

PART ONE : HR PROFESSIONALS THROUGH CULTURAL AWARENESS

In today's global business environment, more and more of us are required to understand people who come from countries and cultures different from our own. While there is no short and easy way to learn about a given culture in any depth, there are some general principles that lead to success in communicating and conducting business with people of backgrounds unlike our own.

Recruiting people from different cultural backgrounds is not always easy and there are many things HR professionals and managers need to consider to ensure that the people recruited have the right skills and knowledge for an international role. Taking part in a cultural awareness training course will help HR professionals and senior management to successfully recruit talent from different cultural backgrounds.

A recent report by the Society for Human Resource Management suggests that a global mindset and cross-cultural intelligence are the two most important competencies that senior HR professionals should have when working across cultures. An increasing number of multinational organizations are recognizing the need for global skills like these but efforts to develop the cultural competencies of HR professionals need to intensify to effectively harness the benefits of global talent before other companies beat them to it.

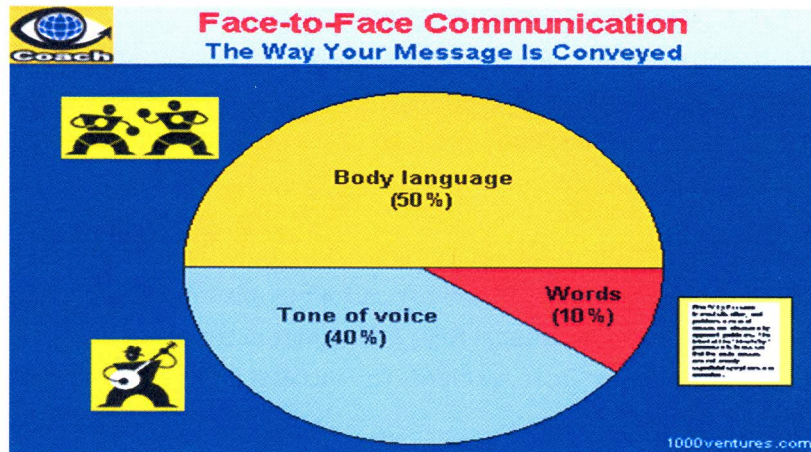
Culture is a very complex construct and anyone involved in hiring talent from other cultures needs to have a good understanding of how it can influence key recruitment practices such as interviews, assessments and applications. Understanding that a person's cultural background determines not only which language they speak or what holidays they celebrate, but virtually every aspect of social and professional life is essential.

When hiring new employees from diverse cultural backgrounds, different behaviours and attitudes can create confusion, misunderstandings and false perceptions. The following are some key areas where the interview may fail as a result of a lack of cultural awareness and cross cultural difference.

HR professionals conducting or organizing interviews with candidates from different cultural backgrounds can benefit immensely from taking part in a cultural awareness training course. Cultural awareness training for HR can prevent misunderstandings and incorrect negative perceptions of candidates that result in failing to hire competent candidates.

HR professionals can learn about the cultural characteristics of the country they are recruiting in and develop a better understanding of the potential problems that multicultural workplaces might face on a cultural awareness training course. By developing their cross cultural intelligence and global mindset on a cultural awareness training course, HR professionals can ensure that the interviewees and interviewers feel comfortable during the interview, ask and respond to questions appropriately and make the right impression.

PART TWO : POTENTIAL HOTSPOTS IN CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION



This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but when working with other people, or traveling abroad for work or pleasure, it may pay to ask some experts about the following communication styles of the area you plan to visit. A little research at the outset can stave off a host of misunderstandings:

- ✓ Opening and Closing Conversations
- ✓ Taking Turns During Conversations
- ✓ Interrupting
- ✓ Use of Silence
- ✓ Appropriate Topics of Conversation
- ✓ Use of Humor
- ✓ Knowing How Much to Say
- ✓ Sequencing elements during conversation
- ✓ Building a Shared Culture
- ✓ Consensus Agreement on Important Matters
- ✓ Building an Understanding Climate
- ✓ Use of the rich points of each culture
- ✓ Concentrating on the things you know
- ✓ Turning off the **gadgets** in meetings
- ✓ Understanding various religious practices
- ✓ Understanding various food practices
- ✓ Understanding various dress practices
- ✓ Showing patience always
- ✓ Showing good manners always
- ✓ Showing a sense of humor always
- ✓ Showing tolerance always
- ✓ Showing respect always
- ✓ Expressing gratitude (Thank you note)

PART THREE : PROPER BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

The way you present yourself to others in the business world speaks volumes about you. Many people form first impressions about others within seconds of meeting them. Whether you're hired in a work study job, an internship or your first full-time job after graduation you must present yourself as a professional. Here are some important tips to help you succeed on the job.

