executives tend to speak at a very fast pace, with a high tone voice and emphasis on certain points in the conversation; this is the case, for example of Russia, Argentina and Israel. By contrast there are other countries — Sweden, Japan and Canada are good examples— where executives talk in a very calm way with a low tone and no emotional component that is not considered correct. Once again, the international executive must adapt his form of communication to not disturb the other party.
As regards speaking turns, in traditional cultures, especially in Asia, it is really bad-mannered to interrupt the other party and actually in negotiations with foreign people is rarely done as it is considered disrespectful. Also in the more developed countries (Germany, Sweden, USA, Canada, etc.) speaking turns also are much respected; interruptions are considered unprofessional.

As a general rule, is better to address the other party using impersonal and plural forms, especially in traditional cultures where the group prevails over the individual. In Asia is really important to avoid what is called *losing face*, i.e. personalize a comment on someone and thereby harm their image within the group - for example in a meeting you cannot use phrases such as *at the last meeting you said that ..........*, but phrases like *in the last meeting was said that ..........* or *at the previous meeting we said that ..........*

Finally it is necessary to mention that in business meetings it is preferable to avoid the jokes and, of course, swearwords. The jokes often have problems of understanding due to cultural or language differences. As for the swearwords, especially in traditional cultures, degrade the social status of people who use them with an immediate loss of personal image that is transferred to the professional world.

**Non-Verbal Communication**

In a negotiation, besides talking and listening to the other party you must also pay close attention to nonverbal communication. Depending on the country you should avoid certain behaviors and gestures denoting rudeness and, in some cases, even may jeopardize the outcome of the negotiation. There are many situations of that type. The following table shows some patterns of nonverbal communication that are related to the international business etiquette.
### Non verbal communication and International business etiquette

| Sitting Down | - For Northern Europeans and Asians the correct way to sit down is upright with feet together on the floor. In many Asian countries crossing your legs is frowned upon.  
- The Americans prefer to be more informal in meetings and tend to sit down adopting a comfortable, relaxed position.  
- In Arab countries cross your legs is shameful and to show the sole of the shoe is considered offensive. |
| Physical contact | - In US, the Nordic countries and most Asian countries physical contact with business partners is avoided.  
- In Latin cultures physical contact-hugging occurs between people of the same social level that have developed a personal relationship.  
- The Arabs and Russians are more prone to physical contact. The Russians touch the shoulder of the other person and embrace him; the Arabs gave effusive hugs and kisses.  
- In India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore, the head is considered the place where the soul resides. Never touch a person's head—even slapping a child— or pass an object above it as it is considered a sacred part of a person. |
| Gestures | - In UK the sign of Victory “V” (with the index and middle fingers) with the palm of the hand towards the interlocutor has an obscene meaning.  
- Point the index to the cheek and turn the finger means praise in Italy. The same gesture, but in the temple means be crazy in most European countries and Latin America  
- In the USA the sign of O.K. (form a circle with the thumb and index with the other three fingers extended upward Index) means zero or nothing.  
- To call someone shaking the hand with the four fingers together and the palm up is acceptable in Europe and the USA, but is a sign of rudeness in Japan, Singapore and Thailand.  
- The left hand should not be used to move objects or take food in Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Malaysia or Indonesia because it is considered dirty because it is the one used to wipe when using the bathroom. |
**Smiles**

- Filipinos, Thais and Malaysians continually smile as a sign of courtesy. Indonesians smile before giving bad news to reduce the negative effect on the other party.
- Usually, the Japanese do not laugh about something funny but to reduce nervousness under uncertainty, tension or embarrassment.
- If all countries is preferable not to laugh out loud during a negotiation unless you have a personal relationship with the other party.

**Glances**

- The Arabs look at the eyes all the time and intensively to discover how is the other person. Scandinavians appreciate eye contact as a sign of sincerity.
- The British tend to look to the other party after starting the conversation or to tell him that is his turn to speak.
- In Mexico and Japan, the direct gaze gesture is considered aggressive and disrespectful, especially to people in high business positions.

---

### Business Meals

Cultural practices in business meals (lunches and dinners) are also very different from one country to another. United States executives prefer breakfast or dinner parties to discuss business. In Europe, lunch is the meal mostly used to advance in business negotiations. In Mexico and Central American countries is very common to held breakfast meetings very early (from 8:00), a custom that is unthinkable in France or Germany. In Asia, high-level meetings continue with invitations to dinner. In India, due to the midday traffic as well as heat and humidity, business dinners are more common than lunches.

Business meals times are also different. Dinners in Russia begin at 18:00, in Mexico about 20:00 and Spain —the latest country in the world in this respect— about 21:30 or 22:00. The tradition about table talk is also different. Japanese dinners prolong dinners with long conversations. On the contrary, in China and India, once the dinner guests have taken the desserts they leave.

The use of cutlery has certain peculiarities. Europeans hold the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right all the time; they use the knife to place the food on the fork. Americans once having cut the food with the knife in his right hand and the fork in the left, place the knife on the plate and take the fork with the right hand to eat. In
Asian countries is highly appreciated that foreign visitors use of chopsticks. When you have finished eating you should place the chopsticks on the table or on a plate with other chopsticks; place them over the plate of food, in parallel, in the style that marks the etiquette in Western countries would be a sign of bad luck. If chopsticks are used to take food from a tray they must be turned and used the sharp edges, so that the part of the sticks that has been in contact with the mouth does not touch the food on the tray. Also in a Chinese meal you should not end the soup before eating other dishes. Like rice, soup should serve as accompaniment throughout the meal. To request to be served further soup or rice you must held the bowl with both hands.

In Arab countries it is considered impolite to eat everything on the plate. You should leave some food like a compliment to the host, to show that the food served was really abundant; if you leave food in a restaurant is considered a sign of wealth. It is also permissible to eat by hand (only the right one, never the left), provided that the host has initiate this practice. By contrast, in Europe and Latin America is considered rude to eat with your hands and leave food on the plate, especially in Bolivia.

In most of the countries guests attending a business meal wait to be placed in the table for the host. In China placing people in a business lunch or dinner —called banquet— is really special. The tables are usually round. The senior host sits at the place in front of the restaurant door with the senior guest sitting to his right. Around them are placed the other guests from high to low range. Guests should not start to eat until the host does. Business banquets in China are very important for the parties to meet, especially in high-level negotiations, so you should know some behavior patterns for these occasions.
Tips for banquets in China

• Try Chinese food: many dishes that are considered exotic delicacies generally are not served in the West.

• Be on time: you should never be late for a banquet in China. Normally the Chinese will arrive fifteen minutes early. Lunch is served from 11:30 am onwards and dinner from 18:00.

• Attention to the seating: tables are round and the host sits facing the restaurant door, with the guest of honor to his right.

• Serve food to guests: it is traditional (though nowadays less common) that host serves food to guests.

• Take the food from the center of the table: as the tables are round, diners are served directly from the trays in the center. Trays are not passed between people.

• Toast several times during the banquet: the most common toast is Gan Bei (dry your glass in Mandarin Chinese) or Yam sing (the same meaning in Cantonese Chinese). Usually toasts are made with local wines or baiju (strong liquor).

• Down your cup: when you toast, down your cup below the top height of the cup of your guest as a sign of respect.

• Use chopsticks: it is advisable to use chopsticks. When you have finished eating you should place the chopsticks on the table or on a plate with other chopsticks; place them over the plate of food, in parallel, in the style that marks the etiquette in Western countries would be a sign of bad luck.

• Do not talk about business: banquets are not for talking about business but to know each other and become friends. There is no table talk. Once the Chinese have eaten the last dish (the fruit) they will begin to leave quickly, even without saying goodbye.

Being invited to dinner at a Japanese house is a great honor. You should remove your shoes at the door and wear slippers from the entrance to the dining room, where they are removed. You have to wear them again to go to the bathroom, where you change them for slippers. When you return to the dining room do not forget to make the change. During dinner, guests sit in a kneeling position on a mat around a low table. Men should keep the knees apart three or four inches and women together. After dinner, during table talk you must seat with the legs crossed.
Relating to the possibility to discuss business at meals, culture also provides different patterns in each country. In low context countries (USA, Australia, Netherlands) you can talk about business from the beginning because meals are considered a way for doing business rather than social events. In other countries such as Spain and Latin American, negotiation takes place once the parties have finished the eating and lasts for a long time (an hour or more) depending on the complexity of the negotiation; but if the parties already know each other can negotiate from the beginning. In Asia, Africa and Arab countries meals are social events and it is not advisable to raise business matters.

Finally when it comes to pay, in all countries it is understood that the host will pay the bill. However, in some countries of Central and Northern Europe (especially in the Netherlands and Nordic countries) it is quite usual to have informal business lunches, in which the bill is split between the parties or, as they say in the Netherlands Going Dutch.

### Phrases to toast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Toast 1</th>
<th>Toast 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chine (Mandarin)</td>
<td>Gan Bei</td>
<td>Dry your cup!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (Cantones)</td>
<td>Yam sing o Yam pai</td>
<td>Dry your cup!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Kanpai</td>
<td>Dry your cup!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banzai (muy formal)</td>
<td>Long life to you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Za vashe zdorovye</td>
<td>Good health!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mir i druzhba</td>
<td>Peace and friendship!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Prosit</td>
<td>Bon Appetite!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Santé</td>
<td>Good health!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italia</td>
<td>Salute</td>
<td>Good health!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Salud</td>
<td>Good health!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Skål</td>
<td>Cup, drink!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| International toast   | Cheers         | -----

### Gift Giving

It is important to know and understand the ways that countries exchange gifts in business relationships. In some countries, like Japan, the custom of giving gifts is
deeply rooted and not giving them would be considered a contempt, while in other countries could be considered offensive or even a form of bribery. International managers must know when to deliver gifts (at the beginning or at the end of the negotiations), whether to open or not in public, and what kind of gifts are most appropriate for each culture.

In US business gifts are very modest, even legally, for tax reasons, this practice is limited to a maximum price of 25 dollars per item. It is very common to give clients promotional items (pens, bags, gadgets) bearing the company logo. These gifts are not wrapped in gift paper.

In Western Europe, there is no tradition of giving gifts at the beginning of the business relationship. In fact in countries like Germany or UK is almost a non-existent practice. In Latin countries gifts are usually deliver during Christmas holidays.

Japan is the country where the tradition of business gifts is more extended. Gifts between companies are almost an obligation at the beginning of year (January 1st.) and mid-year (July 15th.). Besides, gifts also offered in the first meeting. For Japanese the ceremony of giving gift —how gifts are wrapped and delivered— it is as important as the gift itself. It is difficult to guess whether they will give a gift of little value or one that is expensive, so it is advisable to find out something about it so to deliver a gift of the same level. The Japanese never open the gifts so this practice should be avoided when we receive gifts from them. If they open the gifts, they are usually very little expressive although this does not mean dislike.

In China and other Asian countries there is a tradition of refusing gifts three times because they do not want to seem greedy. Therefore, when a gift is given you should insist on it being accepted. Once the gift has been accepted, acceptance should be acknowledged. Gifts must be delivered to the head of the delegation, making clear that is a gift on behalf of the company you represent, to the company or institution that receive it. It is usual to deliver gifts at the end of the negotiations. They must be delivered with both hands. As is the case of Japan, gifts are not open in public.

Both in China and Japan, when negotiating with several people from the same company you must deliver gifts of different values. A gift of more value to the person of higher rank and other of less valuable for the rest.

When an invitation is received to dinner in a private house, in most countries except for example in Saudi Arabia, is advisable to bring a small gift (chocolates, wine, whiskey) to be delivered on arrival so it does not seem to be a compensation for the food. Another possibility is to send flowers to the hostess, in which case
you should consult your local florist since flowers have different meanings in each country, especially in the association which can be made with funerals, for example, carnations in Switzerland or chrysanthemums in France and Japan.

When choosing a business gift the best options are products that denotes a regional origin of the visitor’s country (ceramics, crafts, food products and wines, books with illustrations of landscapes or monuments, etc.). Moreover, you will avoid certain gifts in some countries.

**Gifts that should not be given**

- Perfume or wine in France; they are their specialty.
- Wall clocks China; are considered a symbol of luck.
- Gifts of four units in China since the number is pronounced like the word death and for this reason is considered an unlucky number.
- Wine and liquor in Arab countries; are prohibited by Islamic law.
- Leather Goods in India because the cow is a sacred animal.
- Cutting Instruments (knives, scissors) in Latin America as it can be interpreted that you want to cut the relationship.

**Tipping Tips**

It is difficult to summarize the customs on tipping in restaurants and public services in different countries. In US tipping is very common so when traveling around the country is advisable to carry some banknotes of one and five dollars. In European countries tip is usually included in the bill (as service charge) so it should not be necessary to leave any amount, unless the service has been excellent or worthy reward employees for something special. In Japan there is no tradition of tipping and can be considered an insult or offense. Equally offensive is, in any country, to leave a very small tip (the change coins) though the service has been very bad. The tip percentage varies between countries, from 5%, that could be considered the minimum, up to 15%. The general rule is that the more category has the establishment the higher tip should be left as long as the service has been good.
**Business Attire**

Attire is also a component of business etiquette because it relates directly to the image and status that conveys a person. In international business it is highly influenced by the industry in which you work: for example it is much more formal and conservative in finance or consulting than, for example, in information technology or advertising.

As a general rule it is better to be conservative: men should wear blue or gray suits and women jacket suits and medium heel shoes. However there are some countries were great importance is attached to fashion and elegance. They look a person from below (starting with shoes) to above, and pay attention to clothing accesories (watch, pen, briefcase). Some of these countries where is important to be elegant are Italy, Argentina and Singapore.

In other countries what is valued is the care and cleaning of clothing, rather than its quality or design. This is the case of Germany, Japan and the countries of Eastern Europe, where it is most appropriate dress conservatively, without attracting attention.

In the first meeting is advisable that men wear suit and tie, especially in the case of negotiations of certain level; nevertheless, there are some countries with a very warm weather where almost everyone goes with shirt (long sleeve shirts) such as in Caribbean countries, Western Africa or the Philippines.

Women have to be especially careful when they visit Arab countries so there are many differences between them, ranging from United Arab Emirates where the customs are quite comparable to those of the West, to its neighbor Saudi Arabia where there are many restrictions. In this country, women should dress shirts with high collar and long sleeves, pants or skirts well below the knee, and wear a scarf to cover their hair in certain places.

When invited to public events (receptions, cocktails, presentations, etc.) you have to be especially careful in the way you dress as you will contact and talk with a lot of people. The first thing to do is to fulfill what is called the *dress code*, i.e, the rule suggested by the institution or company that organizes the event. If the invitation does not mention anything about you should ask how to dress. The rule in all countries is that as the day progresses the etiquette is more formal: at a dinner party you must go *more dressed* that in a lunch or a cocktail party.
BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN 60 COUNTRIES
BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN 60 COUNTRIES

Below, you can find the most important etiquette rules that you should take into account when doing business in 60 countries that constitute the major world markets. These rules relate to topics such as: greetings and introductions, names and titles, organizing meetings, punctuality and time management, business meals, gift giving, business attire etc.

A more complete information on etiquette and business culture in these 60 countries and others (for a total of 75) can be found in the Business Culture and Etiquette Guides available on the website www.globalnegotiator.com.

ARGENTINA

• Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting; one should greet every person individually and not the group as a whole. Once a certain degree of familiarity has been achieved, men may kiss women on the cheek.

• Argentines usually greet each other with a kiss on either cheek quite informally. In Buenos Aires, they give just one kiss, but in some provinces two kisses are given.

• In general, negotiators look straight into each other’s eyes, but one should be careful not to overdo it.

• The use of the Spanish forms usted and tú depends on age and professional status. People with a high status and older are addressed as Mr (Señor) and Mrs (Señora). In letters and e-mails, professional titles are frequently used. Young executives are immediately called by their first name.

• Professional titles like Licenciado (University Graduate), Doctor (Doctor), Abogado (lawyer) or Ingeniero (Engineer) are frequent, but less used than in other Latin American countries. In any case, the use is fairly strict. For example, an engineer is called engineer and not doctor as in other Latin American countries. Doctor is only used for doctors in the medical profession.

• Unlike Spain and other Latin American countries where two surnames are used: first the one of the father and second the one of the mother; the Argentineans only use their paternal surname.
• Argentinean executives use sophisticated language. Eloquence is a very highly prized. You should be prepared to participate in intellectual debates. In this respect, business culture is similar to that in France.

• Like in other Latin American countries, the verb *coger* must be avoided as it has a sexual meaning (make love). This can be replaced by *tomar* o *agarrar*.

• The word *che*, which means man in the Mapuche Indian language, is frequently used in a popular and informal level. It has also other meanings: *how are you?*, *do you know what?*, *come over here*, etc. Ernesto Guevara, Argentinean doctor and one of the Cuban Revolution leaders, is known as Ernesto *Che* Guevara since he used the word all the time.

• It is better not to express any political opinions; in particular, you should not mention the military dictatorship, the Falklands conflict with UK (known as *la Guerra de las Malvinas*), or the frequent corruption scandals. The Argentin do not like being compared with other Latin American countries, especially Brazil.

• When negotiating outside the capital Buenos Aires, in cities like Córdoba, Mendoza and Santa Fe, it is preferable not to make too much praise to Buenos Aires; as an Argentine saying goes: *Dios está en todos los sitios, pero atiende en Buenos Aires* (God is everywhere, but serves in Buenos Aires).

• Good topics for conversation are football, music (opera is very popular), history and literature —the twentieth century gave important authors like Borges, Cortazar or Sábato—.

• Football is the great passion. The national team has been twice world champion. The rivalry between both teams of Buenos Aires —Boca Juniors and River Plate— is legendary. Argentineans ask foreigners which team they prefer: Boca or River?, since they think everybody is interested in football. Other sports in which Argentina highlights worldwide are basketball and tennis.

• Argentina is not the ideal place for vegetarians. You should be prepared to try and make compliments on all kind of meats, especially when you are invited to the *asados* (barbecues that are usually held in the open air). Many houses also have indoor barbecues to roast meat (*achuras*).

• Business should not be discussed during meals since these are considered social acts.

• Gifts should be of a good quality, although not too expensive, in order to avoid any misinterpretation.

• When visiting regular clients, a present to the negotiator’s secretary (perfume, a
scarf, etc.) may help you gain access to appointments at a later date.

• When you receive a gift, you should open it in front of the person who has given it to you and express gratitude.

• Of the whole of Latin America, Argentina is the country where dress matters most to create a good impression. Conclusions are drawn about a person’s personality, social and professional level from his external appearance. Suits, shirts, shoes, ties, wallets, etc., will be carefully observed and, even, commented on. They should be of good quality, modern design and prestigious brands.

• Social status is basic for doing business. For example, people that take summer holidays in the Uruguayan resort of Punta del Este, normally has a high status.

AUSTRALIA

• The usual greeting is shaking hands with the informal Good day (pronounced gaday). Women usually shake hands. A kiss on the cheek is only for friends.

• Initially they address people by their surname, but then quickly call them by their first names. You should wait for them to do this first.

• Australia is not a class-conscious society. You should not boast about academic qualifications, social status, professional positions, or material possessions.

• It is a good idea to learn some expressions that are not used in other English-speaking countries. For example: Gudonya (Good on you, which means well done), No worries (No problem), True blue (The real thing), tinny (can of beer) or sunnies (sunglasses). They also shorten some words like Aussies (Australians), barbie (barbecue) or uni (university). Nevertheless, these expressions should not be used in the business environment, since they are considered very colloquial.

• At the start of the meeting, business cards should be exchanged, and it is a good idea to explain the pronunciation of non-Anglo Saxon names if you have one.

• In business conversations, you should not mention the Aborigines (local indigenous population representing 1% of the total population), or compare the Australian lifestyle with the British or American.

• The favourite topic of conversation and hobby is sport. When playing sport with Australians, fair play is compulsory. When someone misses a good shot at tennis or golf, it is polite to say bad luck.
• Australians like foreign visitors to talk and ask about the country’s natural beauties. They will really appreciate any mention of the desert landscape or the Great Barrier Reef.

• Social entertainment par excellence is in the pubs and bars. The custom is that everyone buys a round. The foreign visitor should also buy a round when it is his turn.

• During social events you do not usually talk business unless your counterpart does.

• Australians like to enjoy their family and social life. You should not expect them to work after 17:00 or at weekends. Summer holidays are from 15th December to 31st January. During this period, business activity slows down. In May and September, they usually take some days to relax coinciding with the school holidays.

• Business breakfasts are quite common, as well as meetings at early in the morning (from 8:00).

• You should bear in mind time differences. The country is divided into three time zones: west, central, and east (Sydney, Melbourne) with time differences of one and a half hours and two hours.

**BELGIUM**

• The form of greeting is a quick, strong handshake —although not as strong as in neighbouring Germany— when you introduce yourself as well as when you leave.

• Men and women who already know each other give three kisses in the air (*les bises*, in French), brushing each alternate cheek.

• Although Belgians are friendly, the business environment is formal. First names are not used, except among friends. Before the surname, you must put *Monsieur* or *Madame* when speaking French and *Dhr.* or *Mevr.* in Flemish.

• The typical Belgian is very punctual and expects visitors to be the same. Punctuality is taken very seriously in business.

• Personal privacy is deeply rooted in the Belgian business culture. You should never ask personal questions. You should knock before you enter an office and then close the door behind you when leaving.
• You should avoid conversations about the linguistic division of the country or draw comparisons between the Flemish and the Walloons. Religion is not a good conversation topic either.

• Belgians feel a strong rivalry towards Holland; they even tell jokes about the Dutch and the Dutch tell jokes about them. It is best not to comment on this issue.

• Favourite topics of conversation are food (they have a reputation for being one of the best gourmets in the world), art (especially great Flemish painters like Rubens or van Eyck) and sports, especially football and cycling (Eddie Mercx, five times winner of the Tour de France is a local idol).

• Belgium is really proud of its cuisine. Mussels and chocolate are some of its specialities. They also claim that they invented chips. Belgian cuisine uses a lot of garlic (you should be careful with this).

• The most usual business meal is lunch beginning at 12:00. You can talk about professional matters while you are eating, although it is advisable to let the host take the initiative.

• Table manners are continental. The knife is held in the right hand and the fork in the left. It is bad manners to do otherwise.

• You should eat everything on your plate. Being thrifty, Belgians think that it is wasteful to leave food on the plate.

• In restaurants, the tip is usually included in the bill, but you can also leave a little extra if the service has been good.

