

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN RUSSIA, USA AND CHINA: FIGHTING CHALLENGES ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS

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The first thing one should know doing the international business is to learn and respect cultural differences, because different cultures teach different values and what might be polite in one country could be highly insulting in another one. Ignorance of such things can easily lead to challenges which may threaten future success of the business deals and even ruin the business in the long run. The authors of this article examined some differences in business etiquette in Russian, American and Chinese cultures and focused their attention on issues connected with TIME perception, business communication, dress code, entertainment and gifts, and gender roles. The results of the analysis made it possible to come to a conclusion about great importance of above-mentioned factors in the process of doing business and to formulate some useful business etiquette tips for those who are willing to have successful business connections with American and Chinese partners.

Ключевые слова: international business, business etiquette, business communication, challenges, success, business tips.

There are numerous benefits to working with other cultures, including the unique professional perspective that they can provide to you and your company. However, it is important to follow a few rules of etiquette to ensure a productive and comfortable business relationship [1]. This article considers different issues connected with business etiquette in Russia, the USA and China. The aim of the research was to analyze some differences between Russian, American and Chinese cultures in business etiquette and to formulate some business-etiquette tips which may help in fighting challenges on the way to successful business with American and Chinese business people. The first section of the article presents some key issues on the main business etiquette differences between Russia, the USA and China, namely the differences in TIME perception; business communication; dress code; entertaining and gifts; gender roles. The second section presents some business-etiquette tips which are sure to help when doing business with American and Chinese people.

Differences in TIME perception

Each country perceives time differently. The USA for example represents strict time cultures where you can often hear such things as “Time is money, Save time, Use time wisely, Don’t waste time”, etc. Russia is the example of flexible time cultures and respectively we have a famous saying *всему свое время*. As for China it demonstrates cyclical cultures and the well-known proverb is “With time and patience the mulberry leaf will become a silk gown”. Such differences in cultures of course influence business deals.

Concerning Russian business people the situation is thought to be changing today to the better because more

and more businessmen start to respect punctuality. On the other hand Russian business people can still be late for 10–15 minutes and it is not considered a rude violation of the etiquette [2]. In this respect it is interesting to note what the New York Business Etiquette Guide advises American business people who want to do business with Russians: «Schedule meetings well in advance and confirm them both upon arrival in Russia and a few days before the meeting. Don't be surprised if your meeting is canceled or rescheduled. Arrive on time or slightly early — but don't expect Russian partners to do likewise; arriving late without apology is a test of a foreign business partner's patience» [3].

Americans on the contrary set a term for negotiations a few weeks or even months beforehand, and it is not characteristic for them to notify everyone about them on the eve. One more difference between these two business cultures is a process of planning the actions. Many Americans build their life by the plan using it every day. Russian entrepreneurs are likely to be more spontaneous during the process of organizing their future actions.

China is similar to America because it also values punctuality in business negotiations. Chinese business people suppose that being late isn't an appropriate behavior. If you have business relationships with Chinese partners, you should know that they prefer to arrange an exact place and time for the meeting.

Business communication

Business communicating is the main process in doing business, and its result will show if you established a new partnership or not. Types and styles of negotiations in Russia are connected with the status of the company. If it is a small or a medium company, negotiations may

often take place in a quiet restaurant. If we mean big Russian corporations, negotiations will take place in a special conference hall or in a business center, and style of these negotiations will be the same, as in the United States.

Russian businesspeople place greater emphasis on the spoken word than do professionals in the United States. Face-to-face meetings are usually more productive than written correspondence because they allow participants to more fully discuss and explain issues. Russian businesspeople also demonstrate much less body language than American professionals. They might listen silently without even nodding in agreement, confusing their American counterparts who rely on visual cues such as eye contact and posture [4].

Unlike Russian passive style of negotiations, when both sides simply tell each other about their interests, Americans, from the very beginning try to dominate the negotiation process and unstopably force their partners to make a decision.

Businesspeople in the United States often pride themselves on being tough, but slower, less aggressive style is valued in China. Chinese businesspeople often prefer to have time to mull over a contract, to talk about its risks and benefits and to consult with other interested parties rather than deal with tough negotiations. An aggressive American style is unlikely to be favorably perceived in China and could be seen as highly unprofessional. At the beginning of the meeting, a Chinese will pay special attention to your behavior and manners. Like both Russia and USA, Chinese also welcome a situation, when a business meeting is moved from a special center to a restaurant [5].

Dress code

Business etiquette in different countries is not only the set of rules of behavior or running the negotiations process. There is a big section in many business-etiquette manuals connected with a dress code. As for Russian peculiar features concerning this thing from our point of view there are no unique or special standards of dress code in Russian business culture though it may depend on the size of the company. In general business attire in Russia is similar to that in the United States, with men usually opting for dark suits and women wearing business suits or skirts and blouses. A major difference is the emphasis on designer labels. Russian professionals usually dress as expensively as their salaries permit, and clothing that is obviously expensive is a sign of credibility. While a tasteful wardrobe is also a status symbol in the United States, a designer label is less important. When doing business in Russia, though, American professionals should appear elegantly dressed to be perceived as equals.

Americans may come to the negotiations wearing just jeans and T-shirts. The Chinese will not understand this appearance. In general, they often expect from foreigners a light shirt with a tie, even if it is a hot summer. Sloppy American style in the negotiations is perceived badly by the Chinese. At the same time it can dramatically reduce your status. If you put on appropriate business clothes, it

will be much easier for you to conduct further negotiations.