MAKE A POSITIVE IMPRESSION

Making a good impression on the job can improve your overall image and your confidence.

- When you enter your workplace at the beginning of your day, greet each of your colleagues.
- When a co-worker is speaking to you stand straight, make eye contact, turn towards them and listen attentively.
- Verify and follow the employer's office dress code. NEVER assume you can wear casual attire to work.
- Your bag or purse and the things you carry in them say something about you. Messy items may detract from the image you would like to present.
- When meeting someone for the first time, smile and shake hands palm to palm with a gentle firmness.
- Sleepiness has a negative effect in the workplace. Be alert and ready to contribute to the company.
- Arrive at work a few minutes early each day. Put your personal items away, then be ready to begin your workday.
- Remember, kindness and courtesy always count!

COOPERATE WITH COLLEAGUES

How you treat people says a lot about you. Each colleague plays an important role in the success of the organization.

- ✓ People like hearing their own names. Learn your co-workers' names and learn them quickly. A good tip for remembering names is to use a person's name three times within your first conversation with them. Also, write names down and keep business cards in a collective place.
- ✓ Don't assume a person is more or less important because of his/her title. Speak to everyone you work with or pass in the hallway. Every employee deserves your respect!
- ✓ Self-assess: Think about how you treat your supervisor(s), peers, and subordinates.
- ✓ Would the differences in the relationships, if seen by others, cast you in an unfavorable light? If so, find where the imbalance exists, and start the process of reworking the relationship dynamic.
- ✓ What you share with others about your personal life is your choice, but be careful. Your openness may have a negative impact. Don't ask others to share their personal lives with you. This makes many people uncomfortable in the work space.
- ✓ Respect other people's personal space. This may be very different than your own.

COMMUNICATE WITH CARE

Sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it that counts! Proper communication is equally important whether your delivery is spoken, written, or implied.

- × NEVER create or reply to a work e-mail using text message abbreviations or acronyms!
- E-mails at work should be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. They should never be treated like personal e-mail.
- When e-mailing, use the subject box wisely. Make sure your subject directly relates to what you are writing. This will ensure ease in finding it later and encourages a faster reply.
- × NEVER write anything in an e-mail or on paper you would NOT say directly to the intended recipient.
- Underlining, italicizing, bolding, coloring, and changing font size can make a mild email message seem overly strong or aggressive.
- Return phone calls and e-mails within 24 hours – even if only to say that you will provide requested information at a later date.
- Ask the person on the phone for permission before putting them on speakerphone.
- Personalize your voicemail to ensure that callers have the correct voicemail.
- Use a receptive tone of voice when speaking with colleagues. This helps them feel as though you're approachable.

MASTERING MEETINGS

This can easily be the most intimidating part of starting a new job. The environment of a meeting requires some careful navigation to maintain your professional image, whether the meetings are one-on-one, with several colleagues or with external clients.

- ALWAYS bring a pen and notepad to meetings, so you can take notes. Even if you don't use them, you'll be seen as prepared and conscientious.
- For a meeting in someone's office, don't arrive more than (5) minutes early, as they may be preparing for your meeting, another meeting later that day, or trying to get other work done. You may make them uncomfortable, and that is not a good way to begin your meeting.
- × Don't arrive late. If you know you're going to be late, let someone know so people are not waiting for you.
- When a meeting runs late and you need to be somewhere else, always be prepared to explain where you need to be (understanding that the value of where you need to be will likely be judged).
- × Do not interrupt people when they're speaking. This is a bad habit to start and a tough one to end.
- There is a time and place for confrontations. A meeting is almost never that place. You may embarrass or anger other people and you will look bad for doing it. Give people time and space outside of meetings to reflect on issues that may need to be addressed.
- Contribute to the meeting when appropriate. Meetings are a good place to share your creative ideas and solutions.



WORK SPACE SAVVY

It's possible you may spend more waking hours in your work space than in your home.