• Beer is the drink par excellence (they have three hundred types). Belgians drink more for pleasure than in large amounts and appreciate foreign visitors who know something about beer.

• Belgium is a country where the attire is important for both men and women, and is related to the socio-professional status. Do not forget that the actress Audrey Hepburn, a fashion icon, was Belgian.

**BRAZIL**

• The most usual form of greeting is shaking hands (kisses on the cheeks among women) and the expressions *Como vai?* (How are you?) or *Tudo bem?* (Everything okay?).
• When high-level executives introduce themselves or someone else, they say *Senhor* (Mister) or *Senhora* (Madame) followed by the surname. Young executives address themselves with their first name.

• Professional titles such as doctor, director or engineer are less used than in other Latin American countries.

• English is only spoken by part of the business world. It is best to try to speak in Spanish or Portuguese. Portuguese can easily understand Spanish language, since their pronunciation and structure are quite similar. If you speak slowly and clearly (*falar devagar e claro*), conversations can be held in Spanish. Then, they will answer in *Portuñol*, a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish.

• In conversation, you should avoid sensitive issues like politics (mainly, social differences) religion or the country’s deforestation. It is not advisable to compare Brazil with Argentina. Anyway, Brazilians are very open and it’s hard to offend them.

• Favourable topics of conversation are football —the national team known as the *canarinha* (by the yellow colour of the that remembers Canaries) is the most decorated in the world— the music (samba and bossa nova) and family (especially children).

• Brazilians regard themselves as Americans. You should not call them Latin Americans or South Americans and, least of all, Spanish. Nor should you use the expression *in America*, in reference to US.

• In meetings, they usually serve a coffee (*cafezinho*) at any time of the day. You should drink it out of politeness. As it is the national drink, in many restaurants it is served for free.

• Lunches are a way of continuing a business conversation in a less formal atmosphere. Dinners are exclusively social.

• If you invite your Brazilian partner to lunch or dinner you should choose a prestige restaurant. Staying in the hotel in which you are housed is not appropriate.

• Brazilian cuisine has a strong regional component. The Baiana cuisine (from Salvador de Bahía) is based on fish and seafood, and the Gaucha cuisine (from the southern state of Río Grande) specializes in grilled and barbecue meats. The typical national dish is *feijoada* (beans with pork).

• Typical drinks are *guaraná* (fruit drink, which is especially popular in the south), *caipiriña* (made with *cachaça*, sugar and lemon) and rhum. In any case, the most popular drink among Brazilians is beer.
• To make a toast you simply use the word *Saúde*, which means health.

• During meals, salt must not be passed to other people as is a sign of bad luck. If requested, it must be left on the table for the other person to take it.

• Gifts should be given at the end of the negotiation. If you receive a gift, you should open it in front of the person who has given it to you and express your gratitude.

• There are many African and Indian beliefs and superstitions are commonly held, especially outside the large urban centers and in some cities like Salvador de Bahía.

• Because of the huge distances between main cities, you should travel by plane. There are vouchers valid for several trips. A shuttle service operates between São Paulo and Río de Janeiro every fifteen minutes from Santos Dumont airport in the centre of Río. There are also shuttle services with Brasilia and Belo Horizonte from Río.

• Office hours are from 8:00/8:30 to 17:30/18:00, although senior executives start and finish the day later. Lunch, which normally lasts one hour, is between 12:00 and 14:00, and dinner from 20:00.

• Carnival week and the following week, are not the times for doing business. You should consult the calendar for February before planning a business trip on these dates.

• Dress is casual as you might expect in a country with a tropical climate, although quality clothes and modern designs are appreciated. During summer months, Brazilians do not usually wear a jacket and tie. Nevertheless, foreign visitors, mainly Europeans, are expected to dress more smartly, especially in Brasilia and São Paulo.

• The hottest period is from October to March. If you visit the south of the country between May and August, you should take warmer clothing.

**BULGARIA**

• The usual form of greeting is the handshake at the beginning and end of the meeting. Friends shake the two hands. Unlike other Slavic countries, a kiss is unusuals between men on the cheeks. When a man is introduced to a woman, he must wait for her to reach out first.
• The most common forms of greeting are: *Dobar den* (Good Morning), *Zdraveite* (Hello) and *Dovijdane* (Goodbye).

• People are called by their surname preceded with Mr, Mrs or Miss. The equivalent words in Bulgarian are *Gospodin* (Mr), *Gospoja* (Mrs) and *Gospojitza* (Miss).

• The Bulgarian names, like the Russian names, are composed of the first name, the patronymic (derived from the father’s name) and the surname. The women add an *a* to the surname of the husband. The wife of Mr Markov would be Mrs Markova.

• In the first meeting people call themselves by the family name but afterwards they use quickly first names.

• Punctuality is strict in the world of business. If you arrive late, you must justify your delay and ask to be excused.

• It is important to give your counterpart a business card and wait until they give you theirs. Pay a lot of attention to the title and position as status is very important.

• Their style of communication is more Latin than Slavic. The distance with the interlocutor is close and it is normal to have dynamic presentations with lots of gestures, expressions and elevations in high tone of voice.

• It is important to remember that confirmation or negation with head movements is opposite to the occidental world. To give approval Bulgarian move the head from right to left, to refuse something move the head up and down.

• In the first conversations you must avoid talking about the communist period, for example, establishing comparisons with other East countries. Do not forget that they are very proud and this topic can be considered as condescending. Neither is it suitable to mention the origins of the gipsy population — various hundreds of thousands that are known as *Roma*.

• Favourable conversation topics are sports (there are Olympic champions in weightlifting and rhythmic gymnastics), the history of the country (in a certain way they are considered as the cradle of the Slavic culture) and their wines (one of the most popular is the red wine *Melnik* which is produced in the southeast of the country).

• During the meetings they will offer coffee, which is generally very strong. When they have more confidence with you they will invite you for a *Rakiya* (a cherry liquor) or *Pliska* (a type of cognac). Also it is usual to drink vodka.
• In business meals, dishes are plentiful and you are obliged to try all typical specialties of the country, among others: kavarma (a por casserole of pork with carrots and mushrooms), Gyuvech (cooked with chickpeas and peppers) or Tsatsa (a small white fish which is eaten in the Black Sea coast).

• Presents are appreciated, mainly electronic gadgets and items for the house. They are opened once they are handed over. Typical products of the country are wooden bottles with rose essence called Attar —2,000 petals are needed to produce a gram of essence—. 70% of the world production is carried out in Bulgaria.

• As in other Eastern European countries, business attire is not really important. In this sense, it is preferable not wear clothing or accessories (watches, wallets) too luxurious.

CANADA

• The most usual form of greeting is shaking hands, standing upright. A man must wait for a woman to hold out her hand first.

• The most common expression for greeting is How do you do?; Pleased to meet you is also commonly used. Other more colloquial expressions like Hi or Hello must only be used for greeting when a personal relationship has been established.

• Professional titles (Doctor, Engineer, Lawyer) are not used. To introduce people Canadians use Mr and Mrs followed by the surname. For women whose marital status is not known they use Ms.

• In negotiations people are usually addressed by their surname, although over the telephone it is more common to use the first name.

• Eye contact, although not too intense, is advisable and conveys interest and sincerity.

• Canadians like to keep a distance of about two feet whilst standing and talking to each other.

• Canadian culture is more like British than American. Even in the Quebec province (despite the fact that French language is spoken) the culture is more British than French.

• Canadians who speak English are called English speakers and those that speak French, French speakers. The term British Canadians must be avoided because
there are many English-speaking Canadians whose ancestors are not from the British Isles.

• It is impolite to speak a foreign language if some of the people attending the meeting do not know this language.

• In conversation, you should not mention sovereignty of the Quebec region or compare Canada with the US.

• Although the standard metric system is the official system, in the industrial sector many people still use the Imperial system (inches, feet, etc.).

• Canadians are interested in learning about other countries’ cultures. They like talking about travel, history and foreign gastronomy.

• Ethnic groups (Hindus, Chinese, etc.) are becoming increasingly important in some areas. In Vancouver many businesses are owned by Hong Kong Chinese emigrants.

• As in Britain, the V sign (victory) with the palm of the hand facing inwards is an insult.

• There is no tradition of giving gifts. The best choices are gifts that are not very expensive and representative of the country of the visitor.

• Canadians are very conservative in dress. Following the British tradition they prefer clothing that looks well-used rather than the latest fashions and original designs.

• When travelling in Canada you should bear in mind the huge distances: it is the second-largest country in the world after Russia; it has six time zones with five-hour time difference between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

**CHILE**

• The usual form of greeting is to shake hands at the beginning and end of the meeting. Men can kiss women on the cheek once a degree of familiarity has been achieved.

• Unlike other Latin American countries Chileans do not usually use professional titles (Doctor, Engineer, Graduate). Address them as Mr and Mrs (Señor/Señora) before the surname and Don/Doña before the first name.
• In conversations you should not make comments about the General Pinochet period. Favourite topics are travel, football, the history of Chile and literature; any mention of the two Nobel prize winners, Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda, will be well received.

• The best time for an appointment is mid-morning. It is usual to prolong the meeting into lunchtime. Business dinners (called comida in Chile) are unusual and are only suggested where there is some kind of personal relationship.

• Gifts are not usually given in business dealings. If you receive a present, you must open it immediately in the presence of the person who has given it to you.

• Certain gestures should be avoided. Banging your left hand with your right fist is obscene. Stretching out the palm of your hand with your fingers separated means the other person is idiot.

• The local food is varied. The most typical is seafood and meat pasties. It is impolite to ask for a second helping.

• Chileans dress quite conservatively and uniformly: dark suits, light shirts and discreet ties. You should avoid bright colours and fashion designs. In a business environment, women wear suits and high heels.

• The usual way to travel in the country is by plane or bus. There is no railway network.

• Given the huge distances (6,400 km of coast), the climate is extremely variable: from a subtropical climate in the north to a subarctic climate in the south. Santiago has a mild continental climate.

• The holiday period is January and February. These are not the best months to visit the country for business.

CHINA

• The most common form of greeting is a slight bow from the shoulders rather than from the waist and the words Ni hao (How are you?). A brief handshake is also the norm (you should wait for them to hold out their hand first). Goodbye is Zai jian.

• Physical contact (embraces, kisses, pats) must not be used in business relations. You should not stare for a long period of time either.
Business cards are widely used. One side should be written in English, and the other in Chinese. The larger hotels have business centres that can print the information on the card for you in Chinese characters. It is therefore advisable to have the company’s logo already printed on both sides of the card.

Like most Asian countries, Chinese names consist of surname, generation name and first name. For example, in the name *Li Paio Hui*, *Li* is the surname, *Paio* is the generation name and *Hui*, the first name. You must call them Mr or Mrs followed by their surname. First names must not be used in a business context.

In Hong Kong and other coastal areas like Shanghai, Western European names are used. Initials or even English names are used. For example, *Chang Wu Jiang* can call himself Walter Chang or put on his cards W.J. Chang.

Punctuality is essential since it is a matter of respect and seriousness in business. The Chinese usually arrive at the meeting fifteen minutes before the arranged time.

In introductions, the most commonly used terms are *Xian Shen* (Mr) and *Xiao jie* (Mrs) before the surname. For example, *Xian Shen Wang* (Mr Wang) or *Xiao jie Zhang* (Mrs Zhang). *Zhu ren* (Director) is placed after the surname of senior civil servants. For example, *Li Zhu ren* (Director Li).

At work the term *Lao* (senior) is commonly used before the surname to address older people. Its use is very widespread.

Chinese society is very polite and ceremonial. The most important person enters the meeting first and introduces the members of the negotiating team. You must wait for the head of the delegation to tell you where to sit. It is quite normal for foreign visitors to be put at the head of the table.

Avoid talking about politics, corruption and neighbouring Taiwan. Jokes about sex are not recommended. Favourite topics are: China’s economic progress, its splendid cuisine, or what to buy in China.

During negotiations you must maintain an attitude of respect and not show any sign of relaxation, because this could be taken as a lack of interest.

Your questions should be clear and precise, since they do not like to admit that they do not understand or that they do not know the answer.

When you give expensive presents, you must make it clear that they are from your to the Chinese company, no to any people. Individual presents must not be very expensive to avoid contravening the law. Pens, bottles of spirit, stamps or combs are a good choice. Because of superstition, alarm or desk clocks should not be given as presents.
• The Chinese usually refuse the present three times before accepting it. They do not want to appear ambitious. You should therefore insist. Once they have accepted, you should thank them.

• They usually show their hospitality by inviting you to a banquet (lunch or dinner). Once they have invited you, you must return the gesture as soon as possible, preferably during the same trip.

• When you invite them to a banquet, you should wait for them at the table, seat them according to seniority, and begin with a toast.

• During banquets you should not talk about business, except if they start the conversation. There is no after-lunch session. Once desserts have been served (fruit is the last course), everyone gets up from the table to leave.

• Tables are round, and people serve themselves from the serving dish in the centre. The dishes are not passed from one person to another. It is good manners to try each course.

• You should use chopsticks. To serve yourself with food from a plate you should turn the chopsticks round and use the thick ends (the non-eating ends) so that the ends that have been in your mouth do not come into contact with the food on the tray. When you finish your meal, you should put the chopsticks on the table or on a plate with other chopsticks. If you put the chopsticks alongside each other on your empty plate, as in Western Europe, it is seen as a sign of bad luck.

• Soup and rice are served throughout the meal to accompany the courses and so you should not finish them before you have eaten the other courses. When eating rice, you should hold the bowl close to your mouth. If you serve rice from a serving dish, you must never leave it on the plate.

• If you do not want another drink (wine, tea), leave it in the glass or cup.

• During the banquets there are several toasts. The most usual toasts are Gan Bei (Drink up! in Mandarin) or Yam sing (the same meaning in Cantonese).

• It is best to dress conservatively avoiding bright colours or modern designs. The Western visitor is expected to wear a jacket and tie, although Chinese executives most times do not wear a tie.

COLOMBIA

• The form of greeting for men and women is shaking hands, although not
vigorously. Women may be given a kiss on the left cheek when it is not the first meeting.

• Introductions are usually quite long to show respect to the other party. After the initial greeting, several polite questions are asked about the journey, health, references to friends, etc. You should not act as if you are in a hurry because it will be considered impolite.

• There are marked differences in the forms of address in the different regions. Inside the country, especially in the capital Bogotá, treatment is very formal (you must use *usted*), while on the coast, treatment is more informal (generally, they use *tú*).

• The only professional title that is generally used is Doctor, although it is applied to people with high professional status who in fact do not necessarily have this academic qualification.

• Colombians will readily talk about any topic. Even topics that appear controversial like guerrilla actions or cocaine plantations can be mentioned without any problem.

• Social status is very important. You should not perform any tasks or actions (for example, pick up suitcases, books, dossiers, etc.) that may lower your status in the eyes of a Colombian. In the business world, design and planning jobs have more category than administrative jobs.

• Favourite topics of conversation are: history (the figure of the Liberator Simón Bolívar, who was president of the country is really appreciated); literature (they have great writers, among them the Nobel prize winner Gabriel García Márquez, who was also known as *Gabo*); the country’s tourist sites (especially Cartagena de Indias, the first city in Latin America to become totally independent from Spain in 1881); and sport (football and cycling).

• The most usual business meal is lunch that begins around 13:00. It is best to let your hosts start the business conversation.

• It is impolite to eat too much or take several helpings from a serving dish. In contrast, leaving food on the plate does not mean that you have not liked the food.

• In many restaurants tip is included in the bill as a service charge. If it is not included it is normal to leave 10%.

• During negotiations Colombian coffee is usually served. Be sure to drink some and praise its quality since it is reputed to be among the best in the world.
• To indicate the size of an object, do not draw shapes in the air with your index fingers, as this gesture has rude connotations in Colombia. Instead you should use outstretched arms with your palms facing each other, as if holding a box.

• Except when you travel to the coast, it is best to arrive in the country one day before because of the altitude, especially in Bogotá which is 2,600 metres above sea level.

• The climate in Colombia is varied. You should get research the climate before you go and take appropriate clothing. There are two seasons: the dry season (December-February and July-August) and the rainy season (April-May and October-November). In Bogotá the hottest month is February and the coldest August.

COSTA RICA

• Costa Rica follows a more formal and strict etiquette than other Caribbean countries that have more informal customs even in the business environment.

• The most common form of greeting is a short handshake followed by the words ¿Cómo está Usted? (How do you do?), or Hola, ¿qué tal? (Hello, How are you doing?, when you already know the people. A typical answer is: ¡Bien, por dicha! (Good, luckily!).

• Unlike other Caribbean countries where women kiss when they meet, in Costa Rica they greet with a light tap on the forearm, except when they are close friends. Men do not frequently hug.

• People are addressed by Mr or Ms followed by the surname. Titles like Doctor, Director or Engineer are not so frequently used as in other Latin American countries.

• During negotiations it is advisable to look at the eyes, otherwise you will convey distrust.

• Their favourite topics of conversation are the natural beauty of the country and football. They also love politics discussions. It is widely appreciated to show a large knowledge of Central American history and politics.

• You have to be cautious when making a comment that might concern their social status, since this subject is very important for them.

• It is usual to serve Costa Rican coffee during meetings. It is advisable to drink
it up and to praise its quality, as it is considered to be one of the best gourmet coffees worldwide.

- Lunch is the preferred meal for business, which starts around 12:30 pm. A typical dish is *Gallo Pinto*: green beans, rice, meat, eggs and carrots seasoned with the aromatic spice coriander.

- In restaurants, tips are normally included in the service. It is not common to tip taxi drivers.

- Giving presents is common in Costa Rica. Sweets, chocolate, wine or whisky are suitable presents when you are invited to a house.

- The way of dressing is quite conservative (dark suits and light shirts), compared to other neighboring countries. Costa Ricans do not normally take off their jacket in meetings or restaurants.

- The best time to visit the country is from February to March and from September to November. The rainy season (mainly in the Caribbean side) is from May to November. Holidays are taken in December, January and April.

**CUBA**

- Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting for both men and women. When they already know the women, they kiss on the cheeks.

- Treatment is formal. In presentations, people are addressed by the word *compañero* (colleague) or by the position held in the company. In subsequent meetings, people are addressed by their first name.

- Cubans, unlike other Latin Americans, have a lower tone of voice and respect speaking turns. Visual contact is not very frequent.

- As in most tropical countries, people start working soon in the morning; interviews can be arranged from 8:30 am onwards. However, it is difficult to arrange meetings after 5:00 pm onwards, except for meetings with high level managers.

- Meetings begin on time, unless something unexpected happens in the last moment—for any reason that they will not explain.

- Business conversations are preceded by a brief personal talk. It is better not to talk about politics, either for criticizing or praising the regime’s achievements. A
good topic is the success of Cuban sportmen/women in Olympic Games or the national team in baseball, the national sport—it is known as pelota (ball)—.

• Either personal questions or comments should not be made. Cubans live in an atmosphere of mistrust that has to be taken into account when treating with them.

• Due to their high education they like to speak about history, literature, arts, cinema, etc. The national Independence War hero is José Martí, politician, philosopher and writer who died when fighting against the Spanish army in 1895.

• Presents in business relationships are not a tradition. If an object is given as a present, it should be understood that is for professional purposes. If it is for personal purposes, it is better to give it in private.

• Water, juices and strong coffee with sugar are served in meetings.

• The business meal might be either lunch or dinner. It is frequent to go to state-owned restaurants. When the meal is with friends or colleagues it is frequent to go to restaurants located in private houses, known as paladares. These restaurants were authorized some years ago and are almost the only examples of private economy in the country. They have room for ten people (ten seats) for every lunch or dinner.

• The main Cuban dish is rice. A typical dish is Moros y Cristianos (rice with black beans, called frijoles).

• Cuba is a worldwide famous country for its rum cocktails, the national drink. The two most classic drinks are daiquiri and mojito. Daiquiri is a blend of rhum, lemon juice and sugar. Mojito is a mixture of rhum, soda, drops of lemon juice, mint and lot of ice.

• The way of dressing is very relaxed. Cuban executives never use a tie and do not expect foreigners to wear one. They use a loose-fitting shirt. While in winter (from December to March) a raincoat might be very useful, in summer—from April to November—it is advisable to wear a fresh outfit, as it is hot and humid.

• Communication means are very restricted. There are no newspapers, except for the official one Granma, that hardly contains more than 6-7 pages. The only two TV channels—Cubavisión and Tele Rebelde—broadcast just from 18:00 to 24:00.

• The way of getting around Havana is by taxi. There are numerous companies—all of them are public—with different types of cars, such as American models
from the fifties. It is advisable to negotiate the price with the taxi driver before getting in, since they do not usually have taximeters.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- The form of greeting is a short, firm handshake. When you are introduced to a woman or elderly person you must wait for them to hold out their hands.
- The most common expressions are: Dobrý den (Good morning) and Těší mne (Pleased to meet you). The word for Thanks is Děkuji.
- Professional titles (Doctor, Engineer, Professor) are widely used. When they are known they should be put before the surname; otherwise use Mr or Mrs. You can also use the Czech equivalents: Pan (Mr), Paní (Mrs) and Slecna (Miss). Pan and Paní are also used before professional titles, for example, Pan Doktor Cermák.
- The informal you form is only used with the family or when a personal relationship has been consolidated.
- Professional cards are widely used. You must give a card to everybody that you are introduced to.
- It is better not to start conversations about politics. You should also avoid personal questions because they are not considered relevant in business matters.
- Positive conversation topics are history, literature (they have great writers, like Kafka or Kundera) or the beauty of Prague.
- During meetings coffee is served; it usually has some sugar; it may be Turkish coffee so you must not drink all of it because of the grounds at the bottom.
- The most usual business meal is lunch between 12:00 and 13:00. You can talk business before and after, but not while you are eating.
- Czechs are great beer drinkers. The beer Pilsner comes from the country, specifically from the city of Pilsen. The former Czech city of Budweiser—which is called now Ceské Budějovice— is the home of Budweiser beer. They like explaining the country’s beer tradition.
- There is not much tradition of presents among companies. In any case, if a present is given you must choose quality.
• Czechs are probably the most elegant of all the countries of Eastern Europe. You should dress appropriately for the occasion and take advantage of the current wide choice of fashion trends.

DENMARK

• Greeting is a firm, brief handshake between men and women alike. When you greet a couple you must shake the woman’s hand first. They also shake hands when they say goodbye.

• The word for Hello is Heij, pronounced like the English colloquial Hi. Farvel is the word for Goodbye.

