Особенности бизнес-этикета в Японии

Современный деловой мир не может существовать без внешних контактов. Необходимость изучения навыков межкультурной коммуникации стала неотъемлемой частью бизнеса. Каждая страна имеет свои особенности деловой культуры, стиль ведения переговоров и определенную модель менеджмента. Незнание культурных особенностей может привести к проблемам в переговорах и осложнить процесс деловой деятельности.

Необходимо знать не только традиции и этикет страны вашего бизнес-партнера, но и то, как национальная культура влияет на стиль ведения переговоров, управление и процесс принятия решений.

Features of business etiquette in Japan

Rules of business etiquette are designed to bring together the business areas of interest. For a successful meeting with a potential partner you must follow rules of etiquette existing in a native country. It will provide the basis for a favorable outcome of negotiations and a successful transaction. In recent years, many businessmen are seeking to collaborate with Japanese companies. Despite the well known Japanese caution, slowness in decision-making, meticulousness in exploring the smallest details of projects, there were many prejudices indisputable fact remains that Japanese investors and trading partners have significant financial resources and very few exceptions do business honestly and in good faith.

Japanese business ethics is inextricably linked to the country's culture and ethno psychology Japanese. For those who are going to succeed in business with Japan, its study is necessary.
East etiquette is rather complicated and multi-element, with a complex hierarchy of relations and historically established rules. Japanese etiquette can serve as a model of complexity. Etiquette in Japan is like a code of honor and loyalty of a warrior “bushido” (“Way of the Warrior”), formed in the 12–13th centuries as well as “a compendium of Japanese ethics” for youth, compiled in the 19th century.

Japanese business ethics is significantly different from the ethics of the Westerners. Not to cause any confusion and not to have any misunderstanding during negotiations with Japanese, it is necessary to take into account national differences and learn the rules of behavior.

With all the variety of Japanese components of business ethics can be divided into two groups – rigid rules and aspects where a compromise is acceptable.

Traditional form of greeting is the bow, and the lower it is, the more respect evince. However, in contact with foreign colleagues handshake is becoming increasingly widespread common. Given this, it is important not to be trapped because very often businessmen who want to impress their Japanese partners bow to them at the meeting, and the Japanese at this time hold out their hands for a handshake. So, it’s better to stay on a handshake. Also remember that the Japanese culture does not involve direct contact, so a pat on the shoulder and wide embrace are inappropriate.

It’s obligatory to explore the potential partner by having a personal meeting with a representative of the company in conjunction with the direction of a formal business proposal. As a rule, such meetings take place with the help of a mediator, well known as to you yourself, and the Japanese company you are interested in. Potential partner to whom you refer in written or oral forms on the recommendation of the mediator will consider it as a duty to help you. Moreover, the degree of sense of duty will be directly proportional to the degree of dependence on the intermediary. The mediator will expect compensation in one form or another, in the form of counter services, and materially.

When European businessman comes into contact with the Japanese, we must remember that there are three «no» in Japanese business ethics. It is impossible to come to the meeting without business cards, we must have materials about the company and its offer, and you can not deviate from the protocol in the clothing and appearance.

One of the key elements of business culture is business cards. For the Japanese, they do not only carry a certain amount of information. Any business acquaintance with representatives of Japanese business begins
with a mandatory exchange of business cards, so it is always necessary to have sufficient amount of business cards because if in response to the proposed Japanese card you do not give yours, it may be confused and even offended for a Japanese businessman. In addition, the Japanese have a very selective approach to whom, how and when to pass on their business card. Speaking of gear – take a card (and pass it). Use both hands as if leaning forward slightly. Exchanging business cards occurs at the very beginning of the meeting, the Japanese were able to find out their position in society relative to partners. When Japanese receives your card, at first thing the Japanese looks at what company you work for and what position you have. It will determine the status of your company in relation to their own company, and your own job status, and choose a basic strategy.

The second key element of the business culture of Japan may sound like a commandment which sounds like “never come into contact with a Japanese businessman, if you don’t have a pile of documents and materials about your company with you”. That is, when preparing to enter the Japanese company, you should start with yourself – make the maximum possible documentation. You must have a showcase of the company or at least a description, a detailed presentation of the proposed project or transaction analysis of the industry, etc. tactical purposes to the first meeting and you cannot prepare specific proposals on the amount of the transaction or project, but a clear ownership of these issues is mandatory for those who come in contact with a Japanese firm. Any delay in response to the financial issues can seriously alert your partners. If you want the meeting to be successful, don’t use the tactic where you just meet with your partner to find out what they want, be ready to tell about your company first.

