

# International Business Card Etiquette

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## GENERAL ETIQUETTE

- Always make sure you have enough business cards on you for the occasion. It's always embarrassing to be caught without any.
- Try to learn the basics of foreign customs regarding presenting yourself and the exchange of business cards before traveling abroad. It's very easy to make a bad first impression if you're not prepared. It only takes a few minutes, so read up!
- If possible, try to have one side of your business card printed in the language of the country you are visiting. This shows that you are serious about doing business there, and makes a good impression on you and your company.
- Along with the above tip, make sure when presenting your business card that the native language of the country you are visiting is face up.
- Keep your cards up-to-date. The cost of making business cards is so inexpensive these days that it is inexcusable to have to write corrections on the card, or verbally tell everyone you give the card to that the phone number or address has changed.

## JAPAN

- Business cards in Japan (called meishi [may - shi]) are an important part of not just business interactions but personal encounters as well. Just about everyone has their own meishi, whether personal or business, from the time they are a student onwards.
- Make sure that your business and title are prominently printed on the card. The Japanese place great importance on rank and title.
- Hold out your business card with both hands, and accept other's cards with both hands. Accept another's card by grabbing the bottom corners (the side facing you).
- After handing over your card, bow and present yourself by saying your name, company, and title (note: bowing is fading out in favor of the handshake when dealing with foreigners).

- Present your business card to the highest ranked individual in the vicinity first.
- When receiving business cards, take a moment to look over them. Then put the card away in a card case (preferable) or your wallet carefully. Don't just crumple it up into your pant pocket.
- Never leave another person's business card out and start playing around with it in front of them.
- Do not write on another's business card. Don't fold another's business card.
- Although primarily practiced in Japanese companies between Japanese, subordinates present their business cards by holding them out at a lower level than their superiors'.

## **KOREA**

- Present and receive business cards with both hands outstretched. When presenting the card, hold it out with both hands, then drop your left hand while the right presents the card. After the card is taken, take your left hand and grab your right arm above the wrist.
- Upon receipt of the business card from a Korean person, nod your head to show respect and express thanks. This is especially important if you are meeting with people of higher rank than yourself.
- It is appropriate to put the card away soon after receiving it, and is considered rude to study it for too long. It is okay to study it for a few seconds before putting it away though.
- You should always present your own business card before asking someone else for theirs (assuming of course that they haven't already given you one).

## **PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

- It is preferable to present your own card before asking for another's business card.
- Hold out your card with both hands with the text facing the other party.
- Study the card for a moment before putting it away. It is then polite to greet the other party.
- When seated, place previously received business cards upon the table, in front of you.

- Never write on someone's business card.
- Gold is a lucky color in China, and gold print or embossing on your card is never a bad idea (when used in moderation).
- When translating your card into Chinese, make sure the script for the characters is Simplified Chinese, as that is the most commonly used script today in most parts of China (the traditional script is used in Hong Kong and Taiwan). Also, be sure that the right dialect is used in translating the words (e.g. Cantonese vs. Mandarin), and that it corresponds to the region of China that you will be doing business in.
- Highlight or somehow impress upon any important pertinent facts about your company (e.g. it's the largest or oldest in your country). Your title should also be listed somewhat prominently on the card.

## **INDIA**

- Put any university degrees or honors information on your business card.
- Use your right hand to present and accept business cards.
- English is widely spoken so there's not as much of a need to translate your card into Hindi or the local dialect.

## **UNITED KINGDOM & AMERICA**

- The exchange of business cards is quite informal and does not require a lot of ceremony.
- Business cards may be placed directly in your pocket if necessary.
- Cards should be kept neat and presentable.
- It is only necessary to hand out business cards to business contacts or those who present their card to you first. Business cards are not usually used in personal situations.

## **WESTERN EUROPE**

- Never pass out your business cards like dealing a deck of cards.
- Never put your cards in a stack on the table at a reception.

## **COLOMBIA**

- Present your business card by holding it at one corner with your thumb and index finger. Make sure not to cover up any of the important information on the card when handing it over.

## **ISLAMIC COUNTRIES**

- Always present and accept business cards with your right hand.