• Treatment is correct, although not too formal. For introductions you should use Mr or Mrs and then the surname. You should wait for them to use the first name before you do.

• Over half of the Danes have surnames ending in sen (Hansen, Andersen, Christensen, etc.), that means son of.

• During the conversation you must look at the other person’s eyes.

• Punctuality in Denmark is very strict, both for business and social events. Arriving late to appointments gives the impression of incompetence and disorganisation.

• Danish culture is very tolerant. In conversations you should not criticise other people, companies, political systems, etc.

• You should not make any personal comments. Even positive comments about clothes, physical appearance, etc., can be considered inappropriate.

• The most important meal is dinner. A usual lunchtime snack is smørrebrød, which consists of buttered black bread sandwiches eaten with marinated herrings, boiled ham, boiled eggs, prawns, cheese, etc.

• Toasts are very formal. Before trying the drink, you should wait for the host or the most senior person to make the toast pronouncing the expression skål.

• To be invited to dinner at a Dane’s house is considered a great honour. You should be punctual and take a present (a box of chocolates or a good bottle of wine is a good choice). As soon as you arrive you go directly to the table. Drinks are drunk during the meal and after, but not before.
• A typical Danish drink is akvavit (literally water of life). It is quite a strong alcoholic drink. You should be careful how much of it you drink, since the Danes like to share large amounts of it with their guests.

• The after-dinner session can go on for a long time. You should not leave immediately after the dinner: wait for the host to get up first.

• In Scandinavian countries summer is for leisure. The holiday month is usually July. Danes have five weeks’ holiday per year.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

• The form of greeting is a firm handshake. With women, it is usual to kiss on the cheek, both when you know them or even when you have never met them before.

• The treatment is not as formal as in other Latin American countries. In introductions Señor (Mr) or Señora (Mrs) is used before the surname. Titles like Licenciado (Graduate) or Ingeniero (Engineer), are also used. In a second meeting, people are addressed by the first name.

• Punctuality is not a virtue in the country. Delays in the beginning of the negotiations are till thirty minutes as Dominicans are not in a hurry to finish meetings.

• Business talks are preceded by an informal conversation, shorter than expected since they are influenced by the US culture, and they prefer to start talking about professional subjects directly.

• Some Dominicans speak such broad Spanish that many Spanish-speakers have difficulties to understand them. It might be due to the influence of the Creole, the language from Haiti, that invaded the country in the 19th century.

• Dominicans are very open. There are no subjects that could hurt their feelings. They make a great show of their sense of humour.

• They are very critical with their country and do not appreciate enough the quality of their products. It is advisable to enhance their self-esteem, by praising the beauty and potentialities —they have many— of the country. They would be grateful.

• It is also advisable to mention Oscar de la Renta, world-famous Dominican designer, especially appreciated in the US. Another world celebrity is the
Dominican tennis player Mary Jo Fernández.

- The most relevant historical event is that the island of La Española (Dominican Republic today) was discovered by Christopher Columbus during his first journey to America in 1492; Dominican islands were the first European settlement in Latin America, as well as the place of the first cathedral, the first university and the first high court. Dominicans think that the great navigator’s remains lie in their country, in contrast to what Spaniards believe: that his remains lie in the Cathedral of Sevilla in Spain.

- Business lunches and dinners are very common. As these are considered to be social events, talking about business is not usual.

- There is a great variety of national dishes and portions are big. The most typical dishes are bandera dominicana (combination of rice, kidney beans, chicken or veal, and slices of fried banana), sancocho (five kinds of meat) and catibía (a pie filled with meat, cheese and yucca).

- The most popular hobby is merengue dance. It is characterized by swinging constantly the hips maintaining soles on the floor. The music is played by a band (perico ripiao) formed by three people, who play three instruments: tambora (a little drum), melodeon (a type of accordion) and guira (a percussion instrument placed by the Tainian Indians, the first inhabitants of the island).

- A traditional present in the country is amber jewellery —regarded to be the most beautiful jewel in the world— and lorimar, a stone exclusively from the Dominican Republic, with tonalities ranging from dark blue to bluish green.

- The best way for visitors to travel around the capital is by hotel taxis or those you request by phone. For your security you should not take taxis on the street. To share a taxi (named conchos) with people taking a similar route as yours, is an economical alternative. As these conchos do not have a taximeter, it is recommended to agree a fare in advance with the taxi driver.

- The weather in the country is very warm, and humidity can rise above 90 percent. On the other hand, air conditioning in hotels, taxis and offices is very cold. In some seconds temperature can drop more than 10 degrees. It is advisable to take a jacket with you to prevent a cold.

- Strong downpours are frequent throughout the year. While rainy seasons and high temperatures are typical from May to November, dry seasons with mild temperatures are from April to December.
ECUADOR

- Shaking hands when you are introduced and leave is the most common form of greeting. Women usually greet with kisses when they know each other. Among men *kisses in the air* (brushing cheeks) and embraces are for friends or relatives.

- Punctuality is not one of the country’s characteristics. A delay of fifteen or twenty minutes is considered normal (this is what is called *Ecuadorian time*). They do not usually apologise for it.

- In legal documents they use two surnames: the father’s and the mother’s. For introductions they only use the father’s.

- When a woman gets married, she adds her husband’s surname to hers and usually uses this. For example, most people will call *Señora* Isabel López de Heredia *Señora* de Heredia or, more informally, *Señora* Heredia, her husband’s surname. Nevertheless, the trend among younger female executives is to use their surname and not include the husband’s.

- Topics of conversation to be avoided include relations with the neighbouring countries of Colombia and Peru (especially the latter with which it has had many conflicts) and the situation of the Indian population.

- Favourite topics of conversation include the country’s natural beauty especially the Galápagos Islands (known as Archipiélago de Colón) that are 950 km from the coast, where the naturalist Charles Darwin conducted research that lead to his theory of evolution, the colonial architecture of Quito, the Amazon jungle, and football, which is the national sport.

- You should avoid nodding or shaking your head since not all Ecuadorians take kindly to these gestures. It is best to say yes or no.

- The most common business meal is lunch that begins around 13:00. If the negotiations are important or the foreign visitor requires special attention, he is usually invited to dinner.

- Portions are generous. In the mountains guests are usually offered a large variety of dishes, not necessarily local. A typical dish is the *fritada* (small portions of fried pork with boiled corn and potatoes). On the coast the most typical dishes are prepared with seafood or fish.

- During the meals wine and alcohol are popular, especially in the mountains where the weather is cold. In the coastal areas beer is preferred.
• When a gift is given they expect the other party to open it immediately and be very grateful.

• Attire varies depending on whether you are inland or the coast. In the mountain areas businessmen are expected to wear a suit (preferably in dark colours) and tie, even on hot days. On the coast the people dress more casually. The guayabera (loose shirt with wide pockets) is widely used.

• In the mountains (Quito) holidays are in August, while on the coast (Guayaquil) are in January and February.

• Due to the altitude of the cities in the mountains (Quito is 2,760 metres above sea level), people with heart or respiratory problems must consult their doctor and take the necessary precautions before travelling. In any case, the altitude can cause tiredness, headaches or drowsiness. It is best not to do any sport, or eat or drink in excess.

• The climate in Quito varies from warm to cold. There is a widespread misconception that all the country has a warm climate.

EGYPT

• The form of greeting is very expressive and elaborate. At the first meeting, the host following traditional practices usually welcomes the visitor several times. Shaking hands is the most common greeting. A man must wait for a woman to hold out her hand first.

• The traditional form of greeting is to give the right hand, place the left hand on the other person’s shoulder and exchange kisses on the cheeks. However, kisses are always between members of the same sex. Men and women never kiss in public.

• Names are written the same as in the West: first the first name and then the surname. For example, in the name Muammar Al-Barudi, Muammar is the first name and Al-Barudi the surname. The particle Al has two meanings son of or native of (a town, a village). In written documents you must mention the name and surname. In business conversation only Mr or Mrs is used followed by the surname, or possibly some professional title (Doctor, Engineer).

• Egyptians are very expressive and emotional when dealing with other people. A commonly used expression in conversation is ma ‘alesh (don’t worry, it doesn’t matter) for matters that are not serious or where nothing can really be done, although this does not prevent business being done.
• You must avoid talking about religion, politics and the Arab-Israeli conflict. If these topics arise, especially the latter, it is better to listen and not say much.

• Egyptians have a good sense of humour and make a lot of jokes, even about themselves. Nevertheless, because of their strong nationalist feelings, foreigners must never make jokes about Egypt or Egyptians.

• Although they gesture a lot, you must not use your hand to communicate with another person. The left hand (considered the dirty hand in the Arab world) must not be used for eating, touching others, passing objects, serving drinks, etc. Even if you write with your left hand, you should apologise.

• Generally, you must not cross your legs when you are sitting. In any case, you must never show the sole of your shoe to an Egyptian since it is considered a sign of bad luck.

• At meals you should not eat everything on your plate. You must leave something as a compliment to the host to show that the food is good. When you are invited to a private home, you should not put salt on the food.

• At the end of the meeting coffee or tea is served. It is a sign that the interview must finish.

• The custom of a tip (baksheesh) is deeply rooted. You must give it for all the services that you receive.

• There is no tradition of gift-giving between companies. On a personal level, an original gift might be a compass, since it allows the Egyptian to know at every moment, even when travelling, where Mecca is. Presents must never be given or received with the left hand. Nevertheless, when a large present is given, both hands can be used.

• The holiday for Islam is Friday. Many people do not work on Thursday. The working week starts on Saturday and finishes on Wednesday.

• In spite of the high temperatures, foreign executives are expected to wear a suit, tie and, preferably, a long-sleeved shirt. Women must wear discreet clothing: high necks, sleeves covering the elbow and long skirts.

FINLAND

• A firm and brief handshake is the usual greeting between men and women. When you greet a group of people you should shake hands first with the women
out of politeness, but it is unlikely that anyone will be offended if you greet the person nearest to you first.

- Words for greeting are: *Hyvä huomenta* (Good morning) and *Hyvä päivää* (Good afternoon).

- When Finns introduce themselves they say their name and surname. When they introduce someone else they put Mr or Mrs when they speak in English, but hardly anyone will be offended if the full name is used. Qualifications are only used in official, scientific or university circles, although if you wish to make a letter or invitation more formal you can add the academic qualification that is usually on the visiting card.

- The informal *you* is widely used among work colleagues of a different level and with customers, although elderly people do not necessarily like this custom.

- Punctuality is strict. If you are going to arrive late you should warn them in advance and apologise at the beginning of the meeting.

- During the conversation it is best to look at people’s eyes.

- Finns do not like to talk about their personal life. You should not ask personal questions. Recommended topics of conversation are travel, politics and sports like athletics, football, ice hockey and car racing.

- Finland is a very tolerant country. It is not the done thing to criticise people’s character, ideas or customs. In a business environment you should not criticise competitors.

- Finns regard what is said as definitive. For example, the comment *we really must have lunch together one of these days* is taken literally and they will think that it is strange that you have forgotten.

- The national pastime is the sauna. Each Finn does it differently. For the foreign visitor, the best thing to do is to follow the host’s example and avoid overreacting.

- There are separate saunas for men and women. When there is only one sauna available, women have priority.

- Finns do not usually wear anything in the sauna, except when they go into the communal swimming pool. They do not mind if the person accompanying them wears a swimsuit or a towel.

- It is usual that after the sauna they have a snack: bread, sausages and salted fish. With this they try to recover the salt that has been lost from sweating.
• Finnish cuisine is more sophisticated than in other Nordic countries owing to the Russian influence and the dishes of French origin introduced by the Russians. The most well known dish is the cold buffet known as *voileipäpöytä*, similar to Swedish *smörgåsbord*.

• Lunches and dinners are regarded as social events. It is not a good moment to talk business. Lunch is between 11:00 and 13:00 and dinner in restaurants begins between 19:00 and 20:00.

• Finns are good drinkers, especially beer and vodka. At the beginning of the meals they usually serve an aperitif, a small glass of *koskenkorva*, the Finnish vodka. The foreign visitor does not have to drink it in one go like the Finns do. When a toast is made just raise your glass and moisten your lips.

• Office hours are from 8.30 to 16.30. Saturdays and the day before a holiday are when most shops close in the afternoon.

• After 24th June Finns go to their summer houses and cabins, and business activity stops until August. In February the Finns take another week’s holiday. You should not go on business trips at these times of the year.

**FRANCE**

• The form of greeting is shaking hands, although not as strong as in Germany or the US. When you greet a woman you should wait for her to hold out her hand first. Kisses made on the other person’s cheeks, known as *bises*, (which actually consists of gently brushing the other person’s cheek and giving three kisses in the air) are only used in a friendly environment. It would be quite impolite to kiss suppliers or customers.

• The most common expressions for greeting are *Comment allez-vous?* (How are you?), and more informally *Bonjour* (Good morning, which is also used like Hello) or *Ça va?* (How things are?)

• The business culture is formal. People are introduced by *Monsieur* (Mr), *Madame* (Mrs) and *Mademoiselle* (Miss) followed by the surname. Miss is only used for young girls and single women. These titles are used during the conversation to address people, sometimes without the surname.

• When speaking French, you must use the formal you form (*Vous*), even if you have known them for some time.
• Eye contact is very frequent and intense, so foreigners who are not used to this may feel intimidated.

• Exchanging business cards is commonplace. French people include their academic qualifications on the card, especially if they are from prestigious schools.

• You should try and communicate in French. However, if you do not speak French you should apologise, since they are very proud of their language.

• The French have spread throughout the world the concept of savoir-faire (know-how) completed with the savoir-être (know-being). In a negotiation, the first relates to the technical expertise and the ability to implement procedures; the second to cultural training and education (politesse). Unlike other cultures, such as Anglo-Saxon, in which prevails know-how, in France, both are equally important.

• The French love their language —that, moreover is very beautiful— and if the foreign visitor does not speak it very well it is better to use another language such as English or Spanish that they usually know. If you make errors when speaking in French they will interrupt and correct you.

• At the beginning of the conversation you can make compliments, for example, about the local football team’s success, or how good the last order was.

• It is also positive to praise the country in general. Unlike the Germans who think that everything from Germany is good, the French think that everything good is French.

• When negotiating in a city other than Paris, it is best not to praise too much the capital because some French are not particularly sympathetic to Parisians.

• Favourite topics of conversation include history, art, sport (football and cycling) and food. You should not talk about politics, money or personal matters.

• The most usual business meal is at lunchtime (déjeuner). It is best for the French host to begin the business conversation, although the foreign visitor may also do so without any problem.

• French cuisine is famous all over the world for exquisiteness and wide variety of dishes. In a restaurant you should not choose the most expensive dish or forget to praise the culinary delights. It is good to try some of their favourite dishes like snails or oysters. One of the most typical dishes is cassoulet, a meat stew with beans.

• At the table you should be careful with your manners. You should not eat or drink too much. Lettuce is not cut with a knife, it is folded into small pieces. At
the end of the meal a tray of cheeses is passed round; the custom is to take only one serving.

- There is no tradition of gift-giving between companies. However, they may be given once an agreement has been reached (presents with the company’s logo are not really liked). If you are invited to a house you should not take wine or perfume (these are French specialities). Chocolates, spirits or flowers (except roses or chrysanthemums) can be a good choice.

- The way you dress is important, especially for women. Do not forget that France is the world leader in women’s fashion and has created expressions as haute couture (high fashion) or chic (elegant). Men usually wear business suits of high quality and discrete tones (blue and gray).

- The French are used to taking four or five weeks’ holiday a year. During the last week in July and all of August most people are on holiday. It is not the time to do business.

**GERMANY**

- A long and firm handshake looking at the other person’s eyes is the most usual form of greeting. A weak handshake or not looking directly at the other person are signs of weakness or distrust. Unlike other cultures a woman can take the initiative when greeting.

- The most common expressions for greeting are Guten Morgen (Good morning) and Guten Tag (Good afternoon). The German Hallo equivalent to Hello is considered too colloquial to be used in a business environment.

- Treatment is formal: surnames and titles are used to address people. When the professional title is known (Doktor, Direktor, Professor) it must be put after Mr or Mrs (or Ms), or their equivalent in German: Herr (Mr) and Frau (Mrs or Ms). So Director Gustav Schmidt will be addressed as Herr Direktor Schmidt. First names are only used when there is a close personal relationship.

- To arrange appointments, deliveries, etc., you should get used to working with the calendar week number or Kalenderwoche (KW); for example, the merchandise will be delivered week (KW) 35; that is the last week of August.

- Germans appreciate it if you make an effort to say some words in their language even though you do not speak it. The most commonly used words are Danke (thanks) and Bitte (please).
• You must not ask personal questions (family, salary, etc.) or talk about your personal life, since the German speaker could think that he should do the same. Topics to be avoided are the Second World War and everything related to Nazi Germany.

• You should not make personal compliments unless a sound relationship has been established; it is better to make compliments at company level.

• Favourite topics of conversation are hobbies (almost all Germans have one), holiday places (most travel abroad) and alcoholic drinks (German wines, especially white wines, and beers are world famous).

• Privacy is one of the characteristics of German culture. The doors of their offices are usually closed. You should knock before you enter and remember to close the door behind you when you leave.

• They are very strict about space. When you sit down on a chair that has been placed at some distance from the German negotiator’s table you should not draw it nearer.

• At the end of meetings, Germans usually tap the table with their knuckles to show that they are satisfied with the agreements reached. If they do this, then it shows that the negotiations have gone well.

• Look directly in the eyes is quite common when negotiating. It is desirable to maintain the look because otherwise you would convey distrust.

• The most usual business meal is lunch. Negotiations can be done before or after, but not during the meal.

• They usually say *Guten Appetit* (Bon appétit) before starting the meal. At formal meals the host makes a toast. They say *Prosit* (Enjoy your meal) or *Zum Wohl* (to good health).

• You should not give expensive gifts, although they should be of high quality. Generally, they are given to indicate that the business has been successfully concluded. You should avoid giving presents that could be misinterpreted because of the context or moment.

• The Germans are conservative in the way the dress (dark suits, white shirts) and do not have the taste in clothes like other European countries as UK or Italy. Do not try to dress smartly or use very modern or casual clothes when visiting the country on business.
GREECE

- At the first meeting, the usual form of greeting is shaking hands. When there is a personal relationship they kiss and embrace.

- The Greek words used for greeting are: *Kalimerà* (Good morning) and *Kalinixta* (Good evening).

- At the beginning the treatment is quite formal. In introductions *Kyrie* (Mr) or *Kiria* (Mrs) is used before the surname. Proper names are used by people who know each other and who are of a similar age and professional status.

- Punctuality is not very strict although they expect the visitor to arrive at the time arranged for the meeting. If you are in Athens you should allow for extra time for traffic jams.

- You should not be shocked if they ask you personal questions about your work or family. They do not mind being asked.

- In conversation you should avoid topics about political conflicts with their neighbours like the case of Macedonia or the dispute with Turkey over Cyprus.

- You must show respect for older people: they are greeted first, let past first and served first at the table.

- The main meal is lunch, which begins at 14:00. It is the custom to ask for several dishes, which are shared among the fellow diners.

- A typical meal is *souvlaki* (lamb with vegetables). Salads are served with the main course; they are eaten with a lot of oil and cheese is added. At the end of the meal a strong coffee is served that leaves grounds in the cup.

- Meals are regarded more as social events. The Greeks do not usually talk business.

- Greeks are very hospitable. Unlike central and north European countries, they usually invite foreign visitors to their homes.

- When you are invited to dinner to a house, the host usually insists that you have second helpings of the dishes served. It is polite to accept.

- There is no tradition of gift presents between companies. If gifts are given, once a relationship has been established, you should avoid giving very expensive or very cheap articles. Presents with the company’s logo are not appropriate.
HUNGARY

- The usual form of greeting is shaking hands when you introduce yourself and leave. When there is some friendship an embrace is followed by a kiss as follows: handshake, embrace, kiss on the left cheek, and kiss on the right cheek. Women friends do the same, but they do not shake hands.

- The business culture is formal. They are very polite, serious and punctual. You must use the title Doctor, Director, Professor, etc. followed by the surname. If you do not know the title, use Mr or Mrs. First names are only used among friends.

- You should bear in mind that many Hungarians put their surname first and then their first name when they say or write their names. For example, in Hargitay, Zoltan, Zoltan is the name and Hargitay, the surname.

- Similarly, the Hungarian words for Mr, Mrs and Miss (Ur, Ne and Kisasszony) are put after the surname (Mr Szabo = Szabo ur; Mrs Janos = Janos ne; Miss Borossay = Borossay kissaszony).

- Business cards are widely used. Job titles should be translated into English.

- Favourite topics of conversation are history, art, music, food and sport (especially football). They also like to talk about the origin of the Hungarian language, which they associate more with Japanese than Finnish.

- You should avoid making comparisons with eastern European countries (especially Poland and the Czech Republic), or mention the influence of the gypsy ethnic group on Hungarian culture.

- At meetings, the host usually offers coffee to the foreign visitor and, on occasions, a local juice that has a flavour of its own. You should drink it to avoid creating a bad impression.

- Hungarian cuisine includes several ethnic cuisines typical of a country situated in the centre of Europe. The typical dish is goulash, a meat stew with potatoes, onions and red pepper.

- Meals are regarded as social events. Hungarians regularly frequent restaurants and bars. At lunch you can discuss business, but during dinner you should not talk about professional matters.

- Hungarians like being the hosts. They will try to pay the bill.

- Presents are not usually given in business relations. Nevertheless, promotion
articles with the company’s logo (pens, lighters, mouse pads, etc.) are a good choice as are also bottles of quality wine.

- Timetables and holiday periods are strictly observed. You should not arrange appointments Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, since they usually leave Budapest for the weekend. July and August are not good months for going to Hungary, since most people are on holiday.

INDIA

- The traditional greeting consists of placing your palms together with the thumbs pointing up under the chin, a slight lowering of the head and uttering Namaste, meaning I am at your disposal. With foreign negotiators the most usual greeting is a gentle handshake when you introduce yourself and leave. Only Westernised Indians shake hands with the opposite sex.

- Other forms of physical contact in the greeting (embraces, pats, kisses, etc.) are frowned upon. Indian culture is very traditional and does not allow gestures of affection in public.

- During the negotiation Indians often sway their head from right to left. This gesture does not have a negative meaning but indicates that they understand what is being said; it must not be interpreted either as a sign of consent or approval.