- Keep your work space professional and neat with appropriate personal touches! People will see the space and consider it a reflection of you.
- Whether it is a cubicle or office, respect others' space. Don't just walk in; knock or make your presence gently known. Ask your colleague if they have a few minutes to speak with you. Don't assume acknowledgement of your presence is an invitation to sit down; wait until you are invited to do so.
- × Don't interrupt people on the phone. You could damage an important phone call.
- Limit personal calls, especially if you work in a space that lacks a door.
- Ask your supervisor when and where it is appropriate to use your cell phone in your office.
- Some employers allow staff to listen to the radio. If your employer allows this, keep the radio at a very low volume. So your colleagues are not disturbed.
- AVOID using earbuds or headphones to listen to music while at work.
- Keep food consumption to a minimum. Smells and noise from food can be distracting to others trying to work.
- × Avoid frequent visits from friends or family on the job.
- NEVER look through a colleague's belongings without their permission.

GLOBAL BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

As the global market grows, the need to understand multiple international standards of business etiquette also increases. Research the country you will be working in or visiting. Then, note the proper etiquette, culture and customs for that specific country. There are a few key things to keep in mind when conducting business internationally.

- ❖ Knowing the native language makes an excellent impression on the people you are doing business with. However, barely knowing the language, but implying fluency, could really harm the work you are trying to accomplish.
- ❖ Be mindful of time zones. You don't want to wake someone or call colleagues with an unreasonable deadline or concern at an awkward time of day for them.
- ❖ As there is no standard global work day, you should keep in mind that work hours vary from country to country. This is important when scheduling meetings or conference calls.
- ❖ Know the holidays that will be observed for other countries and be respectful of the time surrounding the holidays, as people may be less available.
- ❖ Meals can be extremely crucial in making a positive international business impression. The customs that are followed when dining are often very important, and mistakes in this area could be costly. Knowing the etiquette well in advance should allow you to relax and enjoy what could be an amazing new experience!
- ❖ Vigilantly observe the professional culture in which you work and be aware that change will happen. Remember, your eyes and ears are your best resource in this learning process! Also, ask your supervisor questions to ensure compliance and success on the job. Practicing these tips will help you successfully transition into the world of work.

PART FOUR : DINING ETIQUETTE

TYPES OF DINING SCENARIOS

Types of dining: **Buffet** , **Cocktail** , **Set menu** , **a la carte** , **sit down dinner** , **gala dinner**

Lunch interview

Order only from the lunch menu, and then not the most expensive item. The expectation is that the employer will pay for the meal; however, you may offer; DO NOT order alcohol (even if interviewer does) and DO NOT order foods that are messy you eat or require you to hold the food with your hands.

Pre-Set Meals

With a pre-set meal the host/hostess has already made the selections and the individuals are served. If allergic, religious or vegetarian issues arise, quietly deal with these as the server is at your side. For vegetarian ask if you may have a vegetable plate; with allergies or religion, provide the server with options (e.g., if **allergic to** shellfish - ask if they have fish, and be ready to order a specific kind). This lets the server know what you can eat. Always eat a little of all items served to you.

Reception

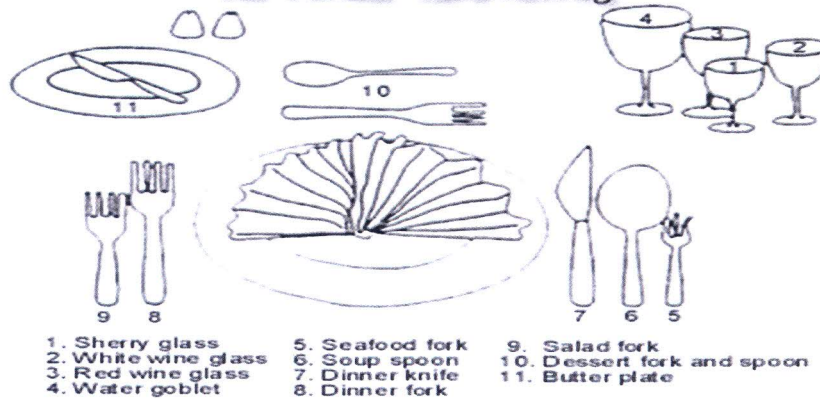
Most receptions or social hours are for the purpose of mingling and making contacts whether for job leads, as part of an interview, or an employee entertaining clients.

