

Key cultural hints for creating successful business relationships in China





Bicultural respect is more important than bilingual ability, although both are the ultimate.

1. Business cards

Remember the importance of business cards. The visiting party is usually the first to hand over business cards. The correct way to do this is to present the card with two hands along with a slight bow of the head. If possible, have your cards translated into simplified Chinese and present this side of the card. Ensure the card is given so the receiver can read your name etc without having to flip it around. When you receive the Chinese person's card, take time to read it carefully. Do not write on it in front of them, nor put immediately into your shirt or trouser pocket as this is a sign of disrespect.

2. Names

Always use title and surname when addressing Chinese visitors. The surname is always the first name listed in the Chinese translated version. You would say 'Manager Wei' rather than 'Ms Wei' as we might say.

Some Chinese visitors may have their name printed in English in the western style of presentation, i.e. family name last to make you feel more comfortable.

3. Punctuality

Punctuality is valued in Chinese culture and therefore should always be maintained. When meeting in China, allow plenty of time due to traffic jams and the possibility of your taxi driver getting lost!

4. Phrasing

Often Chinese people use the phrase "it is possible" to mean "no". The saying of "no" is often not well received. Instead, you could respond "it is difficult".

5. Status

'Face' or mianzi is the regard in which a person is held by others. The preserving of individual self-esteem and recognition of others' status, title/ position or prestige is vitally important to Chinese people.

There are four phases of 'face':

- **Giving.** Giving 'face' occurs when you enhance a Chinese business partner's reputation or prestige.
- **Losing.** Sometimes 'face' is more valuable than business; it's important not to allow your Chinese business partners to lose face.
- **Saving.** It is important to prevent or rescue a Chinese business partner from an embarrassing situation.
- **Keeping.** Allowing a Chinese business partner to gain favour, status or victory without them knowing will assist in them keeping face with their colleagues and superiors.

6. Guanxi

Be mindful of **guanxi**, which literally means 'relationships' and 'social connections' and is about building the quality of your network of relationships. It is a balance sheet of favours that is developed by both parties over a period of time.



7. Entertaining

If you are not able to drink due to health reasons explain this to your guests before the meal; you might want to say that due to company policy you are not able to consume more than one or two drinks to save embarrassment.

Do

- Show interest in China, you are trying to do business there after all
- Seat the guest of honour facing the door and the most important person in your company
- Focus your attentions on the most important person at the table, and never on the interpreter
- Propose a toast only when you are the host
- Leave a small amount of food in the bowl at the end of the meal, as emptying your bowl sends a message that you require more food
- Engage in all aspects of the function
- Pour tea/other beverages for your host and guests
- Use chopsticks if possible, or at least make an attempt even if you then revert to a fork
- Thank the most senior person for their attendance
- Applaud colleagues back if they applaud you
- If you are being hosted this time, try to reciprocate hospitality in the future
- If you receive a gift or favour be prepared to reciprocate
- Relax and enjoy the event.

Don't

- Discuss business during the function
- Order seven dishes for a function if you are the host as that is the number of dishes ordered for a wake
- Make rude jokes or innuendos, or use jargon
- Raise your voice or yell, even if there is a lot of noise in the room
- Eat the bowl clean as it is seen as you requiring more food
- Leave chopsticks sitting upright in the bowl of rice
- Smoke when eating



8. Bargaining

In sales, Chinese will often hint at other, larger sales to obtain a better price now. Bargaining often includes friendly manipulation. Be flexible during the process and allow for the stretching of boundaries in your initial starting price. However, always know what you can and cannot give.

9. Taiwan

Whilst in many respects Taiwan is seen by the rest of the world to be a separate country, the Chinese consider it a province of China. Use caution if you really need to discuss this matter with Chinese people.

10. Colours and numbers

Different colours and numbers have certain meanings to Chinese people, so it is important to be aware of these in situations like gift wrapping, decorations etc. For example, white and black are related to death, although black also symbolises power. Red represents happiness and good luck. Gold is another auspicious colour as it represents wealth. 8 is a 'lucky' number; 4 is an 'unlucky' number.

11. Use of humour

Jokes do not translate well across cultures, and so it is best not to tell them.