- Indians use the first letter of their father’s name before their first name. For example, in the name R. Chibalratti, R means that the father’s name begins with this letter (for example, Rajam or Rama) and Chibalratti is the person’s first name. The father’s full name and the first name must be written in legal documents. Nevertheless, in everyday use long names are shortened. Thus, Mr R. Chibalratti can be called Mr Chibal or Mr Ratti.

- Social status is determined by age, university qualifications, caste and profession. Civil servants have more prestige than employees in the private sector.

- In conversation you should avoid topics about poverty, religion or relations with neighbouring Pakistan. Talking about the climate is not a good choice because it is usually very hot and humid. Favourite topics are: art, life in other countries and the cinema (India is the world's largest producer of films).

- Other topic to avoid is the caste system which is the basis of social relations in India and is too intimate and complex to be understood by foreigners. There are four main castes: Brahmins (priests, teachers, scholars), Chatrias (political and military
class) Vaishias (merchants, artisans) and Shudras (laborers). Within the same caste are the Jatis (sub-castes), of which there are thousands across the country and maintaining inbred relationships among its members. Out of the caste system in the lowest end of society, Dalits known as untouchables or outcasts.

• Nor is it appropriate to make comparisons with China as they consider this country their main rival in many aspects: political, territorial, defensive, strategic and economic. They are very proud of its democratic system against the Chinese political model that is considered dictatorial.

• Indians regard their country as a world power and they can become upset if foreign visitors think otherwise. Ignorance of the country’s culture is frowned upon. Take care not to offend and brief yourself thoroughly before travelling to the country.

• The best time to arrange appointments with Indian managers is before or after lunch (at 11:00 or 16:00).

• At the beginning of the meeting they usually offer tea or refreshments. The custom is to reject the first time and accept the second or third time. Rejecting the drink can be counterproductive. You should drink slowly if you do not want another drink.

• Business dinners are more frequent than lunches to avoid the midday traffic and humidity. Dinners are an opportunity to get to know foreign executives and also talk business.

• Indians usually arrive late for social events and dinners. Before dinner they devote a long time to aperitifs and drinks (especially whisky). The after-dinner session does not exist. When they have finished eating they get up from the table. The local saying Indian eaten, Indian gone, expresses this very well.

• When some kind of relationship has been established Indians usually invite you to dine at their home. The visitor must wait to see whether the host uses his hands or cutlery to eat and then do the same. If hands are used you must remember only to use the right hand.

• Menus are usually vegetarian. Hindus do not eat beef because the cow is sacred.

• You must not touch the plates used as serving dishes with your hands, and least of all, offer food on your plate to another person.

• At the end of the meal you do not usually thank the host, since the expression thanks in this context would be considered as a form of payment and would be misinterpreted.
• At the first meeting you do not need to give gifts. Later on or when the deal is concluded, a bottle of whisky, a bright coloured tie or a box of spices (saffron is greatly appreciated) can be good choices.

• You should also be careful when giving alcoholic drinks since in some states there are restrictions for religious reasons or they are banned at election time.

• Gifts must not be wrapped in white or black paper since these colours are associated with death. They must not be opened in the presence of the person who gives them.

• There are numerous local religious festivals in each state or region. When preparing your trip you should check the calendar for holidays.

• The plane is the best means of transport for travelling within the country. There are two or three daily flights between all the major cities.

• Travelling by car is complicated due to the bad state of the roads. You must calculate an average speed of 40 or 50 km/h (25-30 mph). You should avoid driving at night since there are a large number of lorries on the roads, some of them without lights.

• Dress is conservative. At meetings of a certain level you should wear a suit and tie. You should avoid accessories (belts, briefcases) made from cowhide.

• At business meetings you do not necessarily have to wear a suit and tie, except for very formal or high-level meetings.

• You should only drink bottled water or water served in hotels. Eating in hotels and restaurants other than those recommended for Westerners is also a risk that increases greater the smaller the town becomes.

• The best time to visit India is from October to April. Thus you avoid the most humid seasons and the risk of monsoons, especially until July to September.

• Before you travel to the country you should check the calendar for important national and local holidays, like the Diwali (Festival of Light) in October or November, depending on the yearly lunar calendar.

INDONESIA

• The most usual form of greeting is a long handshake (from seven to ten seconds) in the first introduction or if you have not seen each other for a long time. In
subsequent meetings a slight lowering of the head is sufficient.

- The word that they use for greeting one another is *Selamat* meaning Peace.

- Indonesian names are very complicated. In introductions you must take time to learn how to pronounce them correctly and never make jokes about their meaning or sound, since they are sacred for most Indonesians.

- As a general rule, Indonesians use only one name, and if they belong to the upper class, two, although they tend to abbreviate the first name with an initial.

- Introductions are very elaborate. First the general title is used, *Bakap* (Mr) or *Ibu* (Mrs); then the academic qualifications *Doctorandus* (doctor for university graduates), *Insinjur* (engineer) or *Sarjana Hukurn* (for law graduates) followed by the first name and the surname; and finally, the professional position. For example, *Bakap Doctorandus Juanda Wowungan*, Managing Director.

- You must be ready to explain the meaning of your names, titles and qualifications. Following their tradition you should not suggest lowering the degree of formality they expect during negotiations.

- You should avoid speaking about religion, the role of the Chinese race in Indonesian society, and birth control policies. Favourite topics are: culture, tradition and travel.

- You must not begin to eat or drink until you are invited to do so by the host. During meals Indonesians do not speak very much.

- Owing to Muslim influence, the left hand (the dirty hand, because it is the hand used in the bathroom) must not be used for eating, serving other people, passing or picking up objects, or pointing.

- You should not show the sole of your shoe; therefore, you should sit down carefully and try not to cross your legs.

- When you receive a gift, the tradition is to reject it up to three times. If you give a gift, you must insist that they accept it. Once they have accepted it, you must express your gratitude.

- It is not the custom to open presents in the presence of other people since this would indicate impatience or greed.

- They do not like dogs (they are thought to be dirty animals). Thus you should not give objects or toys with figures of dogs.

- In spite of being a Muslim country, Friday and Saturday are not holidays.
Indonesians work from Monday to Thursday (8:00-16:00) and Friday and Saturday mornings (8:00-13:00).

- The rainy season is from September to February, although may be unexpected showers all year long. You should always take an umbrella with you.

**IRAN**

- The most common form of greeting is a handshake. With women you must avoid any kind of physical contact since it is not allowed by the Islamic laws.

- People are addressed by their surname or title. The order is the same one as in the West. Then, for instance in *Tahmaseb Mazaheri*, *Tahmaseb* is the name and *Mazaheri* is the surname.

- Business cards exchange is only made among high-level executives.

- Iranians are serious and polite. Unlike other Muslim countries, punctuality is highly appreciated.

- In the first meetings it is advisable to avoid any reference to the US or the exiled population —several million Iranians live abroad, mainly in the US and UK.

- Iranians have a solar calendar. The first day of the year is the spring equinox -21st March. Iranian era begins the year when the prophet Mahoma leaves the Meca in 622 AD. This calendar runs 621 years behind the Gregorian calendar.

- Friday is a holiday. Public institutions and most of the companies close on Thursday. Working timetable is from 8:00/8:30 to 17:00, with two breaks at midday and lunch for praying.

- During meetings it is usual to offer tea. It is expected that foreign visitors drink it as hospitality symbol.

- During Ramadan, with the exception of high quality hotels, for Muslims it is forbidden to eat, drink or smoke in public from the sunrise until the sunset.

- Alcohol consumption is strictly forbidden. You have to keep in mind that when Iranians visit a foreign country they are not allowed to sit at a table with alcoholic drinks.

- Lunch is the preferred meal for business. Most dishes are served with rice. Some typical dishes are *Chelo Khoresh* —barbecue meat with rice, vegetables and nut
sauce, or *Morgh Polo*— chicken with rice and spices.

- In hotels the bill amount is normally increased by 10%-15% for services. In restaurants — *chelokababis*— clients use to leave a tip.

- Foreign executives should wear suit and tie, preferably of discreet colours. In public administrations and mosques it is forbidden to use short-sleeved shirts.

- Women must dress according to the strict Koran laws. Since the arrival at the airport, women must cover their hair and neck with a shawl — *Chador*—, wear a coat or raincoat down to the knees if they wear trousers, or below the ankles if they wear a skirt, and dark tights. Women must wear neither jewellery nor make-up.

- Payments are made in cash —mainly in dollars— since credit cards are not accepted, with the exception of MasterCard in some hotels and shops.

- When buying a local product and taking it out of the country you must know that there exist two restrictions: a maximum of one kilo of caviar per person, that must be bought in official shops (Iranian Fisheries Stores) and six square meters of Persian carpets or kilims.

- Any invitation or gift they give you must be kindly rejected at least twice, and in the same way you must insist several times before they accept any gift.

- It is not appropriate to visit Iran during three periods of the year: during two weeks after 21st March (annual holidays), July and August (because of the heat) and the month of Ramadan (activities slow down, although not brought to a halt).

**IRELAND**

- The form of greeting is shaking hands among men and women. When they already know a person, they usually give a pat on the back.

- The words that they use are informal: Hello or How are you?, rather than the British How do you do? A typical Irish greeting is *Dia Dhult* (Hello).

- In introductions the Irish use Mr or Mrs followed by the surname. People of a similar age or professional status are quick to call each other by their first names. It is better to let them take the initiative in this respect.

- At business meetings they expect punctuality. At social events time is more relaxed.
• An unforgivable error is to identify the Republic of Ireland with Northern Ireland (Ulster) which forms part of the UK, or call them British—you should remember that they withdrew from the British Commonwealth in 1949.

• Favourite topics of conversation are the country’s natural beauty (valleys, beaches and cliffs) and literature (they have internationally renowned writers like Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Jonathan Swift or George Bernard Shaw).

• Sport, especially rugby and football, is the favourite hobby of many Irish people. The country comes to a halt when the national team participates in the Five Nation rugby tournament. Outside Dublin, Gaelic sports (hurling—a game similar to hockey—and Gaelic football) are also very popular.

• When dealing with the Irish you should remember that Catholicism has a great influence on all their attitudes and actions.

• Business lunches are not very common, since at midday the Irish usually have a fast, light meal. On the other hand, the custom of going for a beer in a pub after work is deeply rooted. This can be a good occasion to talk business because it when the Irish relax and become more talkative. They expect the host and the guest to buy a round.

• Pubs are mainly for men. Women may have problems fitting in. However, at work there is full equality.

• The Irish are famous for being talkative; they even have the reputation of being gossips. It is considered rude not to talk with people (even strangers) that you coincide with in a waiting room or train carriage.

ISRAEL

• The usual form of greeting is shaking hands when you introduce yourself and when you leave. You must remember that Orthodox Jews do not shake a woman’s hand. When a certain degree of familiarity has been reached, they will give you a pat on the back.

• Shalom (Peace) is used indistinctly for hello and goodbye.

• Business culture is friendly and natural. At first they call people Mr or Mrs followed by their surnames. Then they quickly revert to using first names. Diminutives and nicknames are widely used (it is a custom that is acquired in the army).
• Politics is the main topic of conversation. There is a wide variety of opinions. However, you should not give your opinion about political events. It is better to listen than speak. You must not criticise the government’s actions, even if they do so.

• Other favourite topics of conversation are: the family, the different origins of the Israeli people and sport (especially basketball).

• The most usual business meal is lunch. You should wait for the host or more senior member of the group to start eating first.

• Israeli cuisine is very rich. It reflects the different origin of the Israelis. Some typical dishes are: kabobs (meat with vegetables), borscht (lamb soup) or falafel (pita bread with fried chick peas).

• Tipping is normal in hotels, restaurants, taxis, etc.

• On the Jewish holy day, the Sabbath, shops are closed out of respect for the Jewish religion from midday on Friday to Saturday evening. The working week begins on Sunday and finishes on Thursday.

• When you fly out you must arrive at Tel Aviv airport at least two hours before your flight leaves, to pass through the exhaustive security control and to get your boarding card.

ITALY

• Shaking hands when you introduce yourself and leave is the most common form of greeting. It is usual to touch the forearm of the person that you are greeting with the other hand. The most used words are Ciao (used like Hello or Goodbye), Buon giorno (Good morning or Good afternoon) and Buona sera (Good evening).

• Treatment is formal. The most important people are introduced first. If the academic level is not known, for senior people the titles Dottore (Doctor) for men or Dottoresa for women are used. In fact, although they do not have this qualification, it will be accepted as a status acquired because of professional merit. For other people Signore (Mr) and Signora (Mrs) are used. For lawyers, Avvocato is used. In professional relations (even among company colleagues) the surname is used more than the first name.

• In conversation it is usual to use lei (equivalent to the formal you) even among people who have known each other for years.
• Style and behaviour (a concept known as bella figura) is essential for attracting the other party’s attention and respect. Great importance is attached to what people think of behaviour and appearance.

• The business conversation is preceded by a short informal chat. It is better to let them take the initiative and begin talking business.

• In the preliminary chat you should not ask personal questions, talk about politics or the Second World War. Even if the Italians openly criticise the government, you should not support them in their arguments or add your own personal criticisms.

• Favourite topics of conversation are history, art, museums, cuisine and Italian wines, and sports (football, basketball and cycling).

• The most usual business meal is lunch (la colazione). You must wait for the right moment to begin the business conversation. In the north (el pranzo) is served no later than 13.30 and dinner is until 20.30.

• Food is rarely eaten with the hands. You must use a fork and spoon even for eating cheese or fruit (except grapes or cherries).

• Business gifts are only given to managers. Expensive books with high-quality illustrations are greatly appreciated.

• The way of dressing is distinctive for doing business. You must not forget that Italy is the world centre of men’s fashion. Suits, shoes and ties must be made with the best materials and modern designs. Even on informal occasions the clothes that you wear must be smart and chic.

• Holidays are concentrated in August. Most of the small and medium companies close at this time of year.

JAPAN

• It is best to wait for them to take the initiative in the form of greeting. With foreign negotiators they usually shake hands. On formal occasions they bow. The depth of the bow shows the status of the other person. For Westerners, the most appropriate is to respond with a slight bow. When you bow you must look down and place the palms of your hands at the side of your legs. Women must cross their hands on their lap when standing and bowing.

• 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. They should be in English on one side and Japanese on the other. You should give your card with both hands and with each thumb holding a corner of the card on the side written in Japanese so that the other person can in theory read the information when he bows. When you receive a card, you should read the company and person’s name carefully, make a sign that you have perfectly understood the information and, perhaps, make some comment or ask a question to show interest. During the entire 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. You should not mention the Second World War or sensitive business issues like the bankruptcy of financial institutions, trade protectionism or the nuclear accident in Fukushima.

- It is a good idea to ask questions about the country’s culture, art and customs. Other favourite topics of conversation are travel, food and sports (especially golf).

- In the business context it is usual to dine in restaurants or go to karaoke bars. You must let them invite you first. Although these social events are more to strengthen personal relationships, they are also used for speaking and gaining more insight into business deals.

- In restaurants you are given a set of chopsticks wrapped in paper. To serve yourself with food from a tray you should turn the chopsticks up-side down and use the thick ends (the non-eating ends) so that the ends that have been in your mouth do not come into contact with the food on the tray. When you finish your meal, you should put the chopsticks on a plate with other chopsticks. They must not be left on top of the bowl or plate.

- A Japanese meal consists of several dishes that you should to try one by one, alternating with soup or rice, which are served throughout all the meal as an accompaniment and, therefore, must not be finished before eating the other dishes. In the best restaurants soup and rice is always eaten at the end. When you eat rice you must bring the bowl to your mouth and use the chopsticks to push the food. When you want to ask for more you must hold the bowl with both hands.
• Alcohol is widely consumed. In bars the typical drink is *mizuwari* (whisky with water). If you do not ask for anything else, you will be served this.

• At business lunches or dinners the Japanese make several toasts. *Kanpai* (Dry your glass!) is the most common. To each toast that the host makes, you should respond with another. You must watch the amount that you drink because there will be a lot of toasts. In any case, you can toast with a glassful of water.

• 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*).

• For the Japanese the gift-giving ceremony — the way in which it is wrapped and how it is given (*Hoso*) —, is as important as the present itself.

• It is difficult to know whether they are going to give an expensive gift or not; therefore you should try and find out beforehand (perhaps, via the intermediary responsible for the introductions) so that you give a similar kind of present. In any case, you must not be surprised at modest or extravagant gifts.

• Leather items, pens, ties or handicrafts are good choices for presents.

• You should avoid presents that have associations with the numbers four or nine. Both are unlucky numbers. In Japanese, the words for these numbers are very similar to death (four) and depression (nine). When you take a present to a Japanese house where you have been invited (flowers, chocolates, cakes) you must ensure that you have the right number for the number of people who will be there.

• Even if you bring the present from abroad it is better to have it wrapped in Japan in order to avoid choosing the wrong paper. Rice paper is the best choice. Colours must be discreet, except red, which is lucky.

• Usually, the Japanese do not open presents when they receive them. If they open them they are usually quite sparing in their praise, although this does not mean that they have not liked them.

• To be invited to a traditional Japanese house is a great honour. You must take your shoes off at the door and put slippers on, which you take off when you get to the dining room. You must put them on again to go the bathroom where you take them off and put on a pair of bathroom slippers. When you return to the dining room you must not forget to take the bathroom slippers off. During dinner, fellow diners kneel down on a *tatami* around a low table. Men must keep their knees eight or ten centimetres apart and women must keep their knees together. During the after-dinner session they sit with their legs crossed.
• 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.

KENYA

• The greeting consists of a soft handshake, a little more long than in the West and less than in the Arab countries. It is a way of trying to give an idea of humbleness (in contrast with the power that suggests a strong handshake) and continuity to the relationship.

• In Swahili, the words for greeting are *Hujambo habari* (Hello, how are you?) or simply *Jambo*. The most usual answers are *Sijambo* (I am fine) and *Mzuri* (Everything is okay). The expressions to say goodbye are *Tutaonama o Kua heri*.

• For introductions, it is usual to use the surname preceding by Mr. or Mrs. Professional titles (Director, Doctor, Engineer) are less used than in the francophone Africa. However, it is usual to use diminutives of the name when speaking to people, even sometimes, preceding by Mr.

• During the conversation it is advisable to avoid topics such as terrorism and AIDS. It is advisable not to mention the violent group *Mau Mau*, which in the fifties of last century faced to British colonists because of the land’s control.

• The favourite topics for conversation are natural beauty of the land, sports, specially football and athletics, as well as the Legendary Olympic Champions of long distance races Henry Rono, Meter Koech and Paul Ereng.

• They usually ask you personal questions such as: *Are you married?* or *Do you have children?* You must be respectful by answering with sentences such as *I have not been blessed yet* or *Not yet, I am patient*.

• Religion is a very important aspect in the life of people. You should avoid any negative comment and pronounce the word *God* with the most respect.

• In order to refer to the ethnic origin of people, it is preferable to use the expression *ethnic group* since *tribe* have a negative connotation of primitivism for them.

• The pace of conversation is slow, with a low tone and the use of silences, as a way of avoiding confrontation or disagreement.

• Visual contact depends on the hierarchical level of the person to whom you are speaking; if it is higher you do not have visual contact in order to show respect;
if it is equal or lower, it is important to maintain because it shows honesty.

- Punctuality is very appreciated but it is not a professional requirement as in the developed countries. In the event of waiting for long time in order to be received, it is advisable not to get angry since it is a sign of discourtesy and weakness. Likewise, if you are late you should not apologize either.

- During the meetings, they usually pour very hot tea (*chai*) with milk and sugar. It is advisable to accept it, even if you do not drink it.

- Business lunches and dinners are served in order to celebrate the achievement of an agreement. Barbecues in private residences are also usual. Some typical dishes are *Ugali* (stewed corn with a texture similar to pâté) and *Githeri* (beans, corn and vegetables).

- You should be dressed in a conservative and modest way in order to not show ostentation or wealth typical from a colonist country. It is advisable to avoid wearing clothes that remind to military uniforms.

- Tips, Known as *baksheesh*, are very deeply-rooted, to the point of nearly being a social act. They are used to speed the tasks of people as well as a sign of gratitude. Initially, it may be refused but if you insist it shall be accepted and appreciated.

- The best way of moving in the cities are taxis. There are different companies and quality varies. The price must be negotiated before getting on. It is advisable to have the address written on a paper or to have a card with the address of the person you are going to visit.

- When you travel to Nairobi it is better to arrive two days before the meeting takes place so as to get used to the altitude (1,604 m) that causes tiredness and light headaches.

**LITHUANIA**

- The most common form of greeting is a handshake while maintaining visual contact and a smile.

- Once the relationship is established, the greeting is generally less formal and may include a hug. It is advisable to wait for the Lithuanians to determine whether the relationship has reached this level or not.

- People address each other with their honorific title and the surname of the person. You must wait until they invite you to use the first name.
• Personal introductions and exchange of cards are carried out in a similar way as in other countries of Western Europe.

• It is advisable to avoid talking about the period when they were part of the Soviet Union. They like talking about the nature and wildlife of the country and sport (especially basketball).

• Business meetings are generally around dinnertime, at approximately 18:00 in the afternoon. In business dinners table manners are not very strict. You must wait until they indicate which seat you should take. During the meal, hold the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right, do not put your elbows on the table and keep your hands visible at all times. It is advisable to serve yourself small quantities so that you can taste all the dishes.

• The hosts carry out the first toast. This is generally done with liquor, beer or wine. It is hoped that the foreigner carries out his or her own toast.

• Lithuania is a country where the way you dress is important. It is advisable to arrive well dressed as this sets a good impression. It is advisable to use conservative designs and colours.

• Even though it is not common to find women in managerial positions within the company, foreign businesswomen who travel to Lithuania will not have problems in developing their work.

• If you are given a present, open it when handed over.

• In the case of an invitation to a Lithuanian’s house it is advisable to bring wine, flowers (in an odd number) or something sweet for the hosts. If you choose flowers, have in mind they use chrysanthemums for funerals and white flowers for weddings.

• The family is the centre of the social structure. Family obligations are a priority for Lithuanians.

• The Catholic Church has a great influence on the culture and relationships, since it was the church that was in charge of preserving the cultural identity in the years of the Soviet Union.

MALAYSIA

• A long, weak handshake (from seven to ten seconds) is the most usual form of greeting and farewell. Often both hands are used. With older women a slight
lowering of the head is the most usual. Kisses in public are not allowed.

- The words used for greeting are: Salamat pagi (Good morning) and Salamat petant (Good afternoon). Halo (Hi), is an informal greeting.