- When you enter the reception observe the layout of the room. Seeing the room layout gives you a clue on how to proceed at the reception.
- If no tables are available, you should only have a drink or your food in your hand - never both.
- You should be prepared to greet and shake hands with individuals. If having a drink hold it in your left hand to keep your right hand dry and ready to shake hands
- When someone approaches, you are able to switch the plate to your left hand and your right hand is clean and ready to shake.
- Be sure to greet and introduce yourself to the host/hostess. Spend a few minutes conversing with them on topics that relate to the event or their business,
- To move on, you can politely say, " I know you need to talk with your other guests "
- Start conversations by asking someone about themselves or their job.
- Focus eye contact on that individual and after a time, politely excuse yourself to move on to someone else.

Office Parties

Office parties are good opportunities to improve morale and build good will. Keep in mind these are people who see you every day and they will remember a lapse in behavior. Be aware of your alcoholic consumption and do not embarrass yourself. Do not discuss business - this is a social occasion and an opportunity to learn more about your co-workers

The Formal Table Setting



Napkin

- place your napkin on your lap after everyone at your table has been seated.
- do not open your napkin in mid-air.
- if you must leave a meal, do so between courses, and place your napkin on your chair or to the left of your plate. When a meal is completed, place your napkin to the right of your plate.

Serve

- wait for everyone at your table to be served before beginning to eat.
- eat slowly while waiting for their food to be served.

Soup

- think of making a circle: spoon away, bring around to the mouth and back to the bowl.
- do not insert a soup spoon into your mouth.

Bread

- break bread/rolls into smaller and buttering only a few bites at a time.
- toast and garlic bread however may be eaten as whole pieces.

Sorbet

- often being served between courses to cleanse the palate. It is a light, sherbet texture and may be eaten with a fork or a spoon.

Alcohol

- slowly sipping is recommended.
- if you do not want an alcoholic drink, politely decline.

Passing

- pass "community food" such as the breadbasket and salad dressing to the right.
- always pass the salt and pepper together.

Guest

- select an item that is in the mid-price range, easy to eat and something you will enjoy.
- consider asking your host/hostess for a recommendation before making your decision.
- remember to thank them for the meal.

Finish

- × Do not push your plates away or stack them.

PART FIVE : THAI BUSINESS CULTURE

THE PEOPLE

Thais are tolerant of individualism, but find comfort and security in being part of a group. *Mai Pen Rai* (never mind) is the Thai expression which characterizes the general focus of life - "it is to enjoy." Thais are productive and hardworking while at the same time happy with what they are and what they have materially. They are smiling, pleasant, humble and patient people who laugh easily, speak softly, are slow to anger, and never try to cause anyone to lose face. Thais are very proud of their cultural heritage and enjoy talking about it with visitors. Thais are proud that they have never been ruled by a Western power.

MEETING AND GREETING

- When greeting someone, men say *Sawatdee-krap* and women say *Sawatdee-kah*.
- Thais greet each other with a "wai." Foreigners are not expected to initiate the wai gesture, but it is an insult not to return the wai. If a wai is not offered to you, shake hands with men and smile and nod to women. A Thai businessperson may shake hands with a foreigner. Offer a wai only to a person of equal or greater status. Subordinates should offer a wai first.
- Wai (why) - a person places the palm of his or her hands together, with their fingers extended at chest level close to their body and bows slightly. The higher the hands are placed, the more respect is shown. Subordinates might raise their fingers as high as their nose. However, the tips of their fingers should never be above eye level.
- A wai can mean "Hello," "Thank you," "I'm sorry," or "Goodbye." A wai is not used to greet children, servants, street vendors or laborers. Never return a wai to a child, waiter, clerk, etc. Simply nod and smile in response.
- Monks do not return a wai.
- Thais say "Where are you going" rather than "Hello." A polite response is "Just down the street."
- Introductions are common only in a formal situation. Introduce yourself by your first name. Feel free to introduce yourself or ask for someone's name. When introducing your business partner to an important Thai, mention your partner's name first.
- The inferior or lower-status person is always addressed first in an introduction. Thus, a child is introduced before its parents, a secretary is introduced before her boss.