During the conversation, you need to pay special attention to the fact that the Japanese “yes” does not always mean consent. This follows from the grammar of Japanese. For example, if you ask the question “Would you like a cup of tea?” and answer to it – “No, I do not want”, the Japanese are likely to answer “yes”. In addition, during the meeting, the Japanese have a habit of saying “yes”, just to show you that you continue to listen. Therefore, it is important at this point to pay special attention. By the way, the words “wakarimashita” (I understand), the Japanese express more agreement with you, rather than just the word “hai” (yes).

The Japanese are very polite in business negotiations, and often cannot firmly say “no” to your arguments, if they are not satisfied for any
reason. They avoid the collision, and, in extreme cases, may even refer to poor health, to avoid conflict. According to the Japanese, a good partner is not the one who stands firm on his own, but one that may compromise for the sake of the general welfare.

Given the peculiarities of the Japanese national is quite difficult to get used to the western way of negotiation, when all participants express their opinions clearly, without equivocation, even if it does not coincide with the opinion of the opponent. Japanese style of negotiation is in the nature of friendly conversation, whose members seek to come to a compromise, which prepare the ground in advance.

This training is called “nemawashi” (literally “digging roots”). The phenomenon of “nemawashi” in the business environment is very important for the Japanese. In other countries there are similar practices preconditioning, for example, in the U.S. there is a phenomenon, called the “digging shovel” which is used to work with influential persons responsible for making important decisions, as well as with the opposition parties. In European countries, “underhanded maneuvers” are also presented, but perhaps in no other country in the world there is no a clear system of precondition terms. The tactic “digging roots” plays a dominant role in a business world. Another distinctive point is the following: the Japanese are trying to spend the majority of solutions to be discussed at the meetings, as being in the public eyes people often hesitate to express their opinion, especially if it goes against the majority opinion. Due to differences in social norms in Japan and the West, activities “digging roots” is perceived by many Western businessmen as deceit, fraud and lobbying, but they do not realize that in Japan you can not do business without “probing the soil”, because it is a common practice that helps to achieve a high position and go ahead in a career.

Finally, a business suit. Desire to standardize, desire not to stand out is a characteristic of the Japanese national character, clothing is very noticeable. The style of the clothes and appearance in the Japanese business world are very conservative. Likely to comply with certain rules of dress is recognized as belonging to the same business community, the circle of people with whom “can be dealt with”. Upon contact with Japanese businessmen suit and tie are required, but the tie can be the most radical and colors, if the suit is strict – it will not cause much surprise. Clothes should be clean, especially shoes. In Japan 99 % of the company's employees go to work in the black lacquered shoes. However, if you have
clean clothes on a little wrinkled, in Japan it will not cause conviction which means you “burn at work”.

Japanese pay great attention not only to business relationships with business partners, but also to maintain informal relations. If you are invited for dinner, you need to follow a few simple rules. First, pay attention to your appearance. Second, learn some rules of etiquette. For example, you need to monitor constantly the fullness of glasses of your partners, as well as offer them to try dishes. Third, you must be attentive to your partners, and they are ready to discuss any problem, because for the Japanese, casual atmosphere is a chance to discuss the urgent problem further. The Japanese are good to gifts. A person, who has received a gift, be sure to answer the same to your partner. It is not necessary to give the Japanese a precious gift, not to put them in a difficult position. In addition, it is better not to unpack gifts in the presence of the giver not to put him in an awkward position. Giving flowers to Japanese guests is also not recommended if you are not sure of the need for such a gesture.

Deciding to work with serious representatives of Japanese business, European businessman should consider one more important detail. Japanese business community is much more politicized than the U.S. and European entrepreneurs. In Japan, business ties with politicians, their secretaries, officials and other people close to the authorities, developed tremendously.

Thus, the main difference between the Japanese business ethics is the influence of specific national culture, which is manifested in specific traditions and in particular business processes conservativeness.