- Malaysian names are difficult to pronounce. When you are given a card you should take time to read it and check that the name is pronounced correctly.

- In a business environment you must use professional titles (Doctor, Director, Engineer, Lawyer) or, in their place, Mr or Mrs. The equivalents in Malayan are Encik and Puan followed by the first name. So someone called Hazandy Basharuddin will be called Encik Hazandy.

- Topics of conversation to be avoided are: religion, politics, bureaucracy or the role of women in society. You should not make comparisons with Western culture or its way of life.

- Favourite topics are the country’s economic expansion, tourism, and gastronomy.

- Malaysians smile a lot in situations that Western people would consider inappropriate, for example, at the most difficult moments in a negotiation. By no means does it indicate happiness or conformity, instead it is a way of releasing tension or nervousness.

- An important part of the business involves going to social events, especially lunches. Malaysians are extremely proud of their cuisine. They will invite you first. If the foreign visitor plans to stay a long time in the country (two weeks or more) he must return the invitation.

- As in other Islamic countries you must avoid certain taboos: do not use the left hand for eating (it is the dirty hand), do not show the sole of your shoe (indicating bad luck) and do not touch people's heads, not even children's (for the Malayans, God resides there).

- A gesture that they use to refuse or when there are problems is to breathe in air through their teeth doing a slight sound.

- Gifts must only be given when a business relationship has been established. In any case, you should avoid expensive goods, since the Anti-Corruption State Agency has very severe rules penalising bribery.

- When you receive a present you should not open it in the presence of the person who has given it to you. This would mean impatience or greed.

- Malaysia is just north of the Equator. The climate is humid and hot all year round. The monsoon season is from September to December, but showers can
occur at any time. Some people take an umbrella with them every day.

- Due to the climate, dress is casual. Executives usually wear dark trousers, short-sleeved light-coloured shirts and a tie, but no jacket. Nevertheless, they expect foreign executives to wear a jacket and tie, although, usually a tie is not necessary after the first encounter.

**MEXICO**

- The usual form of greeting is shaking hands. A man should wait for a woman to hold out her hand first.

- Men, who already know each other, usually embrace. The usual form of an embrace is as follows: first they shake hands, then they embrace each other and, finally, they shake hands again. When they greet a woman that they know, they kiss her on the cheek.

- In introductions, Señor (Mr) or Señora (Mrs) is followed by the surname. If the person has a university qualification, Señor or Señora is replaced by the qualification (Doctor, Architect, Engineer, etc.). First names are only used when there is a close relationship. It is better to wait for them to address you with your first name.

- University qualifications are important. In meetings it is normal to address people using only these titles.

- Contrary to what you may think, Mexicans in Mexico City (known as chilangos) are usually very punctual; they even arrive before the time since they take into account the traffic problems. In other parts of the country people are not as punctual. Jokingly, they use the expression hora americana (American time) or also pm (puntualidad mexicana —Mexican punctuality—) to indicate their lack of punctuality.

- Controversial topics of conversation to be avoided are: the conquest and Spanish colonial period, comparisons with the US, drugs and illegal emigration.

- Despite the image of the colonial period portrayed in murals by Mexican artists, Spain is greatly admired and relations between the two countries are excellent.

- Favourite topics of conversation are the Mayan and Aztec cultures, Mexican cuisine and the country’s natural beauty.

- Mexico is an extremely nationalist country, particularly as regards defending
its culture and language from the US. For example, the stop traffic sign has the same design and colours as the international sign but uses the word *Alto*. Also in most public buildings and monuments the is a Mexican flag.

- Social status is important in Mexico. It is good to mention the universities where you have studied, and prestigious hotels and restaurants that you have visited during your stay in the country or on trips to other countries.

- Mexicans are really sensitive to what other people think of them. A sarcastic smile or yawn at the wrong moment may ruin a business deal.

- You should also not fling objects (papers, cards, cigarettes, pens) across the table. You should hand them directly to the other person.

- The most frequent business meal is breakfast. In Mexico City breakfast begins early (between 7:30 and 8:00) to avoid traffic jams. Breakfast is very large: *huevos rancheros* (fried eggs in a hot, chilli, tomato sauce), *enchilados* (stuffed omelettes), *frijoles* (beans), etc. If the foreign visitor is the host he should bear this in mind, although he is used to having a lighter breakfast. Lunches are between companies that know each other. In the after-lunch session you can talk about business extensively.

- When you eat Mexican food you should be aware of the *Venganza de Moctezuma* (Moctezuma’s revenge). If they say that the food hardly has chilli, it is best to ask for something else and make sure that it does not have any chilli. It is also best to order mineral water rather than drink *agua de la llave* (tap water). In the houses there are several filters for the water.

- During the meals you should be careful with the amount of alcohol that you drink. Mexicans are used to drinking large amounts of tequila, wine, and whisky.

- When you are invited to someone’s home you must not talk business. The custom is to arrive half an hour late.

- Gifts are not usually given in a business context, but they are highly appreciated. For example, a correct gesture is to give a present to the secretaries on a second visit to the country; perfumes or scarves are a good choice. A male executive must say that it is from his wife.

- In Mexico City you should take precautions regarding your safety. If you need a taxi, it is best to catch it at an official taxi rank. You should not wear luxury items (gold watches, jewellery) in public places.

- The climate in Mexico is mild all year long. There are no marked differences between winter and summer like in Europe and South America.
• When you visit Mexico City there is a difference in altitude that you will have to adjust to. The heavy pollution makes the problem worse. The first days you should do hardly any physical exercise and you should not eat, drink or smoke too much.

MOROCCO

• The most common form of greeting, for both men and women, is shaking hands. Kisses on the cheeks are only when there is great friendship or family ties.

• In introductions you should not take the initiative with a senior ranking person, but you may do so when the person is of a lower rank and the other parties know this.

• The culture of eye contact is very important. You should look into the speaker’s eyes, with slight pauses.

• People are addressed by Mr, followed by the surname, in French (Monsieur Abdou, Monsieur Yousef). First names (Mohammed, Ali, Azzedine) are used only when there is some trust.

• Life in Morocco is dominated by Islamic principles. Nevertheless, Moroccans get on very well with people of other religions and are very respectful towards a foreigner’s beliefs. Religion affects the world of intimate thoughts, but do not have great influence in daily habits.

• At the beginning of meetings mint tea (the typical Moroccan drink) or coffee is usually served. Out of politeness, you should not reject it.

• In conversation you should avoid talking about sensitive issues like the integration of the Moroccan territory (Sahara, Ceuta and Melilla), the image of the royal family or the role of women in society.

• Moroccans are very nationalistic, and they appreciate any comments about the country’s natural or artistic beauty or sports achievements (especially in football and athletics).

• The most usual business meal is lunch. In international restaurants the customs are the same as in Europe. In Moroccan restaurants or private homes, you can use your hands to eat some dishes, for example, lamb. The host will even serve guests using his hands. It must be taken as a gesture of trust and not of bad manners.
• The Muslim religion forbids pork because the pig is considered an unclean animal. You must not eat pork in front of them or offer it when you are abroad, since this would indicate a lack of sensitivity. If they explicitly ask for pork there is no problem.

• With alcohol there is more permissiveness than with pork. In international restaurants wine is served and Moroccans increasingly have wine in their homes and offer it to their guests. At a business meal with a Moroccan, you should only drink wine if he does, or rather, if he insists that you do and you already have a relationship of trust with him.

• The role of women in Moroccan society is secondary, although this is changing. More and more women are acquiring positions of responsibility in companies. They are usually very professional and effective.

• When you are invited to a house, the host’s wife usually greets you when you arrive and is not present during the meal. You should behave naturally and not mention this custom.

• Presents between companies are not usual. If you are invited to somebody’s home, gifts for children or the lady of the house (chocolates, flowers or some clothing accessory) will be greatly appreciated.

• Ramadan is an extremely important religious festival. It lasts a lunar month (twenty-eight days) during which time there is a strict fast (you cannot eat, drink or smoke) from dusk to dawn. The Moroccans work during Ramadan, although at a considerably slower pace in the administration and companies. Whenever you can, it is better to avoid visiting the country for business on these dates.

THE NETHERLANDS

• The usual form of greeting is a short, firm handshake when you introduce yourself and leave for both men and women. When you visit private homes you also shake children’s hands.

• There is no word that is widely used with the greeting. Usually, when you shake hands you give your surname as a way of greeting.

• Eye contact is appreciated. Looking into the other person’s eyes inspires respect and attention.

• You should show restraint in the use of gestures. Apart from the handshake there
is no other physical contact. You should avoid familiar gestures like a pat on the back.

- The business culture is formal, yet kind and friendly. In presentations they use Mr or Mrs followed by the surname. Once people know each other, they use first names, although it is better is they take the initiative. When dealing with an older person or a senior manager you should be careful about using first names even if the other person suggests it; it could be perceived as impolite.

- Professional titles (Doctor, Director, Lawyer) are not usually used neither in presentations or during conversation.

- Favourite topics of conversation are: history, travel, art, (they have great painters like Rembrandt, Van Gogh or Vermeer), and sports (especially football); on the other hand, you should avoid talking about politics, religion and some social issues (legalisation of prostitution, euthanasia, etc.). The Dutch are restrained in their behaviour. They do not like exaggeration or ostentation. You should avoid any attitude indicating superiority. As the Dutch say: *Being yourself is good enough.*

- Privacy is important in Holland. Personal dealings in business are minimal. Conversations about personal matters will always be very superficial. The Dutch rarely show their emotions; they have immense self-control.

- You should use English in written correspondence. You should pay careful attention to spelling and grammar since they know this language very well.

- It is usual to talk business during lunch with customers or partners. Most Dutch people feel guilty if they think that they are enjoying themselves during work hours.

- The Dutch have very formal table manners. Men wait for women to sit down first. They use a knife and fork for everything, even for eating bread.

- Before the meal begins, the host or hostess usually says *Eet smakelijk* (pronounced *Eit esmakailik*) meaning *It tastes delicious.*

- At informal meals usually they split the bill and pay fifty-fifty. This is called *Going Dutch.*

- Gifts among companies must be of good quality, but not too expensive. When you are invited to a house, a box of chocolates or a toy for the children can be a good choice. Another possibility is to send flowers or a plant, preferably the day after.

- Dutch are simple in their lifestyle. People with a high economic and social position do not wear expensive clothing, drive the latest cars and neither do they
live in large mansions. They try to seem normal and they generally achieve it.

- Dress is conservative and modest. It is not a country where people are valued by their external appearance.

- Many executives usually take off their jackets at meetings and business lunches. You should follow the example.

NIGERIA

- The usual form of greeting is shaking hands when you introduce yourself and leave. In the north of the country you must avoid any physical contact in public with women. In the south (where most of the population is Christian) you can shake their hands and, when there is familiarity, even a kiss on the cheek like in Latin countries.

- Treatment is formal. Titles like Mister or Madam are usually used before the surname. The first name is only used when a personal relationship exists.

- Aristocratic titles like Alhaji (Prince) or Chief are used all the time. In some instances you should not trust the people who use them (especially Alhaji) since they may be trying to feign a social position that they do not have.

- Favourite topics of conversation are cultural heritage, cinema and football (several Nigerian players play in the European Union leagues).

- You should avoid talking about politics, corruption and rivalries between tribal groups. It is best not to use words like natives, jungle, huts, witchcraft, etc., in conversation, since they will be associated with the country's economic backwardness. You must not worry about finding topics of conversation since Nigerians are really talkative.

- At business meetings the Nigerians usually serve tea, coffee and refreshments. If you decline the offer with a minor excuse or, even with no excuse, nobody will be offended.

- Nigerians eat their food very hot and with spices. Typical dishes are yam, cassava and rice. Their favourite dish is chicken.

- Nigerians are good hosts. They like inviting foreign visitors to lunch or dinner (or both). Lunch begins at 13.30 and dinner around 20.30. If you are going to stay long in the country you should return their invitations.
• At hotels of some standing the tip is included in the bill. For other services (taxis, hotels) it is usual to give tips.

• Nigerians, especially in the south of the country, are very hospitable. They invite foreigners to their homes without much etiquette, even to family parties, weddings, etc.

• They love to receive gifts for which they are always much obliged. Pens, key rings, articles with the company’s logo are really appreciated. Nevertheless, among companies the culture of giving gifts is not very widespread. When a personal relationship has been established, typical products of the country (ceramics or craft products) would be appreciated.

• Although the climate is hot and humid, businessmen are expected to wear a suit and tie. If executives wear casual clothes it may be interpreted as a lack of respect. A short-sleeved shirt is acceptable, although with a tie. At business meetings and meals you can take off your jacket.

• Some Nigerian businessmen wear the local traditional dress, an embroidered tunic known as baban riga.

• The two most important local festivals for the Muslim community are Id-El-Fitr (lasting two days, at the end of Ramadan) and Id-El-Kabir, they vary from one year to another. You will have to check these dates when you plan your business trip.

• If you travel alone and for the first time to Nigeria your contact in Nigeria should go to meet you at the airport.

• As a precautionary measure, you should also call the Embassy or Trade Office and tell them the number of days that you are planning to stay and the hotels that you have booked into.

NORWAY

• A firm, brief handshake is the usual form of greeting, equally for men and women. You also give a handshake when saying goodbye. In a business environment you should do without the kisses, even if you know the person you are greeting.

• Respect their personal space a lot: when you talk with others you should maintain a distance of an arm’s length. If you fail to do so you may cause uneasiness and discomfort.

• The typical greeting expressions are: God dag (Good Day) and God morgen
(Good Morning); in a less formal manner they say Hei o Hallo (Hi, Hello), and also for saying goodbye.

- For Thank You they say Takk and the answer is Ingen arsak (You are welcome). They also really appreciate if the foreign visitor says something in Norwegian; it is considered as a sign of respect.

- They rarely use titles. The norm is to introduce one person to the other by the surname and if you know it, by the first name.

- Privacy is an essential characteristic of the Norwegian society: try to avoid questions concerning the family, the place of holidays or what salaries they may have. It is also not advisable to refer to them as Nordics precisely what they like is to appreciate the differences with respect to the Swedes and Finnish people. Mentioning of the high level of prices is not advisable either.

- Favourable themes for conversation are nature (of the fiords), sports (overall, football and skiing) and the high level of social support.

- Despite the equality of different sexes, men show differences with regards to the treatment of women: they open the door for them, they stand up when they enter a room and they sit them when they are in expensive restaurants.

- There is no culture of snacking in businesses. They have a light lunch around 12:00 and continue negotiating afterwards. To celebrate an agreement there is usually a dinner around 20:00, normally they invite whoever they suggest. It is accepted if a foreign woman invites a Norwegian man to dinner and that she pays the bill for him. In order to say thank you for the invitation to have dinner they use the expression Tak for maten (thank you for the food).

- The food most typical in business meetings is a Koldtbord (a hot and cold buffet), which may be served at anytime of the year. In the restaurants they eat a lot of fish and vegetables.

- The most popular drink is Aquavit (water of life). This liquor is made from potatoes, maturing in Barrels for 3-5 years.

- During meals, they usually toast with the word Skål (To your health!). Normally the male host toasts in honour of the male guest and afterwards the female host toasts in honour of the female guest.

- There is no tradition of presents between companies. However, you must be careful with presents of some value as this may be considered as bribery. If you wish to buy a present the most suitable would be alcohol: quality wine, whisky or brandy.
• There exists a very clear separation between work and free time. Do not propose appointments outside the working hour (de 8:00 a 17:00) or the weekends.

PANAMA

• The form of greeting is shaking hands followed by Buenos días (Good morning), Buenas tardes (Good afternoon) or just simply Buenas. The expression Hola (Hello) is considered too colloquial in a business context.

• The business culture is formal. If you decide to negotiate in Spanish, you should use the formal usted (you) and only use the informal tú (you) or first names when they suggest.

• Senior executives must be given preferential treatment. They are greeted first and pass first through doors.

• Punctuality for appointments is not very common. A half hour delay is considered normal. You should not be surprised or get angry because of this flexible attitude towards time. Nevertheless, foreign are expected to be punctual.

• You should not point out the American influence in the country or refer to people from the US as Americans because the Panamanians are also Americans.

• If, however, you demonstrate your knowledge of the country’s culture, history and natural beauty, it will be greatly appreciated.

• The most usual business meal is lunch from 12:00. Dinner is from 20:00. Both usually finish with an after-meal session and a drink in the same restaurant where the meeting was held.

• There is no specific time of the year for taking holidays. Nevertheless, the first week in November when the national festival is held and Carnival week (in February) are not the best times for planning business trips to the country.

• The climate in Panama is typically tropical, with high humidity and temperatures all year long. The climate’s humidity may cause allergy and breathing problems for foreign visitors. The rainy season is from May to November and the dry season from December to April.

• In formal business environments you should wear a suit and tie. In more informal environments the camisilla is widely used, a light open-neck shirt worn outside trousers.
PERU

• The usual form of greeting is shaking hands when you introduce yourself and leave for both men and women. Embraces, pats or kisses (among women) are used when the women are friends.

• The business culture is formal. In introductions Señor (Mr) or Señora (Mrs) is used followed by the surname. First names are only used when people know each other. It is best to wait for them to begin to use them first.

• Professional titles are commonly used, especially for people with public positions. The most used are Engineer, Professor and Doctor. Doctor means the academic qualification that people have obtained and is also used for lawyers, doctors and dentists.

• Peruvians are not strict about punctuality. You should be aware that appointments will begin late and not get angry. One way to avoid starting late is to arrange an hour-long meeting with a set starting and finishing time. This helps managed the so-called Peruvian hour (late appointments).

• Appointments must be arranged in the morning and may include a lunch invitation, so you should not arrange more than one visit a day.

• The custom of a working breakfast is quite widespread, especially when you deal with large companies or governmental administration bodies.

• There is usually some small talk before the business conversation. You should not speak about politics, terrorism and the colonial period, except if your hosts mention these topics.

• Favourite topics of conversation are the Inca and pre-Spanish cultures — especially the Machu Pichu and Cuzco temples and monuments—, football, adventure sports and the country’s ecological wonders, because of the number of natural reserves and microclimates.

• Limeños (citizens of the capital) give much thought to the social class to which each belongs; one of the exponents of social classes is the area in which people live as Lima has a number of very distinct neighborhoods (La Molina, San Isidro, Miraflores, San Borja, etc.). You must be aware of this fact and do not mention anything inappropriate.

• Lima is considered the gastronomic capital of Latin America. There are numerous restaurants serving contemporary cuisine (Novoandina) and other of Spanish origin (Creole), Japanese (Nikkei) and Chinese (Chifa).
• You should be attentive during meals. They expect their guest to eat all the food on his plate. If you do not, you should apologise politely. You must always keep your hands on the table.

• Business conversations during the dinner are not usual. Dinner appointments are usually at 21:00, although in fact they begin half an hour late.

• A typical dish on the coast is *ceviche*, sea bass served with lemon and chilli. There is a variant of this dish served with vinegar, which is known as *tiradito*. The most typical dessert is the *suspiro de Lima*.

• In restaurants it is customary to leave a tip of between 5% and 10%, if the service is good, except when the service is in included in the bill. In taxis is not customary to tip.

• At first meetings you do not usually exchange gifts. If you do give a gift, then a case of quality wine, a good whisky or traditional music are all good choices.

• Peruvians wear evenly and fairly conservative (gray or black suits), white shirts and discreet ties. Bright colours and fashion designs should be avoided. In a business environment, women are well dressed with two pieces suits and high heels.

**PHILIPPINES**

• The usual greeting for both men and women is shaking hands. A man must wait for a woman to hold out her hand first. There is no lowering or bowing of the head which is so common in other Asian countries.

• In introductions Mr or Mrs is followed by the surname. When people already know each other it is usual to use first names and also nicknames.

• Punctuality is observed for business appointments. When you are in Manila you must calculate longer travel time because of traffic problems. Social events are different. People can arrive from fifteen minutes to two hours late, depending on each guest’s social status.

• Academic qualifications and honours are highly valued. If you have them, you should include them on your professional cards. If you are negotiating with a Filipino who has similar qualifications you should mention it; the response will be very positive and it will act as a bond.

• Filipinos like to talk a lot about family matters, about their family and that of their
counterparts. Another favourite topic of conversation is cinema, especially American.

- Topics of conversation to be avoided are religion, politics, the social conditions of the population and corruption.

- It was the Portuguese explorer Magellan who led Spanish boats to the island in 1521 and called them the Philippines after the king of Spain of the time, Philip II. In 1899 as a result of the Cuban war between Spain and the US, Spain ceded the Philippines to the US. After Japanese control during the Second World War, in 1946 the Philippines became an independent state.

- There is a tradition of business lunches and dinners. You should never refuse an invitation to these or other social events. Lunch begins between 12:00 and 12:30 and dinners between 19:30 and 20:00.

- You do not usually talk business during meals and social events.

- Food is very important in Filipino culture. Even one of the traditional forms of greeting, *Kumain ka na ba?* means *Have you eaten?*

- There is a great variety of dishes. Some specialities are *adobo* (chicken and pork stew with onion, soya sauce and vinegar) and *kare-kare* (meat and vegetables served with peanut sauce).

- The climate is very hot and humid all year long. Nevertheless they expect the foreign visitor to wear a suit and tie, preferably in conservative colours. Many Filipino businessmen wear a shirt outside their trousers, the *barong tagalog*; the long-sleeved *barong* is used for work and formal occasions, and the short-sleeved one only for social events.

**POLAND**

- Shaking hands is the usual form of greeting. With a woman you must wait for her to hold out her hand first. Older Poles usually kiss a woman’s hand at social events. Friends and family embrace and kiss one another.

- The most common expression for greeting is *Dzien dobry* (Good morning).

- People are addressed as Mr, Mrs or Miss followed by the surname. You can also use the equivalent Polish words: *Pan* (Mr), *Pani* (Mrs) and *Panna* (Miss). The treatment is formal. First names are only used among friends and family.

- As in other Slav languages the final letter in a woman’s surname can become *a*, for
example, *Pan Solski* and *Pani Solska*.

- Although it is a Slav country, Poles are very extrovert and emotional in their expressions and behaviour. They express themselves in a very direct way, which must not be interpreted as a lack of manners, but as a sign of their pragmatism when doing business.

- They have a deeply rooted sense of honour — the expression *Człowiek honoru* (*person of honour*) does not exist in other Slav languages —.

- The expression *Guest at home, God at home* reflects the great hospitality of Poles inherited from the Sarmata tradition, people who inhabited the territories of the current Poland in the 1st Century B.C.

