

South korean- business etiquette and cultural aspects

Society



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“ Welcome to South Korea”. This will more than likely be the greeting one hears when arriving in South Korea on a business trip. Knowing as much about the country and its people will be extremely important to your visit. It’s also important to know as much about the language, their customs and culture as humanly possible, but for this paper we will focus on business practices and etiquette. Some of the business topics we need to discuss are where is Korea, Business Meeting Etiquette, Business Dress Attire, Giving and Receiving of Business Cards, Giving and Receiving of Business Gifts, Business Dining and Entertainment, and Business women.

South Korea is the southern part of the Korean Peninsula divided by the de-militarized zone (DMZ) with North Korea at the upper half of the peninsula bordered with China in Southeast Asia. The Koreans were liberated from the Japanese (35 years of colonial rule) after World War II and the country was split in half at the 38th parallel as the spoils of war, with the south being occupied by the Americans and the north being occupied by the Russians. The DMZ (de-militarized zone) was established after the Korean War.

South Korea has had a hard and turbulent history however, as of today; the country is an enormous economic success and has become the third largest economy in Southeast Asia just behind Japan and China. It has also, just elected its first woman president ever (Park, Geun-hye) who takes office this February 2013. President Park is the 60 year old daughter of the former military styled dictator president that took over the country back in 1961 until 1979 (President Park, Chung-hee) he was assassinated in 1979.

It's also important to know as much about the people, language, their customs and culture as humanly possible, but for this paper we will focus on business practices and etiquette. Some of the business topics we need to discuss are, Business Meeting Etiquette, Business Dress Attire, Giving and Receiving of Business Cards, Giving and Receiving of Business Gifts, Business Dining and Entertainment, The Business Meeting Etiquette is as follows; always make your meeting well in advance 2 to 3 weeks prior, and either for mid-morning or mid-afternoon.

When meeting for the first time always have your most senior person introduced first and down the line by authority. Koreans are very particular about authority and ranking. When shaking hands always use your left hand holding the right hand out while shaking and with a slight bow of the head is most acceptable. Be punctual at all meetings, it's a sign of respect. If possible an interpreter is always useful in the language barrier. All pertinent paper work, contracts, manuals, brochures or paper documentation should also be written in Korean. Be direct when you communicate with slight pauses in between different points to be made.

Koreans are more interested in making personal relationships, before forming business relationships. Always address the most senior authority in the meeting by his title and then his last name, (as well as the others in descending order of authority). One note to remember Koreans don't like to be touched unless its family or a close friend be careful of any overt touching. Have patience, Koreans like to make decisions in a group collectively. Don't expect one person to give you a final answer on anything. The Business

Dress Attire should always be clean, (for men) dark suit with plain dress shirt and tie, socks and dress shoes.

The tie should be tied, shirt tucked in and shoes polished (the professional look works best). It should go without mentioning, hair combed, shaved and teeth brushed. No flashy jewelry other than a watch and a ring. For women professionals it should be the same basics apply except no real short dresses or tight pants and no excessive cleavage showing off the breast, plus no stripper heels, (again the professional look works best). The same applies to jewelry as men Giving and Receiving of Business Cards, when giving out your card hold with both hands and extend outward with a slight head bow until taken.

Whenever possible have the back of the card translated into Korean (either by interpreter or professionally done) and as you hand it off have the Korean language facing up to the taker of the card. When receiving a Koreans business card never writ on it or stuff it in your pocket, this is considered rude. The card is an extension of them and they want you to relish it, so look at it closely and admire it as much as possible. It is best to have a nice card case or portfolio to place the card in once you think it's safe to do so. The Giving and Receiving of Business Gifts should be a mutual exchange.

Koreans see it as a part of the personal relationship there experiencing with you. If you receive a gift you are expected to give a gift of equal value. When giving a gift, use two hands extended out to give it and with a slight head bow. When you receive a gift, use two hands to except it and with a slight head bow. However, do not open the gift without the givers permission

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because this is considered rude. Only wrap gifts in bright colors. The Business Dining or Entertainment, sometimes when dining at someone's home or even out at a restaurant the Korean custom is to remove your shoes before entering the building.

You always wait until you're told where to sit for the meal. The most senior person in age is the first person who starts the eating process. Some of the time the meal is usually a quiet time for a family to concentrate on eating. You must eat everything on your plate or it is considered an insult toward the host. Eating with someone is a sign of building a friendship or personal relationship. You are never supposed to pour your own drink but it is perfectly alright to pour someone else's. Leave a little drink in the bottom of the glass if you are finished drinking and do not want any more to drink.

Koreans see tipping as an insult and you are not required to tip unless otherwise told so. Many times business men like to go out on the town or to the bars for drinks and business talk. The Korean business men are known for being big drinkers and if you get invited out, you must accept or you have insulted your guest in the eyes of the Koreans. Also, the Koreans love Karaoke As strange as many of these different customs may seem to an American, I can actually see that the Korean people have some pretty neat customs.

They have been around a lot longer than Americans have and they're a very proud people of their heritage. When looking at some of these customs it makes one wonder how many different customs there must be that seem a little quirky from all countries. There are multitudes of business practices

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that should be reviewed by any and all business professionals before leaving their own country for business etiquette and cultural aspects. The only way that business professionals can be a successful organization in another country is to learn as much about the country their going to as is humanly possible.