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The Lowdown: Business Etiquette - Japan

by Rochelle Kopp, Pernille Rudlin

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12 Highlights

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 66

We'll answer questions such as "How do I tell if a yes is a yes?" and "How do I disagree without offending?"

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 143

You can try asking concrete, non-aggressive questions that get to the root of what the problem might be. For example, rather than saying "What's the problem for you with this?", ask "is the time schedule too short?" Avoid using "you" – and find ways to gently pry the negative information out of your counterparts.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 263

"Nice to meet you" is fine. If you want to say something in Japanese, a typical greeting is yoroshiku onegai shimasu: literally "please be nice to me."

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 313

Q: And what is nemawashi? A: It's a kind of consensus-based decision-making, where all possible stakeholders are consulted about a decision, usually in a very informal way to start with. Through this process, a consensus slowly emerges. It can take a lot of time, but implementation is usually quite quick, because all the stakeholders know the decision is in the pipeline, so are prepared for it, and also feel a certain amount of "buy

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 320

Japanese people are great ones for "pre-meetings" or "off-mi," meaning offline meetings. The first meeting you have may well just be a preliminary, getting-to-know-you meeting. Then there will be another meeting among the Japanese participants to swap impressions. Then you might be invited back for more in-depth discussions, probably with the people who are more directly involved in working with you.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 327

Is there no way I can at least get some sense of whether they are positive or negative about my proposals?
A: You can tell if there is a positive atmosphere when there are lots of interested questions.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 334

You can get some sense of their views if you try less direct questions, such as “do you have any comment on this?” or “or is there anything else that we need to talk about?” or “do you have any advice on this?”

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 387

With group dishes, there will be a common dish in the center of the table that everyone takes from. When taking things from this dish, turn your chopsticks around and use the opposite end – that is, the end you aren’t putting in your mouth.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 484

The Shinto religion evolved in Japan before Buddhism – it’s an animistic religion, worshipping spirits in the environment, centered on conducting rituals and making offerings to placate those spirits.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 488

If anything does get contaminated – for example by death, or blood – then various rituals have to be undertaken to purify the person or the area that was contaminated. Often salt is used – you’ll have seen sumo wrestlers throw salt around to purify the arena, and sometimes you see little piles of salt at the entrance to houses. People use salt to purify themselves if they have been to a funeral, for example, before entering the house.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 510

Often Japanese people are so concerned not to cause meiwaku (annoyance to others), or are so busy wondering what other people are thinking or wanting, that they do not say what they want for themselves. If you can second guess this, and offer them a drink when you think they might be thirsty, or sense that someone needs a break because they are tired, your sensitivity and consideration will certainly be noticed. And, as with the Buddhist concept of karma, “what goes around comes around” – and you will find yourself being treated even better in return.

Highlight (Yellow) | Location 713

She has written or contributed to several books on Japanese business and management, including Encyclopedia of Japanese Business and Management, A History of Mitsubishi Corporation in London: 1915 to present day, Kaisha no Naka no Gaikokujin (Foreigners in the Japanese Corporation) and Business Communication.