- History, culture, family, trips and sports are favourite topics of conversation.

- You must be very respectful with religious beliefs. The influence of Catholicism is not to be underestimated. Poles are the most devout Catholics in Europe.

- Business lunches start late, from 15:00. Some very popular places are the *kawiarna* (cafés) where pastries are served and bars.

- Poles like talking and drinking in bars until the early hours. When you go with them you must be prepared for a long night. If you leave too early it may appear impolite.

- They are great drinkers. Although the Germans have invested much effort in introducing beer in Poland, vodka continues to be their favourite drink. It is not surprising that every time you empty your glass they will fill it up again. There is a real custom of toasting at formal and informal meals. You should drink slowly or offer a good excuse to do it.

- When a Pole touches his neck with his index finger, it means an invitation to have an alcoholic drink, or it means that he has already drunk something.

- As houses are small and modest you will probably not receive an invitation to dine at a home. Social relations mainly take place in restaurants and bars.

- At the first meeting with a Polish company, you should take a present from your country. A hand-made article could be a good choice.

**PORTUGAL**

- A gentle handshake is the usual form of greeting. Women, who already know
each other, give each other a small kiss on one cheek. Embraces and pats are reserved for friends.

- The most common expressions are *Bom dia* (Good morning) and *Boa noite* (Good evening). It is common to say the word *obrigado*, which means Thank you, in the same way it is used in English.

- The order of surnames is different to that used in Spain and most Latin American countries: first comes the mother’s surname and then the father’s.

- To address a person use *Senhor* (Mister) or *Senhora* (Mistress) before the father’s surname.

- In introductions, for certain managerial-level professionals and graduates, the professional title *Doutor* (Doctor) for men or *Doutora* (Doctor) for women is used, although they do not have the academic title of doctor. For technical qualifications *Mr* is followed by the professional title (*Senhor engenheiro)*.

- The business culture is formal. If you decide to negotiate in Portuguese the informal *tu* form is hardly ever used. The word *você*, equivalent to the formal *you* is the most usual term of address. First names are reserved for friends and family.

- If a person with a high position calls you by his first name should not do the same, unless you are expressly requested to do so.

- Written correspondence is still very strict. When you write to senior company managers or civil servants the title *Excelentíssimo Senhor* is put before the person’s surname.

- In conversation, you should avoid talking politics or making comparisons with Spain. Comments about the country’s tourist wonders (they are especially proud of Sintra) the beaches (El Algarve, Cascais, Estoril) and the sporting successes of their football clubs (Oporto, Benfica and Sporting de Lisboa) will be appreciated.

- The most usual business meal is lunch. It begins about 13:00. Dinner appointments are between 20:00 and 21:00. Meals should be used to strengthen personal relations rather than to deal with business matters.

- Portions are generous: starters, two courses and several desserts. A Portuguese wine always accompanies the meal. The typical dish is *bacalhau* (cod) cooked in different ways. At the end of the meal the *bica* (strong, black coffee) is served. You should eat at the same pace as the Portuguese host.

- On certain occasions, since the amounts served are copious the Portuguese sometimes ask for *meia dose* (half a portion).
When you are invited to lunch or dinner in a restaurant you must return the invitation. However, you must not use the expression *I owe you a meal*, since it would be considered bad manners.

You are only invited to a person’s home when a personal relationship exists. You do not need to take a gift. You can return the invitation by taking the host to a restaurant. Another possibility is to send flowers to the hostess; you should choose a nice bouquet.

On the first visit to a company you should not give a present. If you send a present (mainly at Christmas), you should enclose a handwritten note and not a professional card.

Dress is very conservative (dark suits and light shirts). At meetings and business lunches executives do not usually take off their jackets, even in summer.

**ROMANIA**

The form of greeting is a short, gentle handshake every time that you meet or leave a person. Even when the meeting continues the same day, after a recess, you must shake hands again. Friends embrace each other and give a kiss on either cheek.

Men must stand up when they are introduced to a woman and they wait for her to hold out her hand first. Women must remain seated.

The most common greeting is *Bună ziua* (Good morning) and more informally, *Bună* (Hello).

People are addressed by Mr, Mrs or Miss followed by their surname. The equivalent words in Romanian are: *Domn* (Mr), *Doamnă* (Mrs) and *Domnisoară* (Miss).

Professional titles (Doctor, Engineer, Professor) are commonly used First names are only used when a personal relationship has been established.

Professional status is very important for Romanians. Your professional status and position must appear on your card. When you are in Bucharest, you should stay at a prestigious hotel.

In restaurants, and especially in hotels, social gatherings among companies are held. After-meal sessions are usually long. Business conversation is interspersed with personal matters. You should be prepared to return their toasts.
• In conversation, you should avoid talking about politics, especially the Ceaușescu period that ended on Christmas Eve 1989 with the execution of the dictator and his family by the people.

• Favourite topics of conversation are the architectural wonders of Bucharest, and the Transylvania region where the Carpathian Mountains are to be found.

• Meals are generous. Out of politeness, you will have to try the different dishes that you are offered.

• You are not usually invited to their homes because they are modest and small.

• Gifts, especially items for general use, are much appreciated. You should remember that Romania, Bulgaria and Albania are the poorest countries in East Europe. Chocolates, perfumes and especially cigarettes (they are great smokers) are a good choice.

• You must dress conservatively and, as in the rest of East Europe, do not wear flaunt luxury items. Outside Bucharest a tie is not usually worn.

**RUSSIA**

• Except in very formal situations, Russians greet visitors with a handshake and say their surname. They do not use expressions like *How are you?* When there is trust, as well as shaking hands, they embrace and kiss each other.

• The most usual greetings are *Zdrástvuitie* (Good morning, which is used like Hello) and *Dasvidánia* (Goodbye). Thanks is *Spasiba*.

• Russian names consist of the first name, the patronymic name (from the father’s first name) and the surname. Thus, in the example *Ivan Nikolaievich Pankratov,* *Ivan* is the first name, *Nikolaievich* means son of *Nikolai* and *Pankratov* is the surname.

• Women add the letter *a* to the end of their surname. Mr Pankratov’s wife will be Mrs Pankratova.

• The Russians address each other informally. They use first names and patronymic names, as well as diminutives and nicknames. When they have established a personal relation with a foreigner, they invite him to use one of these names.

• It is important to give them your business card so that they give you theirs. You must not lose it because it is difficult to find contact information in business or
telephone directories, since there are hardly any or they are not up to date.

- You must not mention politics. Topics to avoid are relations with the ex-USSR republics, periods of conflict in their history, for example, the Stalin period, and Russia's severe living conditions; you should not mention the alcoholism problem either.

- Russians have no problem about speaking of their personal life. You should not be surprised when at the first meeting they start talking about their family problems, their salary or their company’s economic situation.

- Russian people are extremely proud of their literature, architecture and museums, as well as their sports achievements. You can feel safe with these topics of conversation.

- The family is very important in Russian society. They frequently repeat the expression *Semiá yest Semiá* (The family is the family) to justify any act that they do for their relatives.

- Privacy is also important. Office doors are usually closed. You should knock and ask permission to enter; when you leave you should remember to close the door behind you.

- Lunch is the most usual business meal. You usually have to wait a long time to be served. You should not bother with the *a la carte menu*, as many of the courses will not be available. Just ask for the set menu.

- The most popular restaurants usually have long tables for several people. If there are just two or three people in the group you may have to share the table with other restaurant diners. In medium—price or expensive restaurants a person can sit alone at a table.

- After-lunch sessions are long. They do not normally talk about professional matters, but personal or social matters, for example the way of life in the foreign visitor’s country.

- Russians are great drinkers and boast about staying sober after drinking very heavily. The national drink is vodka (it is estimated that vodka represents 5% of retail sales). It contains pure water and natural alcohol obtained from pressing rye. It is 40º alcohol by volume and, when drunk in moderation, is a good drink: two or three small glasses during a lunch, instead of a glass of wine do not prevent you from continuing working, since vodka does not make you sleepy or cause an upset stomach.

- Drinking vodka is a pleasure and ritual for the Russians. Glasses are filled to the
brim and are never raised to be filled, since it would be too risky; all the bottle must be drunk. Vodka is sold in grams in restaurants.

- Toasts are very common. The expressions used most are: Za vashe zdorovye (Cheers!) and Mir i Druzhba (Peace and friendship!).
- All gifts are well received, especially if they are products that represent Western culture like CDs, electronic gadgets, designer watches, wallet-document holders, etc.
- Social status is important in Russia. Keep in mind that Russian businessmen are all self-made men and belong to the category of new rich. Showing ostentatious signs of wealth, like staying in luxury hotels or going to expensive restaurants, reflects positively.
- Business men and women should be dressed with quality suits and modern designs. In Moscow and St. Petersburg great attention is paid to fashion and are highly valued luxury goods such as watches, jewelry, pens, etc.

**SAUDI ARABIA**

- The form of greeting is a long, gentle handshake. Saudis usually greet their friends by putting an arm around their shoulders or giving them a kiss on either cheek. If the meeting is in a majlis or diwan you must shake hands with all the people present.
- You are not obliged to give a business card at the beginning of the meeting. It is better to wait for them to give you theirs. You should keep it safe, since it will be difficult to find the same information in the telephone directories.
- The expressions for greeting are quite elaborate. They say Assalam Gualaikum (Hello — literally: May peace be with you) and the reply is Gualaikum Assalam (And peace be with you too); then they say, Kaif halak? (How are you?). Other common phrases are: Sabaah al-khayr (Good morning), Massa al-kayr (Good evening) and Shukran (Thanks).
- To address people you should use the title followed by the first name, for example, Mister Mohammed, Sheikh Rashid or Prince Abdullah. The title of Sheikh (whose meaning is expert in the Koran) is used by people of a high social level who are not members of the royal family. For members of the royal family you should use the title Your Highness and for government ministers Excellency.
• You must avoid speaking about some topics like religion, the conflict with Israel or the role of women in society. Neither should you ask about the way they dress.

• Favourite topics of conversation are: the country’s economic progress, history, art and sports (especially football).

• You should not ask about their wife or sons and daughters, since it may be interpreted as a lack of respect. It is best to use the general term family.

• Staring is a sign of trust. It is useful to gesticulate to give emphasis to what is said.

• You must not use your left hand for eating, touching people or pointing. The left hand is considered dirty because it is used in the bathroom. Even if you write with your left hand, you must apologise for this.

• Showing the sole of your shoe to another person is a sign of bad luck and is offensive.

• In general, at the start of meetings or when you are in a room waiting for the meeting to begin you are served with tea or coffee. The Saudis like the foreigner visitor to accept it.

• Coffee or tea is also served as a sign that the meeting must finish. If you stay until the drink is finished, then it is a sign that you want another meeting. When the agent or partner is present in the meeting, it is better to let him establish the details of the next appointment.

• During meetings it is very likely that other people enter in the office, they attend phone calls or take time to resolve something, apparently urgent. Do not show anger because it is their usual modus operandi.

• You must not mention the objects that are in offices or homes because the host will feel obliged to give them to you.

• Lunches and dinners between companies are quite usual. The business conversation must begin once the meal has finished. You should show an interest in how the dishes have been prepared and try each one.

• Usually, you eat with your hands from a single plate in the centre of the table. It is advisable to leave food on your plate. This it means that the food is good and that another person can eat it. In restaurants leaving food is interpreted as a sign of wealth.

• Restaurants have two entrances: one for men and another for families, with separate rooms.
• When you are invited to a house you must not take presents for the hostess. You must not take food either, since it could be interpreted that you do not expect the food to be good. On the other hand, presents for children are welcome.

• During Ramadan you must not eat, drink or smoke in front of the Saudis during daylight hours. It lasts a month and finishes with the *Id-al-Fitr* festival (three days' holiday in which nobody works).

• Some companies have in their offices an area for praying (their own mosque), which consists of a rug with drawings of arches. You must never tread on this rug, although the host most likely points that out to you in a friendly gesture when you pass near it.

• The role of women is in the background. They hardly participate in the business world. If there is a woman present in a business meeting you must not greet her unless she is introduced. The greeting will be short and polite and with no shaking of hands.

• You must never look at a woman’s eyes (the only visible part of her body, together with her hands and feet). You must not enter a lift where there is one or several women. If you are in a lift, women will not enter.

• When you catch a taxi you should establish the price of the journey beforehand and make sure that the taxi driver knows how to get to the address, since often newly arrived immigrants work as taxi drivers and do not know the cities particularly well.

• The holiday is Friday when the Jaimaa prayer takes place. The working week begins on Saturday and ends on Wednesday. Some companies and shops open on Thursday morning.

• The two most important local holidays are *Id-El-Fitr* (lasting three days at the end of Ramadan) and *Id-El-Kabir* (two days for celebrating *Hajj* or visiting the holy city of Mecca); the date is different every year. You will have to check these dates when planning a business trip.

• In Saudi Arabia you must dress conservatively, with a jacket and tie. Women must cover their arms and legs, not show their knees or wear much jewellery or make-up.

• It is completely inappropriate that foreigners wear the garments worn by Saudis such as the *ghutra* (red headscarf) or the *thobe* (white robe to the feet).
**SENEGAL**

- The most common form of greeting is a long handshake. They even use to start talking while handshaking. Unlike Arab countries, Senegalese do not hug or kiss.

- Introductions are formal: French words like *Monsieur* (Mr) or *Madame* (Mrs) are used followed by the surname or the name. Professional titles are also used for Government employees or general managers —PDG (Président Directeur Général)—.

- Senegalese are very strict about punctuality. You should not show rush or stress in meetings since this could generate distrust.

- Visual contact is limited as it is considered disrespectful to maintain direct eye contact, especially to a high level person. Foreigners are thought to be high ranked people.

- You should speak in a low tone of voice and avoid gestures. It is not advisable to make or tell jokes.

- They speak about general subjects before they talk business. The most common topics are the family, the beauty of the country and especially, football.

- The national hero is Leopold Sedar Senghor, founder of the Socialist Party of Senegal, President of Senegal since its independence until 1980, and a famous writer in France who created and developed the concept of negritude.

- Topics to be avoided are: slavery, Islam, the independent movements in the southern area of Casamance or the conflict with Mauritania.

- Tea, coffee or a peanut drink are served in meetings. If you do not like these you should ask for other different drink since they are very hospitable and could feel themselves uncomfortable if you do not.

- When closing a deal it is common to have a meal in a local restaurant. Senegalese cuisine is one of the best in Africa. The main ingredient is rice that is accompanied by meat or fish. Typical dishes are: *Yassa* (chicken with lemon, pepper and onion) and *Thiebou Dienne* (rice with fish).

- Tips in the country are called *baksheesh* —or just *dash*— and it is very common in all kind of services. They might refuse it the first time but if you insist, they will accept and appreciate it.

- The typical dress of Senegal is known as *boubou*, a bright colours tunic. Business
executives dress as in the Western countries. It is advisable to dress modestly; otherwise you could give an impression of excessive richness and colonialist exploitation.

- It is not advisable to visit the country during the Ramadan since business activity slows down and most companies close at 14:00.

**SINGAPORE**

- The form of greeting is shaking hands accompanied with a smile and, unlike other Asian countries, looking directly into their eyes. When you greet a Chinese or elderly person you should lower you head slightly.
- In introductions you should use the professional title (Doctor, Director, Engineer) and the surname. If you do not know the title use Mr or Mrs followed by the surname.
- It is essential to bear in mind the ethnic origin of the negotiators. In Singapore three ethnic groups exist side by side: the Chinese, who make up the majority (75% of the population), Malayans (15%) and Indians (7%); each maintains its own special characteristics when doing business.
- Each of the three ethnic groups has their own rules as regards names and surnames. For example, the Chinese put the surname first, then the generation name and, finally, the first name. A person called Lee Tse Hui is introduced as Mr Lee. First names should not be used.
- People from Singapore laugh in situations that seem strange to a Westerner. Like the Chinese, they laugh in embarrassing situations, which Westerners find completely inappropriate. In these circumstances it is better to change the subject, since laughing indicates tension or nervousness rather than happiness.
- You should avoid conversations about issues like religion, politics or the role of women in society. You should not tell jokes either; humour is only used with people that you really know.
- Positive topics for conversation are travel, the country’s economic success, the number of quality shops (they are avid consumers) or the delights of local cuisine.
- Due to its mix of ethnic groups, Singapore has one of the world's widest varieties of high-quality restaurants (Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, European, etc.), which reflects a country with a high purchasing power. You should make an effort to
use chopsticks. They will appreciate it.

- It is one of the few Asian countries where you can talk business during meals.

- A gesture that Singaporeans use to reject something or when there are problems is to breathe in air between their teeth.

- Gifts are only given when a personal relationship has been established or a business deal has been clinched. In any case, gifts must not be very expensive because they could violate the country’s anti-corruption laws.

- In spite of the heat and the humidity so typical of a tropical climate, dress is similar to Anglo-Saxon countries. They expect businessmen to wear a discreet suit and tie.

- The rainy season is from November to January, but showers are frequent all year long. Some people carry an umbrella every day of the year.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

- The form of greeting is a quick, strong handshake when you introduce yourself and leave. You should not give a kiss on the cheek; this is reserved for friends and family.

- In English, they use informal greetings like *Hello* or *Good Morning*, rather than the formal British expressions *How do you do?* or *How are you?* Afrikaners and most black people use the expression *Goeie*. Zulus greet each other with the word *Sawubona*.

- The use of first names is quite common in the business world. Nevertheless, you should wait for them to use them first. Up until then you must use Mr or Mrs followed by the surname.

- Professional titles (Doctor, Engineer, Lawyer) are often used because only 5% of the population have a university qualification and, therefore this is a status symbol. In formal written correspondence you should use the abbreviation Dr (Doctor) before the person’s surname. In conversations you should only use it with people that have actually obtained this academic degree.

- The two favourite topics of conversation are the country’s natural beauty and sports, especially golf, but also rugby, football and cricket.

- You should avoid talking about politics, religion and racial conflicts. If this last
topic is mentioned, it is better just to listen and not say anything. You must bear in mind that regarding racial topics whites of British origin have more moderate ideas than Afrikaners, who are more extremists.

• Social activities are part of the South African business etiquette. Attending sport events, going on tours of the country and even hunting will raise the esteem of the supplier or foreign partner. Golf is also a good opportunity to strengthen relationships. In important business deals establishing a personal relationship before concluding the agreement will be useful.

• Foreign visitors are usually invited to barbecues at homes, known as braaivleis, the Afrikaner expression for roast meat, which is usually abbreviated with the word braai. Although the host insists that the foreign visitor should not take anything, it is considered polite to take some bottles of wine or cakes.

• In South Africa, going to a coffee shop does not mean going to a bar, pub or cafeteria to have a coffee, but to one of the shops in the area (equivalent to grocery stores) that are open until late.

• The most usual business meal is dinner from 19:00 onwards, although South Africans also organise working breakfasts and lunches.

• Work timetables are fairly strict from 8:00 to 17:00, with a one-hour lunch-break. Business meetings are not usually held outside these working hours.

• Business activity is virtually non-existent in December, as this is when South Africans take their summer holiday. Remember too that 16th December (The Day of Reconciliation) is a national holiday. Business activity gets back to normal in the third week of January.

SOUTH KOREA

• As in any Asian country, etiquette is important: you must wait to be invited into an office or to sit down at a table.

• The most common greeting is shaking hands and a slight lowering of the head. The local expression for greeting is: Annyong haseyo (Are you at peace?)

• The order of Korean names is the reverse to that in the West: first the surname, then the generation name and, finally, the first name. For example in Lee Hyong Sim, Lee is the surname, Hyong the generation name and Sim the first name. In business conversations Mr is followed by the surname (Mr Lee) or adding the
suffix ssi (Leesii) meaning Mister. First names are never used.

- Surnames are usually one syllable and generation names two. Six or seven surnames represents about 60% of all surnames being the highest percentage: Kim (23%), Lee (15%) and Park (9%).

- Written correspondence begins with To my respected followed by the title and full name. Just to mention the surname is not enough.

- Exchanging cards is very common. When you receive a card, you should look at it carefully before putting it away. You must not write on it.

- In conversation you must avoid references to North Korea. You should not compare Korea with Japan either: even though the two countries organised a football world cup together, the Koreans still remember the Japanese occupation during the Second World War.

- You should not criticise any aspect of their way of life. Since their country is ethnically and racially uniform, they believe that their culture is unique and superior to that of other countries.

- When a Korean laughs a lot it does not necessarily mean that he is very happy, rather that he is reacting to an embarrassing situation.

- Business lunches and dinners are very common, although more to get to know the other party than to talk business. It is important to accept invitations and return them, although this does not mean that you are close to reaching an agreement.

- At meals there are usually several toasts with soju (rice liqueur). The phrase they use for the toast is Gun-bei (Raise your glass!).

- The number four is unlucky, since its pronunciation is similar to the word for death. In some hotels and office buildings there is no fourth floor.

- Dogs are not liked in Korean culture, since they are thought to be dirty (something like the pig in Arabic culture). You must avoid logos, photographs or presents with images of dogs.

- Giving presents is common at the start of the negotiations. If the negotiation is with a group, you must give a different and more expensive present to the boss, and other presents that are similar and less expensive to the other group members.

- You should not give products made in Korea or Japan. Good choices are bottles of spirit. When you receive a present you should not open it in the presence of the person giving it.
**SPAIN**

- Shaking hands at the beginning and end of a meeting is the most usual form of greeting. Embraces or pats on the back are reserved for friends. A man must wait for a woman to hold out her hand first.

- When a man greets a woman that he already knows, or when two women meet who know each other, they kiss on each cheek —what really happens is that they touch each other’s cheek and they kiss in the air—.

- Cards are widely used. They are usually handed out at the beginning of the meeting to all the people present. You should take enough cards with you, since you will create a bad impression if you receive a card and do not give yours in return.

- In Spain, the name consists of three parts: first name, first surname (father’s surname) and second surname (mother’s surname). Sometimes there are compound first names and surnames. Compound surnames are separated by a hyphen or the particle *de*. For example, in Juan Antonio Fernández García de Leaniz, the first name is Juan Antonio, the father’s surname is Fernández and the mother’s surname is García de Leaniz. In the introductory meeting you can use just the first name and the first surname, but in written correspondence and legal documents both surnames should be used.

- Titles that are used are *Señor* (Mr) or *Señora* (Mrs) —*Señorita* (Miss), only for young women— before the surname, and *Don* or *Doña* before the first name. Titles are not generally used and people are simply introduced by their first name and first surname. Unlike Latin America, the academic titles of Doctor, Engineer or Lawyer are seldom used in Spain.