In China women for example must keep a sense of proportion in relation to jewelry. A woman, who is literally studded with necklaces, bracelets and rings, can be perceived very negatively in China.

Entertaining and gifts

What concerns Russian culture of entertaining and creating non-business meetings foreign business people state that it is difficult to know what to expect when invited out to lunch or dinner in Russia. The event could simply be a relationship building exercise or it can be a traditional Russian performance. In most cases long Russian negotiations may end in going out to the restaurant for a friendly conversation or relaxation. Also it is quite normal in Russia to show off your social status. This trait of Russian character can alienate partners from the USA or China. Here we mean expensive clothes, accessories, cars and visiting lavish restaurants. Business negotiations in big companies to some extent demand the VIP service, but we mostly emphasize superfluous using of such things. At the end of business negotiations, when guests are going to leave, Russians prefer to make traditional gifts: matreshkas, Russian symbols and so on.

American entrepreneurs behave in a different, much calmer way and they always have strict plan of the actions, and "Plan-B" for some unexpected situations. During breaks between negotiations, Americans can offer you to go somewhere, also this kind of offers, sometimes can be just a formal gesture. Business entertaining is not to develop a personal relationship. It can be in the form of cocktail parties, golf games, and barbecues, formal or casual dinners. One of the most interesting American peculiarities is that they prefer to come to an agreement about payment in the restaurant before the action, to avoid haggling over the check. The person extending the invitation usually pays.

If we talk about the Chinese mentality, you should first be aware of the fact that the Chinese are quite a friendly nation. Food for the Chinese is on the first place, and its amount is on the second. Therefore, many Chinese people expect an invitation to the restaurant from their foreign partner. The Chinese are very serious about gifts. China is customary to exchange souvenirs. It is recommended for any social event to come with a gift. However, elderly Chinese may initially refuse a gift, but later they will accept it especially if you offer it to them again.

Gender roles

In Russian business-etiquette, theoretically there is not any division between genders, and on the paper level everyone is equal. In spite of this fact, Russian women in business spheres are still thought to be inferior to men and their opinions are considered less smart and important. In this respect women in Russia need to make special efforts to be listened and understood. As for gender roles in American business spheres we cannot ignore the fact that the USA is the most developed country in question of social equality and human rights. During

negotiations, the audience will listen to both genders with the same attention.

If we have in mind Chinese businessmen it is important to emphasize that they prefer to deal with men only. As for women, they are just not so reliable and responsible in this question. We think that this situation has arisen due to the fact that for a long time the country had a clear separation by gender. But probably it is something like prejudice in China. Modern China nevertheless has both famous men and women entrepreneurs. But at the same time some old stereotypes about women may dominate in different regions of the country.

Useful business-etiquette tips

Having analyzed some issues connected with business etiquette differences between Russia, the USA and China we present the following useful tips for those who want to do business with American and Chinese partners.

Russia and America

1. During the first meeting do not forget to be polite and use formal phrases.
2. Do not be confused with Mr., Mrs. and Ms.
3. Do not forget about your appearance: business dress code, suitable haircut and, for women, decent cosmetics and accessories.
4. Be calm and self-confident, but don't boast your prosperity.
5. Be ready for a lot of pressure from the partner side; be ready to answer all their questions, connected with the sphere of business.
6. If your partners are women or you ought to have a conversation with them, do not make big gender differences.
7. If you are going to have a rest with your business partner, at first discuss all details of payment, place and style of the meeting.

Russia and China

1. Remember, that Chinese partner will judge you by the first meeting.
2. Do not forget to invite your partner to the restaurant, most of them like to do business there.
3. Do not try to wear Chinese traditional suits.
4. Your dress code should be strict and conservative.
5. Making gifts and presents excluding white color and number four, these things are symbols of death.

Conclusion

Summing up, it is necessary to emphasize that doing the international business it is very important to be aware of cultural differences because simple mistakes in communication and other aspects may ruin win-win situations. By understanding the differences between cultures and adapting your style accordingly, you can gain the trust of people in foreign markets, avoid offending po-

tential clients and grow your business. From our point of view, the business etiquette tips formulated in this article can help Russian entrepreneurs doing business with American and Chinese partners. ■

1.URL: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/business-etiquette-working-other-cultures-21128.html>.

2.URL: <https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/how-to-break-culture-barriers-win-business-in-china-russia-india-and-brazil/>.

3.URL: http://www.etiquetteoutreach.com/blog_new-york-etiquette-guide/bid/93212/Business-Com.

4.URL: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/difference-between-americans-russians-cultures-business-56041.html>.

5.URL: <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/american-vs-chinese-business-culture-59039.html>.

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Деловой этикет в России, США и Китае: преодоление вызовов на пути к успеху

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Первое, что нужно знать о ведении международного бизнеса, — это знать и уважать культурные различия, потому что разные культуры имеют разные ценности и то, что может быть приемлемо в одной стране, может быть весьма оскорбительно в другой. Пренебрежение такими вещами может легко привести к проблемам, которые могут привести к срыву деловых сделок и даже разрушить бизнес. Авторами статьи рассмотрены некоторые различия в бизнес-этикете в российской, американской и китайской деловых культурах и акцент сделан на вопросах восприятия времени, делового общения, дресс-кода, развлечений и подарков, и гендерных ролей. Результаты анализа позволили прийти к выводу о значительной важности вышеперечисленных факторов ведения бизнеса и сформулировать некоторые полезные советы делового этикета для тех, кто желает установить успешные деловые связи с американскими и китайскими партнерами.

Ключевые слова: международный бизнес, деловой этикет, деловое общение, проблемы, успех, советы для бизнеса.