

Business Etiquette of Banquet in China

The traditional etiquettes of dining and banquet are very complicated in China. Each place in China has its own special etiquette, even Chinese native can't know all the details. As a foreigner, you are not expected to know everything about proper banquet behavior, you just follow the essential principles and tips.

1. Show your respect to your host. Chinese dining and banquet etiquette draws on its basic culture, such as respect for age and position, an orientation toward group goals rather than individualism.

Such behaviors will help you show your respect or give face to your host.

- Arrive on time
- Dress well, dressing well gives face to your host
- Happiness and keep smiling
- Speak politely
- Don't be rude or offended
- Don't complain about the food or the people or Chinese Culture

If you are not ready to get drunk, make it known that you can't drink alcohol at the very beginning of the meal to prevent embarrassment. It is a matter of courtesy for the host to try to get his guests drunk

2. Follow the arrangement of your host. Such as seating arrangements; structure arrangements; toasting arrangement

1) The seating arrangement is determined by the host, you should wait to be seated rather than seating yourself.

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Traditionally, the Chinese regard the right side as the superior and the left side as the inferior. Therefore on formal occasions, including meetings and banquets, the host invariably arranges for the main guests to sit on his right side.

2) **Chinese banquets typically last two hours.** As guests arrive, they proceed through a receiving line in order of highest- to lowest-ranking hosts. Guests are then seated. Banquets in China have definitive beginnings and endings. The principal host offers a welcoming toast to begin the banquet (or shortly thereafter), and it is customary for the principal guest to reciprocate with his/her own toast. Upon toasting, the formal meal begins. At the conclusion of the banquet, the host will again stand and toast, thanking the guests for attending. Again, it is customary for the principal guest to reciprocate in thanks to the hosts.

3. Follow the behaviors of other guests.

There are many taboos in Chinese dining and banquet etiquettes.

Don't eat or drink until the host has delivered the welcoming toast and begins eating
The host is the only person who can signal that the meal has ended-guests must not leave early

- Fish is never turned over
- Don't point your chopsticks directly at people and never stick them standing upright in your rice bowl
- You should drink the whole glass when cheers
- Expect close quarters but no touching

Nobody knows all the taboos of the Chinese dining and banquet etiquettes, every city has their own traditions. Just follow the native guest, behave as they did, then you will enjoy your dining and banquet.

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Eight Essential Business Etiquettes of Meeting in China

1. Punctual for the business meeting. Timing is everything.

Business meetings start on time and it is a good practice to arrive at the location early. Punctuality is a virtue in China. Meetings also end on time, it is considered rude to stay late or keep others at the meeting past the designated ending time.

2. Establish a connection before the meeting.

In addition to formal introductions and exchanges of name cards, this is the part of the meeting where you exchange pleasantries to put everyone at ease and work to establish a connection with the business partner. In China personal relationships are critical.

It is advisable to start the meeting with "small talk", such as the weather, beautiful city, and something you might have in common with your counterparts. Even some tenuous link is helpful, such as same speciality, having been the same places.

3. Exchanging business cards.

Business cards should be exchanged at the beginning of a business meeting. Be sure to have an adequate supply of business cards. It is a sign of courtesy to have your card translated into Chinese. Many Chinese do not read English. It is good that your business card is engraved in gold. This is a symbol of your status and prestige in China. Use both hands to both present and receive name cards. Present the card with the Chinese side face up.


Read the card for 10-20 seconds, this shows respect for the card's owner. Putting the

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card immediately into your wallet or briefcase without reading it is an unforgivable insult to the Chinese business culture. It is polite to lay the cards out on the table next to you. Place cards in order also helps greatly in remembering people's names. When exchanging business cards, greeting with simple phrases such as "Ni Hao" (hello) can help to break the ice.

4. Dress and appearance. The accepted style of dress for a business meeting in China is conservative.

Conservative suits for men with subtle colors are the norm. A dark colored, unostentatious suit and tie are customary. Women should avoid high heels and short sleeved blouses, and their skirts are not above the knees.

Good quality jewelry that is not ostentatious can make the right impression. Jeans are not acceptable for business meetings.

5. Speech culture and communications during the conversation is important.

Never say no to the counterpart's ideas or speech. You can respond with "I'll look into that" or "I'll see what I can do in this matter". Refer to a Chinese associate as Mr./Mrs. Using titles is a sign of respect and is done frequently in China. For example, it is preferable to address someone as Section Chief Zhang instead of Mr. Zhang. Unless you are longtime friends, avoid calling Chinese by their first names.

When presenting your position at a meeting, speak slowly with short pauses between the sentences. It is worthwhile to allow your Chinese opposite number to understand your intentions properly. Never, during the course of a business meeting, refer to a deadline.

Do not become agitated if there are pauses in speech on the part of the Chinese. This

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is an accepted custom and the pauses are a sign of measured and considered thought in Chinese culture. The decision making process is slow. You should not expect to conclude your business swiftly.

The most important member of your company or group should lead important meetings. Chinese value rank and status. Allow the Chinese to leave a meeting first.

6. Gestures and behaviours.

Avoid gestures like the "come here" curled-index-finger, and the "I don't know" shoulder-shrug, which are Western and often not understood by Chinese.

Do not touch your Chinese counterparts; do not even pat him on the shoulder. Make an effort not to use your hands to illustrate your speech (talking with your hands). The Chinese hate this. Try as well to refrain from looking straight into the eyes of your Chinese counterparts, this is particularly offensive during a meeting and will offend your Chinese counterparts' feelings.

Personal contact must be avoided at all cost. It is highly inappropriate for a man to touch a woman in public.

7. Giving gifts to Chinese.

Gift giving is a very delicate issue in China. Avoid gifts of excessive value or that are too personal. Try to find a gift that represents your home state, such as locally made products. As a fallback, many companies rely on gifts of nice crystal or company products such as pens or calendars that can be distributed to everyone.

Similarly, care should be taken that the most important person in the group receives the gift before the others. Acceptable gifts are alcoholic drinks, lighters, etc. The

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most acceptable gift is a banquet.

Great care should be taken in regard to the color of the gift-wrapping. Chinese culture is very sensitive to colors. Thus for example, a white or black wrapping symbolizes death. Red is the preferred color as this symbolizes luck. Good advice is to ask the hotel staff, or the assistants in the store to wrap the gifts that you want to distribute.

It is illegal to give gifts to government official however; it has become more commonplace in the business world.

8. Avoid arranging business meetings around the times of Chinese festival.

It is recommended to bring a translator to the meeting who can translate for you and assist in explaining business customs according to Chinese formalities.

My name is Xuyonghua,I am a Chinese

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