- In Spanish, there are two forms for you: there is the informal *tú* that is used among friends or among people of a similar age, and the formal *usted* that is used among strangers or people where there is some age difference.

- With old people or people in an important position it is best to wait for them to address you as *tú* and then ask them whether they mind if you call them *tú*. Unlike in Latin America, among work colleagues, even bosses and subordinates, *tú* is used, whereas people who attend public services (shop assistants, taxi drivers, waiters) are addressed as *usted*.

- Favourite topics of conversation are politics, the family, holidays and sports (especially football).

- You should avoid talking about terrorism, emigration problems, or criticise
bullfighting. Neither, you should not mention the difference between regions, especially, Madrid and Barcelona. There is real rivalry between these two cities and this is more than evident in matches between the two football teams (Real Madrid and Barça) whose matches are known as El Clásico.

• Business lunches are very common. They begin at 14:30 and there is normally half an hour after the lunch has finished for chatting and liqueurs. Business is dealt with after the main courses, over the dessert or coffee. The person who suggested the lunch will begin the conversation about business and will also pay the bill. The custom of splitting the bill does not exist. Guests should comment on the high quality of the food and thank the host when they leave.

• When you are the host you should choose a restaurant where the food is good, since Spaniards really appreciate quality food and wine.

• 5% and 10% tips are usually given in bars, restaurants and to taxi drivers, but not in hotels.

• Table manners are European. The fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right hand (different knives are used for meat and fish). A knife must not be used for dishes that can be cut with a fork (eggs, omelettes, vegetables, etc.).

• When you are invited to a private house for dinner, you should decline the first time, because it may be that you have been invited just out of politeness. You should only accept if the host insists. You should take a present; a box of chocolates, a cake or a bottle of wine are good choices.

• Gifts given by companies are not very usual. In any case, they should not be given at the first meeting. If you decide to give a gift, you should choose it carefully. It should be of a good quality, although not excessively expensive, and also carefully wrapped.

• When you receive a present, you should open it immediately in the presence of the person who has given it to you and express your gratitude.

• In Spain appearances are important. You should therefore dress well. In cities (particularly, Madrid and Barcelona) a suit and tie are compulsory. Designer-label, neatly pressed clothes and highly shined quality shoes attract attention and project a positive social image. In small towns, or when you visit companies on industrial estates, you can dress more casually.

• The working day starts and finishes later than the average in Europe, especially in Madrid. The normal day starts at 9:00/9:30 and finishes about 18:30/19:00. From 14:00 to 16:00 it is difficult to locate people in companies, since there is a long lunch-break.
• Holidays are concentrated in August. Small companies close and large companies’ activity is less intense.

• You should also bear in mind that, in addition to the official public holidays, each region has two or three local holidays. When these holidays are on Tuesday or Thursday, it is usual to take the Monday or Friday as a holiday too. These holidays are known as puente (bridge), and the working week is reduced to three days. Before planning a trip to the country, it is a good idea to check the public and local holidays.

SWEDEN

• A short, strong handshake is the most usual form of greeting for both men and women. In a business environment, you rarely ever kiss women.

• Typical expressions for greeting are: God dag (Good day) and God morgon (Good morning). More informal is Hej (Hello). When they say goodbye they usually say Hej (or Hej dä), which may confuse the visitor since Hello is used as a greeting and for saying goodbye. Thanks is Tack and the reply is also Tack or Ingen orsak (Don’t mention it). They really appreciate it if the foreign visitor says something in Swedish.

• Older people or with a higher social position tend to use the impersonal form when they address other people. Thus for example when they speak in English they greet with the expression How is Mr Olsen today?

• Among younger people, the most usual behaviour is to use the informal you form and call people by their first names. At work, superiors are usually addressed by their surname without Mr or Mrs preceding it.

• You must adopt a permanent position of moderation: maintain a low tone of voice and not gesticulate very much (they say that Swedish is spoken well with your hands in your pockets). It is positive to look directly into the eyes of the person that you are talking to.

• Swedes are very regionalist: you should not praise the beauty of one particular region or town and compare it with others.

• Privacy is an essential characteristic of Swedish society: you must not ask personal questions about work, family, etc.

• The Swedes like talking about nature, the Nobel Prize tradition and differences
with other Scandinavian countries. The topic of sports (football, tennis and golf) is also a good conversation starter.

- There is no custom of business meals —they are thought to be a waste of time—, except for celebrating a successful agreement. Lunches are very quick, usually at a self-service restaurant.

- The most typical food is *smörgåsbord* (a buffet of cold and hot dishes) that is served all year round. It begins with an assortment of herring, more or less raw, which have to be tried.

- Toasts are reserved for very special occasions. You must wait for the host to say *Skål* (To your health!) to clink the glasses. If wine or another alcoholic drink is served you should not try it until the host has drunk first. The Swedes take this very seriously.

- Contrary to what you might think of the country that is the paradigm of equality of the sexes, Swedes treat women very politely: they open doors for them, stand up when they enter the room and help seat them at restaurants.

- Creating a relaxed atmosphere is important in Sweden (remember that saunas are used a lot, although not in business relations like in Finland). You should not hurry them to finish a coffee break or finish eating, even if you are in a hurry. In any case, it is most likely that they will finish first because they generally eat quickly.

- There is not much tradition of gifts among companies. For certain occasions a present that is really appreciated is spirits or wines from the visitor’s country. You should be careful with the value of the presents because there are very strict rules regarding bribes.

- Sweden is a country where dress is important. You should dress well to make a good impression. It is best to use conservative tones and designs.

- One of the most traditional festivals, midsummer, is June 6th. After this date and until the end of July most Swedes take their holidays. It is not a good moment to travel to Sweden on business.

**SWITZERLAND**

- The form of greeting is shaking hands for both men and women. You even shake children’s hands.
• You should use Mr or Mrs followed by the surname to address people. In the Germanic part, you can use Herr (for men) and Frau (for women); in the French part, Monsieur and Madame; and in the Italian part, Signore and Signora. First names are only used when a personal relationship has been established.

• In the German part, you should say the person’s surname when you greet, for example, Good morning Herr Galliker; in the French part, you just need to say Good Morning Monsieur.

• Business cards must be given to secretaries and receptionists as well as to the people that you are negotiating with.

• The Swiss like to talk about their country’s natural beauty and their position in the world.

• 300 days of military service over several years is compulsory; they like to talk about this.

• You should avoid any kind of personal question about the family, salary, age, etc.

• The Swiss expect foreign visitors to observe the strict regulations governing the sense of civic responsibility (cleanness, noise, timetables, etc.).

• Respect for the environment and nature is extremely high. At traffic lights some drivers switch off their engines so as not to pollute.

• Business lunches are usually quite informal; they take place on company premises or cafeterias. They can be used to talk business.

• For dinners you should choose a restaurant of some social standing. When you pay the bill you should bear in mind that the tip is already included in the service.

• Toasts are formal. Once the host has made a toast, you should look directly back at him and make another. Typical toasts are: Prosit (Bon appétit, informal) or Zum Wohl (Cheers, more formal) in German Switzerland, Santé (Health) in French Switzerland, and Salute (Health) in Italian Switzerland.

• You will not usually be invited to a Swiss home. Some chocolates or flowers (except red roses, which have a sentimental value) are appropriate presents.

• Exchanging gifts is not common in business dealings.

• The Swiss are discreet people. You should dress conservatively. You should not flaunt wealth or wear luxury objects, except, of course, Swiss watches.
TAIWAN

• When you are introduced to a person for the first time, the most usual greeting is to bow your head. Younger executives usually give a long, weak handshake. On occasions, they use both hands.

• The most usual words for greeting are: *Ni hao ma?* (How are you?) and *Ching dzwo* (Please sit down).

• The order of names is the opposite of that in the West. First the surname, then the generation name followed by the first name.

• The generation name and first name are usually separated by a hyphen. The first name is written in small letters; for example, in *Chen Shui-bian*, *Chen* is the surname, *Shui* the family name and *bian* the first name. You should address people by their surname.

• Many Taiwanese have the same surnames since there are only four hundred different surnames. Nevertheless, when they are translated into English, they have different forms; for example Wong, Wang and Huang are the English versions of the same Chinese surname.

• Titles (Director, Doctor, Engineer) are quite widespread. If you do not know the professional title of a person you should put Mr or Mrs before the surname.

• Business cards are very widely used. The information must be in English on one side and in Mandarin Chinese on the other. You must handle the cards with care since they indicate the person’s position; they should not be folded, written on or put into your pocket.

• Politeness is the main code of conduct in Taiwan. You should not enter an office or sit down before you are asked to. If you are paid a compliment you should reject it and also wait for them to do the same. This does not mean that you should not make compliments, as they are always appreciated.

• The Taiwanese are very hospitable. They invite foreign visitors to dinners, shows, even tours of the country. However, you should be careful because it could be a tactic to gain your trust and weaken your negotiating position.

• They are quite distrustful in their treatment of foreign visitors, especially with the Japanese. You should not ask questions that may arouse suspicion or make the slightest intrusion on their privacy.

• Dinners begin around 18:00. You should not eat much at the beginning, since
there may be more than twenty dishes. You should not eat all the food on the plate because it will be interpreted that not enough has been served. You should not take food from a serving dish either and put it directly into your mouth: first you should put it in the bowl or on the plate provided.

- The Taiwanese appreciates that the foreign visitor uses chopsticks to eat. To serve yourself with food from a tray you should turn the chopsticks upside down and use the thick ends (the non-eating ends) so that the ends that have been in your mouth do not come into contact with the food on the tray.

- When you finish your meal, you should put the chopsticks on the table or on a plate with other chopsticks. If you put the chopsticks alongside each other on your empty plate like in Western Europe, it is a sign of bad luck.

- Favourite topics of conversation are: the family, the country’s economic growth, the language and Chinese calligraphy. You should avoid talking about the relation with China and corruption. During dinners they usually talk about the meal and how it is prepared. Compliments to the chef are compulsory.

- Beards are frowned upon in Taiwan. The Taiwanese only stop shaving (for seven days) when their father or a brother dies, according to the mourning tradition.

- You should not be surprised when they ask you personal questions like *How much did this cost you?* or *How much do you earn?* This is not impolite in Taiwan. If you do not want to answer, just explain that in your culture you do not normally give this kind of information.

- While Westerners point to their chest to refer to themselves, the Taiwanese point to their nose.

- Gifts form part of the business tradition in Taiwan. They are even given on the first visit. An article with the company’s logo (wallet, pen) or a bottle of spirits are good choices. You must avoid giving products made in Taiwan and, generally, in South-East Asia.

- You should use both hands to receive a gift. As in other Asian countries, gifts should not be opened in the presence of the person who has given them.

- The Taiwanese usually have a siesta after lunch (from 13:30 to 14:00). It will be difficult to arrange appointments at this time.

- Holidays are between January and March. The best period to visit Taiwan is from April to September.
THAILAND

• Although the usual form of greeting with Westerners is shaking hands, the local greeting known as *Wai* is still used: the palms of the hands are placed together at chest height with the fingers pointing outwards and the head slightly lowered.

• You should not give a pat on the shoulder or on the arm as a sign of friendship or congratulations, since it would be offensive. It is the gesture that they use to scold children.

• The most usual word for greeting is *Wai* (Hello). As well as meaning Hello it also has two other meanings: Thanks and I’m sorry; it is therefore used all the time.

• Other words for greeting are: *sawassdee krap*, if the person that you greet is a man, and *sawassdee ka*, if the person is a woman. You will create a very positive impression if you learn some Thai words.

• The order of the name and surname is the same as in the West: first the name and then the surname; however, as surnames are very complicated to pronounce, names are used more. In a business environment people can be addressed by their first name. Surnames are only used for formal occasions.

• You should not be surprised if they call their Western counterpart by his name, even a nickname if the name is difficult to pronounce for them.

• Titles are important. You should use Mr or Mrs before the first name. The local word for Mr and Mrs is *Khun*. So a person called *Chatchai Leekpai* will be addressed as Mr *Chatchai* or *Khun Chatchai*.

• Punctuality is a norm in the Thai business world. You should be aware of the traffic jams in Bangkok. You must allow at least 45 minutes for any journey that you make. Rush hours are 7:00 to 9:00 and 16:00 to 18:00.

• Bangkok and other Thai cities have canal transport services. When the traffic is congested, you must consider this alternative for moving about.

• Taxi drivers do not usually speak English. You should take the name of the street that you are going to with you written in Thai, and even the nearby crossroads.

• Thailand is the *Land of smiles*. However, a strong laugh indicates nervousness or tension more than happiness. If one of the other party begins to laugh
without any apparent reason in the course of a negotiation you should change the subject; it is very likely that he is uncomfortable because of some comment that has been made.

- The royal family plays a very important role in the social and political life of the country. They enjoy the respect and admiration of the nation. You must avoid any negative comment about the monarchy in general, and the Thai monarchy in particular.

- Delicate topics of conversation that should be avoided are drug trafficking, prostitution and political matters. You must not make comparisons either with the Western lifestyle. Thais do not believe that economic development means that they have to approach Western culture.

- Business meals are common. It is best to let the Thai hosts begin the business conversation.

- Except in Chinese restaurants —where chopsticks are used— Thais eat like in the West, but with a fork in the left hand and a spoon in the right hand. The fork is used to place the food on the spoon. Because of the kind of food that they usually eat, they hardly ever use a knife.

- You should never take the last piece of food on a tray. You must wait to be offered it and reject the first time. If you are offered it a second time you should accept it; it is considered a great honour.

- Meals are usually served with tea or beer. If water is served, you must only drink from a bottle opened in front of you and the fellow diners.

- Gifts are appreciated, even at first meetings. A bottle of imported spirits (especially whisky) or a traditional craftwork are a good choice. You should not be surprised if the present is not opened in the presence of the person who gives it; it is the custom.

- In Thailand they appreciate it if you dress well. They regard it as belonging to a high social class. Quality clothes, well-known brands, modern designs, luxury items, etc. project a positive image of the people wearing them.

- The best time to go on a business trip is from November to March. Holidays are from April to May. Most companies close in April to coincide with the Water Festival.

- The climate in Thailand is humid and subtropical. The wet or monsoon season is from May to October.
TURKEY

• Shaking hands is the most usual form of greeting in introductions. You do not need to shake hands when you leave. When a personal relationship has been established you can hold out both hands; among friends and relatives they give a kiss on each cheek.

• The words most commonly used for greeting are *Nasiliniz* (How are you?) and *Merhaba* (Hello). The answers are, *Iyiyim* (very well) and *Tebekur ederim* (thank you), respectively. When you enter a company you usually say *Gunaydin* (Good morning).

• When you leave the most common expression is *Görumek üzere*. They also use *Allahaysmarladik* (Goodbye), which has a more formal, Islamic component.

• When the professional titles are known they must be used: *Doktor* (Doctor) or *Avukat* (Lawyer). Otherwise *Bay* (Mr) or *Bayam* (Mrs) followed by the surname must be used.

• Favourite topics of conversation are the family, football and tourism. They really appreciate it if you ask about their children.

• They also like to talk about the history of the country and its monuments. They are particularly proud of the Greek ruins in the city of Ephesus and the mosques in Istanbul, the city renamed as Constantinople by the Roman emperor Constantine, and which was earlier called Byzantium, the capital of the Byzantine Empire.

• You should avoid talking about politics in general and, especially, the conflicts with the Kurdish minority and the struggle with Greece about the sovereignty of part of Cyprus.

• In Turkey shaking the head from right to left to say *no* means *I don't understand*. To say *no* they raise their eyebrows slightly and tilt their head slightly back, and utter a sound similar to *Tisak*.

• You should be careful how you sit down. It is impolite to cross your arms or legs during a conversation. As in the rest of Muslim countries showing the sole of your shoe is offensive.

• During meetings they offer tea (*çay*) and coffee (*kahve*). You should accept it as a sign of respect. Tea is served very hot in small cups, so you will have to drink several times during the meeting; you should pick up the cup by the rim so as not to burn yourself; they add water and sugar to it but never milk. Do not drink
the whole cupful of Turkish coffee since it has grounds in the bottom; like tea, it is not served with milk.

- The Turks are great hosts. Lunches and dinners between companies are very common, although they hardly talk business. Lunch follows the European timetable, between 12.30 and 13.30. They will insist on paying the bill.

- In Turkish restaurants courses are ordered one at a time (once a course is finished they decide which to eat next). The meal is not too long because service is very quick.

- Turkish food is varied and exquisite. The most typical dishes are Mezeler (tray of appetizers), Shish Kebab (lamb chops) and Muhallebi (milk dessert). Dishes are often served with yoghurt or ayran (a drink with a fermented milk base). The national drink is raki, a kind of strong anis that is diluted with water; it is particularly enjoyed with fish.

- Although service is included in the bill, a 5% tip is usually given. If service is not included, a 10-15% tip is given.

- Turkish people smoke a lot, even during meals. Non-smokers must not show signs of disgust.

- Although it is a Muslim country, Friday is a working day and Ramadan celebrations hardly affect the business life. The day of rest is Sunday.

- During June, July and August many executives are on holiday. You should not visit the country for business in these months.

- The climate in Turkey is very extreme and changeable. Istanbul, the main business centre, is a very cold and humid city in winter; it even snows then. When you visit Turkey you should find out about the weather in order to take the right clothing. In any case, you should dress conservatively. Modern designs or bright colours can distort the serious image of the person wanting to do business.

**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)**

- The form of greeting is a short and soft handshake when you introduce yourself and when you leave. Among them, they bring noses together in a kiss on both cheeks. With women you must avoid any physical contact.

- If the meeting is held in an office you should greet first the older person, even if he is not the host. If, on the contrary, it is held in a majlis or diwan, you should
111

shake everybody’s hands counterclockwise.

- You do not have to offer a business card at the beginning of the meeting. It is better to wait for them to start. You should keep the cards given to you as it is difficult to find their contact data in phone or business directories.

- Greeting expressions are very elaborate. When saying Assalam Gualaikum (Hello — literally: let peace be with you) it is answered Gualaikum Assalam (also with you); then, it is said, kaif halak? (How are you?). Other common phrases are: Sabaah al-khayr (Good morning), Massa al-kayr (Good night) and Shukran (Thank you).

- People are addressed as Mister Mansur, Sheikh Hamad or Prince Said followed by the name. The title of sheik (which means expert of the Koran) is used by high-ranking people, who do not belong to the Royal Family. The title Your Highness must be used for members of the Royal Family and Excellency for Government ministers. Other titles are Mohandas (Engineer) and Ustadh (Professor).

- Although punctuality is not a deeply-rooted custom, it is expected for the foreigner to be punctual. In occasions when urgent commitments lead to cancellation of appointments without warning in advance. Therefore it is advisable to prepare a letter regretting the cancellation and wishing an alternative date. The letter and the contact details are given to the company so that it is easy for the counterpart to arrange other appointment. This tactic commonly works.

- It is very useful to know some Arab words to travel around the city. It is also good to learn the spelling and pronunciation of Arab numbers to understand addresses and the floors of the buildings. On the other hand, you have to keep in mind that Arabic spoken in the UAE has certain influence of the farsi (Persian), then it sounds somehow different to other Islamic countries.

- It is normal that meetings are interrupted because of phone calls, people coming into the meeting room, etc. This is their way of working. You should be patient, do not show anger, and take up the conversation again when possible.

- It is positive to keep strong visual contact with the speaker since this generates confidence. Otherwise, it could cause suspicion.

- At the beginning of the meeting it is frequent to offer very strong coffee, tea or an appetizer. Even if you do not want to drink or eat, you should accept them as courtesy. If you do not want to drink or eat more, you just have to move slightly your cup.

- First meetings frequently start with an informal talk on trips, family, etc. You should be calm and avoid gesture of impatience to start business, since this
could communicate anxiety.

- Conversation topics to avoid are: politics, expatriates’ situation or their relationship with the US. You should ask for the family in general, not for the wife or the number of sons or daughters.

- Positive topics are: the country’s modernity, the quality of the or coffee, or the luxurious shopping centers, called gold souks (golden markets).

- When speaking about the countries of the area, you must say Arab Gulf states and not Persian Gulf states.

- Physical space between people is much more reduced than in the West and there is rather more contact: rapping arms and shoulders, touchings hands, etc. These are signs of friendship, not sexual connotations. However, clips on the back — typical in the West— should be avoided.

- Physical contact and giving objects with the left hand must be avoided. This hand is considered impure as it is the one used in the toilet.

- You should neither sit cross-legged pointed out the speaker nor showing the soles of the shoes, as this is thought to be a derogatory gesture.

- Even though official religion is the Islam, there exists liberty of worship. The Koran Law is not as strict as in Saudi Arabia or Iran. For instance, you can drink alcohol, but you should not do it in their presence.

- During Ramadan, which lasts four weeks, it is not allowed to smoke, drink or eat in their presence. It is also customary to interrupt meetings to pray, which is done five times daily.

- The weather is warm with cloudless skies for the whole year. During summer (from May to September) and especially during August, you should be ready to tolerate temperatures up to 50 degrees, with humidity around 100 percent.

- The frequent way to travel around the cities is by taxi. They are not excessively expensive and render good service. Nevertheless, due to the economic boom of the country, it might be difficult to find a free taxi. It is not usual to give tips.

- Be careful if you drive a car since the way of driving is deficient. UAE has one of the highest traffic accident rates in the world. It is common to change the lane without warning, to drive close to other vehicles and to use the mobile phone while driving.

- Business lunches and dinners are frequent. Emirati are use to invite people to their houses. When it is the foreign visitor who invites, these dinners and lunches
are in hotels. They start talking business once the meal is over.

- Unlike other Arab countries, you should not flatter excessively the food or the country. It is better to speak moderately as in the UK or Japan. It is usual to tip 10%.

- Giving presents is usual either during the first contact or when closing a deal. It is difficult to find a suitable present since the country has all kind of products. A good choice could be aloe colognes. If the present is for a woman, it always has to be on behalf of another woman.

- Due to high temperatures, it is not necessary to wear a suit and a tie, except for high-level meetings and business dinners. Women must dress in a conservative way, although they do not have to obey the strict Arab or Iranian rules.

**UNITED KINGDOM**

- A short, gentle handshake is the most usual form of greeting. A woman does not always hold out her hand. It is better to wait for her to hold out her hand first.

