

BUSINESS ETIQUETTES AND CUSTOMS



HONG KONG

WORKING HOURS

- Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 18:00. Punctuality is important.

BUSINESS CLOTHING

- Dress codes vary slightly according to the size of company and industry sector. To attend a formal business occasion or conference, men can wear dark suits, shirts and ties and women will not feel out of place in conservative business suits.
- Bear in mind that weather can be very hot and humid in the summer and that typhoons are common. Therefore, it is possible to wear casual business attire on those days if the other party adopts a dress-down policy

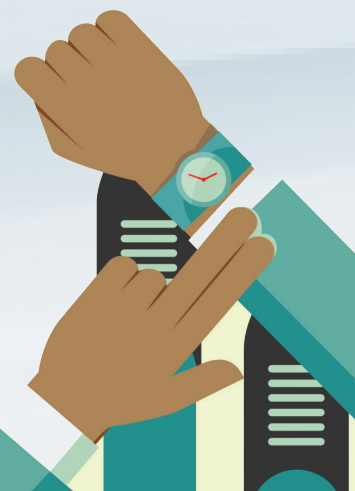
GIFTS AND PRESENTS

- The best time for gift-giving is at Christmas or around the Chinese New Year. These are the most important Hong Kong holidays to maintain a business relationship.
- You can give away a typical souvenir from your home country, like a certain kind of candy, food, or beverage. There are, however, gifts which are not appropriate according to Hong Kong business etiquette:
 - Clocks are associated with death.
 - Four is an unlucky number because the Chinese word for "four" is too similar - to the word for "death". Try not to give four things at once, but not in all cases.
- Sharp objects represent a severing of relationships.
- Anything unwrapped looks tacky.
- Any gifts for civil servants or government employees could be misunderstood as bribes.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- Hong Kong may not place in the bottom 10 of the Urban Work Life Index (57th out of 72), but it still only ranks 70th in the Work-Life Balance subcategory (Urban Work life index 2018).

- In proper Hong Kong business etiquette, always use both hands to give or accept gifts.
- Upon receiving a gift, thank the giver and set it aside.
- It is rude to unwrap it in their presence.



BUSINESS MEALS

- If your business contacts send you an invitation for dining in Hong Kong, it is considered very impolite just to refuse. In case that you can't make it, suggest a more convenient date, but do try to find the time.
- According to Hong Kong business etiquette, most invitations only extend to you without including your spouse or partner. If spouses should be present, business is rarely discussed. During meals, you should pay attention to Hong Kong business etiquette regarding seating. For western dining, usually at a long table, the guest of honour usually sits opposite the host, with the second and third most important guest to his or her left and right.
- At the same time, the guest of honour is seated furthest away from the entrance while the host sits near the entrance. In Chinese meals, round tables are usually used.
- The host and the guest of honour sit next to each other farthest from the entrance; others arrange the seat according to different situations, considering whether the situation is a first meeting, a formal or casual business meal, and so on.
- Sometimes the inviters sit between other invited guests so that they can take care of everyone. Sometimes, the inviters sit next to the host and sit on one side, the guests sitting on another side. If in doubt, ask your host politely where to sit or wait for them to offer you a seat.
- A business meal may also be an opportunity for your host to make a toast in your honour. Accept it graciously by smiling, raising your glass, taking a sip, and thanking everyone present. In case you are asked for a toast, rise from your seat and express your sincere hope for a successful cooperation or something along these lines.
- Western dining invitations usually allow guests to choose their own food and beverages, each enjoying their own food.
- For Chinese meals, most of the time, the host decides the menu; if you do not like or are allergic to certain foods, you had better state so.
- On the contrary, it would be embarrassing if the guest says they do not mind but then do not accept food when dining. At premium or formal business banquets, the server gives shares of the food at the side table before the service; try the best to empty the plate. If such kind of service has not been provided. All the dishes are put in the middle of the table and everyone shares the food. To show kindness, the host usually fills the dishes for the guests. If you are full, tell the host politely and directly.

NATIONAL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

- 17 days

ADDRESSING A PERSON

- Business contacts should be greeted with a handshake. Other than the handshake, it is not usual to engage in any kind of physical contact when meeting people.
- The business hierarchy is important to keep in mind, too. When being introduced to a group of associates, always greet the senior member before you greet the others. You should be able to recognize the senior member by their title.
- Professionals in Hong Kong are addressed with their title and their surname. For instance, you might address someone as "Doctor Kwan." Many business professionals in Hong Kong employ the use of a Western sounding name in order to simplify the pronunciation for Western associates.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

- If you want to arrange a meeting with business contacts in Hong Kong, it is always a good idea to make appointments well in advance. Try to avoid scheduling meetings on long public holidays such as at Christmas, Easter, or around the Chinese New Year, which are all popular times for vacation in Hong Kong business culture. Don't forget to call or email your business partners the day before to confirm your appointment.
- During the meeting, greet the most senior business partner first and then work your way down the hierarchy. Hand out your business cards. Here you should make sure, just like with your wardrobe, to stick to a positive or neutral colour scheme. One side of your business card should be printed in Chinese, the other one in English. In Hong Kong business culture, it's key to be well-prepared for the meeting and to support everything you present with some facts and figures.
- Always remain calm, patient, and modest during negotiations. In Hong Kong business culture, negotiations take a while as everything is discussed in detail and considered thoroughly. Don't pressure your business partners, but give them time to think things through. Although English is commonly used in Hong Kong business culture, you should try to be respectful of your Chinese business partners. Speak slowly and clearly, and practice or try to learn Cantonese in Hong Kong if you can. If your Cantonese is not quite up to Hong Kong business culture, you may at least try a bit of small talk or a few polite phrases to show your effort.

CONVERSATION

- Casual inquiries about health or business are considered polite conversation.
- Chinese history and architecture is always a good topic.
- Food is very important and they enjoy discussing their delicacies.
- Culture and the Chinese traditions.
- Music and the arts are excellent topics.

Conversation to Avoid:

- Anything that could cause loss of face or embarrassment.
- Avoid mentioning the political situation in China.
- Avoid discussing Taiwan.
- Anything negative about their food or dining habits.
- Overly specific or detailed inquiries that may be considered intrusive.