NAME AND TITLES

- Thais address one another by first names and titles and reserve last names for very formal occasions and written communications. Last names have been used in Thailand for only the past 50 years and are difficult even for Thais to pronounce.
- Foreigners are often addressed by their given names because it is easier for Thais; it does not imply familiarity. Thais will probably call you Mr. Joe or Mrs. Mary.
- Titles, rank and honor are very important. Introductions require only the given name and title. Mr., Mrs., or Miss + family name are appropriate for visitors to use in formal situations.
- Thai given names are preceded by **Khun** (Mr. Mrs. or Miss), unless they carry a higher degree, such as doctor. Khun is used for men and women, married or single. If you don't know a person's name, address them as Khun. Example: Siri-orn (Given) + Champatong(Family) is Khun Siri-orn.
- Correspondence: Use Dear + Khun + given name. Example: Dear Khun Mary.
- Nicknames are common in Thailand

CORPORATE CULTURE

- Thailand has a pro-business attitude. Business decisions are slow. Decisions pass through many levels before being decided upon. Planning is short-term. Top management is often family. Who you know is important. Powerful connections are respected.
- First meetings generally produce good humor, many smiles, polite conversation and few results. The second meeting should include a meal invitation. Meetings begin with small talk. Discussing business before becoming acquainted is impolite. Degrees, especially from prestigious universities, bring status. Thais may list these on their business card. Thais respect foreigners with powerful connections.
- Negotiations may be lengthy. Process takes precedence over content. Slow information flow may delay discussions and decisions.
- Thais prefer to work later in the evening rather than early in the morning. Business is kept separate from work. Family comes first before business.
- Frankness is not appreciated. Be subtle in responding with a negative reply.

BODY LANGUAGE

- Touching between people of the same sex is more common in Thailand than in many other Asian countries. However, touching someone of the opposite sex is taboo. Do not show affection in public.
- Never touch or pass anything over anyone's head. The head is considered sacred in Thailand and must be respected.
- Never point your feet at anyone or use your feet to move anything or touch anyone. Feet are regarded as unclean and symbolically (as well as physically) the lowest part of the body.
- Do not put your hands in your pockets while talking to someone. Never put your arm over the back of the chair in which someone is sitting.

- A smile is often used for many different emotions. It may be an apology, a thank-you, a greeting, or to show embarrassment. Be aware: A Thai's smiling assurance does not mean you will in fact get what you want, when you want it. It simply reflects the Thai appreciation of harmony and their "never mind" attitude.
- Don't wave your hands about as you talk, giving Thais the impression that you are angry. Never pass anything with your left hand. Never point with your hand and never, never with one finger.
- Do not cross your legs in the presence of the elderly or monks.
- To beckon someone, extend your arm with the palm of your hand down and flutter your fingers up and down.

DINING AND ENTERTAINING

- To attract a waiter, wave quietly with your palm down or say "Nong" (brother or sister). Never snap your fingers or raise your voice to attract a waiter.
- Thai food is eaten with a fork and a tablespoon rather than with chopsticks. The spoon is held in the right hand and the bottom of the fork pushes the food into the spoon.
- All Western hotels serve Western and continental cuisine for all meals.
- Never drink tap water unless it is boiled. Avoid eating salads that haven't been washed in purified water. Always peel fruit before eating.
- Many Thai dishes are hot and spicy with herbs, lemon grass, and coriander, but most are not especially aggressive. Food is always sweet, sour, hot, salty or spicy never bland. Each region has its own specialties.
- Food may be transferred to your rice bowl, where it can be mixed with rice.
- Leave a small amount of food on your plate when you have finished eating, to show you are full. Place your spoon and fork on your plate at the 5:25 position to indicate you are finished-eating.
- The host pays the bill. Never offer to split a bill in a restaurant.

DRESS

- Thai society is divided into upper and lower classes. At formal occasions, dress is expected to match one's social station. Appearance is very important. Wealth is greatly admired. High-status Thais often overdress, especially considering the hot climate.
- Western clothing is very common. Modest clothing is recommended. General dress is informal but always neat and clean. Clothing should be stylish and cool.
- For Businessmen: Pants and shirts (white or colored) with or without a tie. A light suit or jacket adds status. In the evening, dark business suits or formal traditional Thai shirts are worn. Senior executives wear light weight suits to work.
- For Businesswomen: Conservative dresses or skirts and blouses (not sleeveless). Simple blouses and calf-length loose pants and long wrap-around or tube skirts are common.



GIFTS

- Gift giving in Thailand is Westernized with less formality than elsewhere in Asia.
- Bring a small gift for anyone who works for you regularly. Items such as books, special food items and pens are appropriate.
- Give a gift with your right hand and receive a gift with your right hand. You should also offer a wai.
- Do not open a gift you've been given unless invited to do so. Thais generally do not open a gift in front of the giver.
- For the hostess give: Fruit, flowers, cakes, brandy/liquors, candy.
- In business, give Brandy, liquors, American crafts, books and desk attire are appropriate gifts.