- In the UK there is virtually no kind of physical contact in public (kisses, pats, embraces). Moreover, the British keep a wide distance when conversing.

- Generally, the British do not look directly at the person that they are talking to and they do not gesticulate very much when they are speaking.

- In the first introduction they use the expression *How do you do?* in reply, your greeting that will also be *How do you do?* It is a mere formalism and, therefore, you should not misinterpret it as a question about your health but should reply *Very well, thank you*. In subsequent meetings the more informal *How are you?* is used. In a business environment you must not use the expression *Nice to meet you* (most commonly used at social gatherings) since it would be considered too colloquial.

- Professional and academic titles are rarely used in introductions. People are addressed as Mr or Ms, followed by their surname. The title Mrs is only used for introducing married women.

- The titles of Sir and Madam are only used with people accredited with them (military, nobility, etc.).

- You must not use first names until the other person does. When they are used, you must make an effort not to repeat the speaker’s name several times during
the conversation. It would seem too informal.

- You should bear in mind that there are some words in British English that have a different meaning to the same word in American English.

- In a business environment the expression *to table* means in UK *to deal with a matter immediately*, whereas in the US it is the opposite: *postpone it*. Other times the word is different: the British use *lift* and Americans use *elevator*.

- You must also take into account that some words are written differently in British and American English. Words ending in *our* in British English —colour, favour— end in *or* in American English, and words ending in *re* in British English —centre— end in *er* in American English.

- Exchanging business cards is not strictly necessary, but if the foreign visitor’s name is unusual or difficult to pronounce it is better to give the card and explain how it is pronounced.

- The British are forever saying sorry, even for minor things. You should do the same.

- They are very formal and polite (British manners), especially with women: they open the door for them to go through first, they stand up when they come into a room and seat them at restaurants.

- In conversation you should not mention the royal family (you should never criticise their status, wealth or role in society) or the troubles with independent movements in Northern Ireland and recently is Scotland. It is not a good idea either to draw comparisons with the US. They like to talk about their history (they are very proud of the British Empire), animals (especially dogs) and sports (football, rugby and athletics). The weather is a compulsory topic of conversation.

- At meetings they usually offer coffee or tea. You do not have to accept it: the UK is one of the few countries in the world where you can decline an invitation to drink something.

- Many of the business lunches take place in pubs, where typically British lunch is served, much lighter than in continental Europe. It is usual to discuss business during lunch. You do not usually leave a tip.

- At the table, you should pass things to your left. It is not polite to taste food from another person’s plate.

- Business colleagues are not usually invited to British people’s homes since they value the privacy of their family life. If you are invited, the best thing is to take
some chocolates (they are very sweet-toothed) or some alcoholic drink (quality wine).

- Gifts do not form part of dealings between companies. Instead it is better to invite them to dinner or a show (theatre, opera, musical).

- In the UK it is important to dress well, especially in London. The British like good-quality clothes, although not necessarily new. They wear shoes with laces and shirts without pockets (if the shirts have pockets, they leave them empty). You should avoid ties with stripes or shields because they could seem to be copying their regimental or university ties.

UNITED STATES

- A firm handshake is the most usual form of greeting. The most formal expressions are Pleased to meet you, How do you do? and How are you? The informal expressions are Hello, Hi, How are you doing? and Howdy (on the west coast). At social events you should not be surprised when they ask you direct questions like What do you do? or Where do you work?

- In the initial meeting Mr, Mrs or Miss is used followed by the surname. If you do not know the marital status of a woman you must use Ms. The first name is quickly used except with older people or people of a higher status. It is also common practice to use shortened versions of the first name: Tom for Thomas, Jack for John, Bill for William, Bob for Robert, Jim for James, Al for Albert, Alex for Alexander, etc.

- Professional cards are exchanged at business meetings and social events. This is a way to promote networking considered essential in the business world.

- Visual contact is perceived as a sign of interest, sincerity and trust. It must be direct although not continual; periods of five to seven seconds, interrupted by pauses of two to three seconds.

- The atmosphere in business meetings is not formal and even casual. Do not be surprised if they start the meeting with a joke, but you must be very careful not to tell sexist jokes or jokes with racial or religious themes.

- To interrupt the other party during negotiations is considered very rude. You have to respect the turns intervention and when the other party has finished his turn refer to what he said with phrases like: in relation to point c), I would like to mention .........
• Some sensitive conversation topics to avoid are: American foreign policy, the situation of racial minorities, abortion, discrimination on grounds of sex, etc. Among the favourite themes are working, traveling, food (and diets), sports, film and music.

• You have to be especially careful not to criticize American culture and American’s way of life. Even if they do, patriotism prevents them from accepting criticism from the outside world.

• You should remember that there are words in American English that have a different meaning in British English. For example, intercourse in American English always has a sexual meaning, while in British English it can mean a friendly conversation. Other times the word is different: Americans use the word elevator and English use lift.

• Some words are also spelled differently in American and British English: re at the end of a word in British English (centre) is er in American English (center) and our at the end of a word in British English (harbour) is or in American English (harbor).

• Because of fast food, business lunches do not take as long as in other countries. It is also frequent to have breakfasts (preferably in hotels) and dinners. When you are the host you should choose a good restaurant.

• Playing golf is also an opportunity to reinforce business dealings but not usually with female business professionals. Moreover, this custom is somewhat outdated.

• At informal meals diners usually go fifty-fifty. This is called splitting the bill, getting separate checks or going Dutch.

• In restaurants (except those of fast food) tips of 15% are usually left. It is important to leave a tip because it is considered an important complement to compensate workers that have very low salaries. In taxis the tip is around 10%.

• Gifts should not be expensive. The law only allows a tax reduction of $25 per object. If you give a gift, you should do it after concluding the agreement. If you receive a gift, you should open it immediately in the presence of the person who has given it to you. It is usual to give objects with the company’s logo.

• Business attire is more important than you might think as it influences the first image that people convey (remember the expression: dress to impress). Regardless of the weather, the sector or the city in which you are doing business, it is expected that foreign executives wear jacket and tie; nevertheless, in meetings is quite common to take off the jacket.
URUGUAY

• The form of greeting is shaking hands. Men and women who already know each other usually give each other a kiss. Pats and embraces are reserved for friends.

• In introductions, Mr or Mrs, is used followed by the surname. Titles like Doctor, Engineer, Professor, etc., are less commonly used than in other Latin American countries.

• Before the business conversation there is some small talk about different topics. You should not ask personal questions because the Uruguayans do not like to talk about their private life. You should not mention complicated subjects (politics, history, etc.) because they are great talkers and the discussion could go on and on. One topic to be avoided is the country’s military dictatorships in the past.

• The favourite topic of conversation is football. They are extremely proud of having been world champions twice even though the country is so small. There is real rivalry between the two Montevideo teams: Nacional and Peñarol. They also like to talk about the similarities and differences with Argentines.

• Uruguayans are very hospitable. Foreign visitors are often invited to lunch. Meals are good moments to talk business. It is also the custom to invite visitors to lunch or dinner at their homes. You should not worry if the invitation is spontaneous. It is sincere and can be accepted without any commitment.

• After a business dinner at a restaurant they usually invite the guest to their home to have a drink or coffee. You should not stay late, especially if the next day is a working day.

• When a personal relationship exists you are invited to asados, barbecues where all kind of meats are tasted. They expect the foreign visitor to try all of them and praise their quality. Uruguayans consider that their country’s meat is the best in the world.

• Montevideo has a continental climate: cold and rainy in winter, and hot and humid in summer. Make sure you wear the right clothing for the season of the year when you visit the country.

• Uruguayans dress conservatively. Dark suits, white shirts, quite plain ties. You should not wear clothes that are very modern or bright coloured like in Caribbean countries or neighbouring Brazil. In summer, if the other party does not wear a jacket and tie you can do the same.

• The best time to go on a business trip to Uruguay is from May to November. In
December, February and April there are one or two weeks’ holiday for Christmas, Carnival week and Easter. January to March is the summer, and it is very likely that some of the people that you have to visit will be on holiday.

- When you are in Uruguay it is worth visiting the coastal city of Punta del Este that is considered one of the most luxurious summer resorts in Latin America. Trade negotiations began here for the *Uruguay Round* that culminated in the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Most of the owners of large mansions are Brazilians or Argentines.

**VENezuela**

- The form of greeting is a firm handshake and at the same time you say your name and surname. When you greet a woman you should wait for her to hold out her hand first.

- In Venezuela personal dealings are not as formal as in other Latin American countries. In introductions Mr or Mrs is used followed by the surname. The titles of Doctor, Professor, Engineer, etc., are not usually used. When people already know each another they usually use the first name.

- Although punctuality is not strict, the Venezuelans do not like you to arrive late to appointments. You must be aware of possible delays because of the intense traffic in the capital Caracas.

- Before the business conversation there is some small talk that is usually shorter than you might think because Venezuelan businessmen, especially in Caracas, have busy schedules. You should let them start to talk business.

- You should avoid talking about personal matters, politics and relationships with Colombia and Brazil.

- Appropriate topics of conversation are: history (Simon Bolívar, the Liberator of America, was born in Venezuela), the country’s natural beauty (especially, the Island of Margarita), and sports. Simon Bolívar is greatly admired. In almost all cities the most important square is named in his honour as is the country’s currency.

- At business meetings or when you visit a home they usually serve a *cafeíto* (black coffee in a small cup). It is best to accept it so as not to offend the host.

- The most usual business meal is lunch at 12.30. Dinners are considered social
events and are therefore not for talking business.

- Dishes are generous: stew, meat, pasta, etc. A typical dish is *Arepa*, a baked cornmeal cake with a meat, cheese and butter filling.

- There is no tradition of gift-giving between companies. In any case, gifts should only be given when a business deal has been concluded. They should be of good quality. A good moment to give them is during a meal.

- In Venezuela appearances are important. Modern, quality, brand name clothing will convey an image of success.

**VIETNAM**

- The form of greeting is shaking hands. On occasions they use both hands to show greater respect.

- A handshake is usually accompanied by a slight bowing of the head. In fact, this is the most usual form of greeting with women, with whom you must avoid physical contact.

- You should not give pats on the back or grasp the arm as a sign of friendship. Above all, you must not touch a person’s head (not even a child’s) since according to Buddhist religion God resides there.

- The usual word for a greeting that precedes the name is *Xin Chao* (Hello); however, for the Vietnamese to understand it as a greeting you must pronounce it with the right intonation, since this expression, besides meaning *Hello* has five other meanings.

- The Vietnamese are very punctual. They even arrive ten or fifteen minutes early for appointments.

- They are extremely proud of their country, culture, exotic scenery and gastronomy, which are positive topics of conversation. They prefer to talk about the future than the past.

- It is best to avoid conversations about politics or the Vietnam War, which is known as the *American war*.

- At meetings they usually serve hot tea or coffee, fruit and cakes. Coffee is usually served with a little condensed milk.
• Social relations are at restaurants, although they also go to karaoke. Unlike Chinese society, the after-meal session is common; they generally talk about family matters.

• When you book a restaurant you should choose one with air-conditioning because the climate is very humid and hot, even in winter.

• The typical dish is rice (Vietnam is the second rice exporter in the world after Thailand). Seafood has a recognised quality. Nuoc Nam is a fish sauce dressing used with the local dishes.

• Tipping is not very widespread, although in restaurants and taxis it will be appreciated.

• Dress is informal. For meetings with the public administration you should wear a suit and tie. Executives in companies often wear a long-sleeved open-neck shirt.

• The main local festival is Tet (the Lunar New Year) that is held at the end of January and the beginning of February, depending on the year. You should bear this festival in mind when you go on a business trip because business activity stops for three days.
It is difficult to know in depth the etiquette habits of the countries you visit. In the best case, you can know some general rules and specific behaviors such as those exposed in this book. In uncertain situations, the best alternative is to wait for the other party to take the initiative. If he offers his hand, shake hands; if he uses professional titles in presentations, use too; if he gives you a gift, correspond with another one of a similar value; etc. In any case, the international executive must learn the local customs before traveling for the first time to a country. To check the assimilation of knowledge exposed in this book we propose the following international business etiquette test. There is only one correct answer for each question.

1. At a meeting in South Korea your client gives you a business card where his name appears as Lim Peng Ho. How you should call him?
   a) Mr. Pen  
   b) Mr. Lim  
   c) Mr. Ho  
   d) Mr. Lim Peng

2. In which of the following countries is it customary to call your business partners by the first name from the beginning of the business relationship?
   a) Australia  
   b) Chile  
   c) France  
   d) Indonesia

3. You are a man/woman who is in a business meeting in a foreign country and one of the members of the party is a woman/man. When making introductions: in which of the following countries is it better not to reach out to greet a person of the opposite sex and wait for the other person to take the initiative?
   a) Germany  
   b) Brazil  
   c) Morocco  
   d) Russia

4. In which of the following countries, in business meetings, men greet women with
a slight nod or putting his hand on the heart because there is no physical contact between men and women?

   a) India  
   b) Kenya  
   c) Iran  
   d) Malaysia

5. In which of the following cultures is there less physical contact between people in greetings and farewells?

   a) African  
   b) Arab  
   c) Asian  
   d) American

6. In which of the following countries is it important to maintain a certain physical distance to the other person when greeting or standing during conversations?

   a) Argentina  
   b) Greece  
   c) Poland  
   d) United Kingdom

7 Which of the following titles is used in Latin America to introduce business executives and senior professionals, that have not necessarily this academic but denotes a high professional status?

   a) Lawyer  
   b) Engineer  
   c) Bachelor  
   d) Doctor

8. At a formal meeting with Japanese executives, each of them gives you a business card. Which of the following behaviors is wrong?

   a) Bowing 30 degree before delivering the card  
   b) Read and pronounce the name on the card  
   c) Make notations on the card  
   d) Put the card on the table in a visible place during the meeting
9. You are negotiating with someone who has a higher rank than you. In which of the following countries must you avoid looking directly into his eyes as it can be interpreted as a lack of respect?

a) Germany  
b) Mexico  
c) Ukraine  
d) Turkey

10. You are in a business lunch. In which of the following countries, must you not pass the dishes with your left hand?

a) Estonia  
b) Taiwan  
c) Iceland  
d) Saudi Arabia

11. In which of the following countries is it not frowned upon to split the bill of a business lunch, without having to pay the host, as is usual in most countries?

a) Brazil  
b) The Netherlands  
c) Russia  
d) South Africa

12. During a business meal (banquet) in China attended by several guests who share a round table, the host should sit:

a) To the right of the main guest  
b) In front of the main guest  
c) Opposite to the dining room door  
d) With his back to the dining room door

13. In which of the following countries is it better to arrive a few minutes before the start of a business meeting to convey an idea of reliability?

a) Argentina  
b) Japan  
c) France  
d) Thailand
14. On a business trip one of your company providers gives you a gift. In which of the following countries should you not open it in his presence?

a) Argentina
b) Spain
c) Israel
d) Malaysia

15. Your Chinese client is very keen on golf and you want to give him a box with golf balls personalized with his name. What number of balls should avoid giving?

a) 4
b) 6
c) 8
d) 10

16. You are traveling through Latin America. In which of the following countries is it not advisable to make comparisons with Chile, especially if it is to praise this country?

a) Colombia
b) Panama
c) Peru
d) Venezuela

17. In which of the following countries is it common that the other party ask you questions related to your personal life (family, academic qualifications, hobbies, etc.) to assess your social status that is an important matter when doing business?

a) Germany
b) Hungary
c) India
d) Israel

18. You are in a business meeting in China. They have already served you several cups of tea and you do not want to have another cup. What is the most appropriate gesture to reject another cup?

a) Put your hand over the cup
b) Move the cup from left to right
c) Place the empty cup upside down on the table
19. In which of the following countries is it very common to hold business breakfasts at an early time?

a) Italy  
b) United Arab Emirates (UAE)  
c) Mexico  
d) Russia  

20. You are packing your suitcase for a business trip abroad. In which of the following countries is it preferable to dress formally (suit and tie) to adapt to the customs of the country and convey an image of seriousness?

a) Australia  
b) Cuba  
c) Japan  
d) Senegal  

**ANSWERS**

1. b. Mr. Lim.

In Korea the order of names is inverse to the West. First the name of the father (Lim), then the generational name of the area in which the person is born (Peng) and finally the first name (Ho). To address people in business the family name (father’s name) should always be used. The first name is not used at work. Therefore, the right thing is to call this person Mr. Lim. However, more and more Asian managers, particularly those who have contact international markets, use in their business the same order of names as in Western countries; first name and afterwards the family name. Even in the most modern areas of Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, Shanghai) it is common that executives use first names in English such as William or Anne (William Wong or Anne Zhao).

2.a. Australia.

Australia is a very informal country. Even in the first contact executives are called by their firsts names regardless of rank or age. Diminutives (Tom for Thomas, Jimmy
for James or Bob for Robert) are also used. This practice is also common in the US.

3.c. Morocco.

In countries where there are still differences in the social levels, especially in the treatment of men and women, the right thing is to wait for the other party to take the initiative in greeting. This way you will know if the other person allows physical contact with the opposite sex when greeting. It is the advisable practice in Arab countries, including Morocco.

4.c. Iran.

In Iran, there is not physical contact between men and women when greeting in a business meeting, so the usual gesture is a slight nod or place the right hand over the heart as a sign of friendship. This gesture is also used to greet men.

5.c. Asian.

The degree of physical contact (shaking hands, patting, kissing, hugging) when greeting is very different in each of the cultures. The culture that allows more contact is the Arab and the least the Asian.

6.d. United Kingdom

The British are very jealous of their privacy and like to keep not only a physical but also emotional distance from the people they do business with. When greeting it is recommended to leave a space of about half a meter to not upset them.

7.d. Doctor.

In Latin America, the use of Doctor as a title in the professional world normally does not correspond to the academic qualifications but rather to the professional status and seniority of executives.

8.c. Make notations on the card.

In Japan, business cards have a very important symbolic value: it is as if they were part of the person; therefore, the cards must be treated with the utmost care: they should not be stored in pockets, or bent, or have notes on them.

In some countries such as Mexico and Japan, the direct gaze gesture is considered aggressive and disrespectful, especially to people of high status and power within organizations.


In Arab countries, the left hand is considered dirty because it is the hand that is used to wipe when going to the bathroom. It should be used as little as possible: no passing objects with this hand, do not touch people, do not touch food during meals, and even apologize if you write with your left hand.

11.b. The Netherlands.

It is customary in some countries of Central and Northern Europe (especially in The Netherlands and Nordic countries) where executives held informal business lunches to split the price of the bill - what is known as Going Dutch.

12.c. In front of the dining room door.

Business lunches and dinners (called banquets) are very common in China for the parties involved in a negotiation to know each other or to celebrate the signing of an agreement. Diners usually sit at round tables in which the food is shared. The seating is made according to a very strict protocol. The host (head of the company that organized the banquet) sits in front of the entrance to the dining room. To his right sits the head of the other company. The other diners are placed according to their rank, so that the one with lower rank will be the farthest from the host and sits back to the entrance of the dining room.


It is always advisable to be on time for a business appointment in any country you visit. But there are some countries such as Japan - also Switzerland, Germany, and China - where it is positive to arrive a few minutes before so to transmit an image of seriousness and reliability.


The practice of opening gifts in the presence of the other party depends on the culture of each country. In countries with very open and extroverted cultures, as is the case of Spain or Latin America, gifts are opened immediately and appreciation is
showed. By contrast, in countries with more introverted character in which people have difficulties expressing feelings such as Malaysia and Asian countries in general, gifts should not be opened.

15.a. Four.

The Chinese are very superstitious. For them, the number 4 is the unlucky number because its pronunciation is very similar to the word death. Even in many buildings, there is no floor number 4. On the contrary, 8 is the lucky number because its phonetic reminds people of the word wealth. The Beijing Olympic Games were inaugurated exactly at 8:00 pm hours, 8 minutes and 8 seconds of August 8th, 2008.

16.c. Peru.

In principle, cross-country comparisons are not positive, but mostly are not advised between countries with frontiers because they usually have a history of conflicts and wars. Especially you have to avoid this comparison when visiting the weak country that has suffered invasions by its strongest neighbor as in the case of comparisons between Peru and Chile, Ireland and the UK, or Austria and Germany.

17.C. India.

There is a big difference between social classes in India and despite its modernization, the caste system prevails and regulates social relationships, including marriages. Therefore Indians will ask questions to foreign visitors to place them in a certain social class which is important to know who in the Indian the company should negotiate with them.

18.d. Allow to fill the cup, but then not take the tea.

In China and most Asian countries, you have to avoid answering No to any proposal or offer. In this situation, the most appropriate behavior is Leave the waiter fill the cup, but then do not drink the tea, because in the other three alternatives you are openly saying No.

19.c. Mexico.

In many Latin American countries, including Mexico, it is very common to hold breakfasts very early in the morning and thus avoid morning traffic jams.

The formality of dress varies from country to country. Normally in cold weather countries (Germany, UK and Japan) it is expected that foreign executive dress formally while in other areas of the world (Africa, Caribbean) with very hot weather, businessmen wear in an informal way without a jacket and tie, except for high-level meetings.
Global Negotiator Country Guides contains detailed information to learn how business culture and etiquette affect international business negotiations.

- Key Facts
- Business Environment
- Negotiation Strategies
- Business Culture
- Customs & Etiquette
- Practical Information
- Essential websites

Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Australia
Belarus
Belgium
Bolivia
Brazil
Bulgaria
Canada
Chile
China
Colombia
Costa Rica
Croatia
Cuba
Czech Republic
Republic of
Denmark
Dominican Republic

Libya
Lithuania
Malaysia
Mexico
Morocco
Netherlands
Nicaragua
Nigeria
Norway
Panama
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Serbia
Singapore
Slovakia
South Africa
South Korea
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Taiwan
Thailand
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
United States
Uruguay
Vietnam

More information at:
Business Culture and Etiquette Guides
Models of the main international trade and transport documents ready to use with explanations about what they are and practical advice to complete them

- International Proforma Invoice
- International Commercial Invoice
- Packing List
- Delivery Note
- International Purchase Order
- General Conditions of International Sale
- CMR Transport Document
- Bill of Lading B/L
- Air Waybill AWB
- Multimodal Bill of Lading FBL
- ATA Carnet
- Irrevocable Letter of Credit L/C
- Cargo Insurance Certificate
- Certificate of Origin
- Certificate of Origin Form A
- Certificate of Inspection
- Certificate of Analysis
- Phytosanitary Certificate
- Kosher Certificate
- Halal Certificate

Pack All Documents