Key hints for making Chinese visitors feel welcome and safe in Queensland

Understanding your visitor market

Chinese travellers are a very diverse market with varying needs and expectations depending on their travel experience, where they live, age and travel style. As their travel experience grows so does their knowledge of tourism products and services provided elsewhere. To maintain competitiveness and delivery of their expectations a sound understanding of your target market is essential.

Regularly refer to teq.queensland.com/china for the latest information about the China market.

Greetings and common phrases

Learning and using a few common Chinese phrases helps build rapport with your visitors and can add to their experience by making them feel welcome.

The following expressions are basic greetings that can be used any time:

ENGLISH	CHINESE	PRONUNCIATION
Hello	Nǐhǎo	nee how apply a slight nod of the head when saying the phrase
Goodbye/see you again	Zàijà n	zai rhymes with bye; jen rhymes with ben
Thank you	Xièxiè	shee air shee air
You're welcome	Búkèqi	boo ker chi

In a service situation, e.g. at reception:

ENGLISH	CHINESE	PRONUNCIATION
Can I help you?	Yǒushénmexū yàobāngzhù de ma	
Sorry, I don't speak Chinese/Mandarin	Bàoqiàn wǒbúhuìshuōZhōngwén	bow (rhymes with how) chen, wor boo hooee shoo or joongwern
Please wait a moment	Qǐngděngyíxià	ching dung yeeshee yah
Please form a line here	Qǐngzàicǐpáidù	chingzaetsee pie doo ee

Introducing yourself:

ENGLISH	CHINESE	PRONUNCIATION
I'm called	Wǒjià o...	worjeow You would then say your first name and then your surname, all deliberately and precisely, and with a slight bow of the head.
May I ask, what is your name	Qǐngwèn nǐjià oshénmemíngzi	chingwern nee jeewshernmermingzer

Food and beverage

Chinese cuisine is often discussed in terms of region. While some areas like the Canton province are often known for eating lots of rice, noodles tend to be more popular in the north, where growing rice is difficult because of the climate. Other regions, like the Sichuan and Hunan provinces, are known for their use of spicy peppers.

Many Chinese dishes consist of noodles or rice prepared with vegetables, tofu, or meat, which is usually pork or chicken.

Meals in China are often prepared in bite-sized pieces, a practice developed to help cook foods faster in order to save fuel. With no knives needed at the table, most foods are eaten with chopsticks!

Here are a few tips that will help Chinese visitors enjoy their experience:

- Ensure your visitors have access to hot water so they can fill their tea flasks or have instant noodles if they wish. Having hot water at a central point will ensure kettles are not used as saucepans for the noodles.
- Provide drinking hot water or water at room temperature for Chinese visitors who generally prefer it to ice cold water.
- If providing Chinese snacks ensure they are sourced from a Chinese food supplier so they are authentic.
- Give your Chinese visitors the opportunity to access good Chinese food at least once every day (even if it's only instant noodles; employing the right chef or contracting the right restaurant to provide for your guests' tastes and meal needs).
- If providing a buffet, include discrete signs (or pictures) in simplified Chinese identifying the dishes.

Not all Chinese visitors will want to eat noodles; some of the southern Chinese prefer rice, so if you are supplying some, an option of both is preferable.

Product marketing

If considering getting content translated, simplified Chinese has a different linguistic style in Hong Kong and Singapore to that in Mainland China, so the person engaged to do the translations must have the skills and knowledge to translate in the style of Mainland China, as well as understand the nuances of the messages in English.





Visitor expectations

As queuing is not customary in China, be prepared to politely ask your guests to form a line if they need to queue. This can be done with quiet and deliberate movement and gesturing if you and your staff cannot speak Mandarin or Cantonese. Not making eye contact shows respect of the people you are gesturing to.



Make clear to your Chinese visitors where smoking is allowed. The use of internationally recognised signage is acceptable.

Ensure all safety information is available in either simplified Chinese or through the use of internationally recognised signage.

This document is part of Tourism and Events Queensland's suite of China Cultural Information and Training Resources for Tourism Operators. For more information, including the opportunity to hear pronunciations of common greetings, see queensland.com/china

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