HELPFUL HINT

- Show great respect for the royal family. They are highly respected by most Thais. Stand in respect when the Thai national anthem is played.
- Step over the threshold, not on it, when going through a doorway. Thais believe a spirit resides in the threshold.
- Take off your shoes before entering a home, **wat** (temple) or building which has a Buddha image within.
- Use your right hand only for passing, eating, touching, etc.
- Never touch the head of a Thai or pass an object over it; the head is considered sacred in Thailand.
- Do not speak in a loud voice. Do not show your temper. Never criticize anyone publicly.

FOR WOMEN

- Men conduct most business. However, many traditional sex-barriers are disappearing. More and more women are holding executive positions in the workforce.
- Ladies may not enter a bot, the restricted area of a wat. Never touch a monk, hand him anything or sit next to or higher than him. When visiting a mosque, cover your body. Wear slacks, a long skirt, a long sleeved blouse with a buttoned neck, and a headscarf.
- Traditional Thais believe a woman can lose face if a man touches her in public.

PART SIX: WORKING PRACTICES IN THAILAND

WORKING TIME & LANGUAGE

- Normal office hours are between 8.00 and 17.00 or between 9.00 and 18:00 with lunch between 12.00 and 13.00.
- It is acceptable to be a little late for meetings as it is often unavoidable in Bangkok due to traffic jams but it is appreciated to inform your business partner that you are running late.
- April and early May are the main holiday periods so business trips to Bangkok should be avoided during this time as many staff will be on leave.
- English is commonly used in business, especially in large companies in Bangkok, and presentations, proposals and contracts are acceptable in English. However, make sure to use fairly simple and non-idiomatic language and if language is a problem, interpreters should be offered.

STRUCTURE & HIERACHY IN THAI COMPANIES

- Thai business reflects a society in which hierarchy and respect for seniors are very important. Understanding social status of people and the vertical structure of a company is essential for doing business with the Thais.
- Traditionally, women were underrepresented in the business world and especially in managerial positions. However, this has changed and now women have equal rights and protection as men, although some inequalities remain in the law. An increasing number of women hold professional positions and women's access to higher education has grown, with more than half of university graduates being women.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

- Building good relationships is an important part of doing business in Thailand. Thais place great importance in 'liking' their business partners so it will influence the negotiation process.
- Invitations to social activities from your Thai counterparts should always be accepted as these are used as a means of getting to know each other before doing business together.
- Informal conversations before or after a meeting are common and should not be neglected. Thais may ask personal questions about your age, marital status and educational background, to help them understand your place in the social hierarchy and to build a relationship with you.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

- Thais are generally not confident decision-makers and often need to consult with several people before making a decision which can lead to a lengthy process. However, impatience should be avoided as it will be seen as a sign of weakness.
- The traditional common form of greeting is the '*wai*' when hands are raised with palms together, fingers pointing upwards and with a bowed head. Younger and lower-ranking people are supposed to offer the '*wai*' first to their senior counterparts. The higher one's hands are placed, the more respect is shown.
- In Thai business, first names are generally used, preceded by the honorific title '*Khun*' or '*Kru*' if the person is a teacher, trainer or an expert, used both for men and women. Note that Thais will tend to use first names as opposed to last names even when using Mr, Mrs and Miss.
- A high quality business card is an important asset in Thailand and should be exchanged when initiated by the host. Cards should be offered to the most senior person first and it is imperative that cards are given and received with the right hand.

DO & DON'T



DO wear business suits for meetings with trousers, a long-sleeved shirt and tie. Women should normally wear skirt and blouses, covering the shoulders and upper legs.

DO give general praise to your Thai colleagues but avoid giving too specific praise in regards to a Thai's possessions as he or she may feel obligated to give you the item in question.

DO take off your shoes when invited into your Thai business colleague's home.



DON'T plan any meetings at the beginning and end of the day. Avoid these time-slots because of difficulties with transport to the workplace.

DON'T joke about or criticize the Thai King or Queen as these are to be treated with respect and it is illegal to say or write anything offensive to royalty.

DON'T touch your Thai colleague's head as it is considered sacred according to Buddhist tradition.

PART SEVEN: MULTI-CULTURE WORKING PRACTICES



Cross-cultural Communication
An Example of Different Meanings of the Same Gesture



UK & USA = O.K.

JAPAN = MONEY

RUSSIA = ZERO

BRAZIL = INSULT

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