

25 TIPS ON... DOING BUSINESS IN CHINA

1 READ

Read about China. Voraciously. Not just any of the many Western books (though Henry Kissinger's *China* is not a bad place to start) but also the old Chinese classics such as *The Journey West*.

2 GO

Take a trip there before you do business there. Ensure you have an extra day at the beginning to see the sights, not just to appreciate them as a tourist but so you can speak about the history with respect. Basically, show you are interested in China and the Chinese will be interested in you.

3 SPEAK

A little language goes a long way. You don't have to speak Chinese but a few well-placed words and phrases will go a long way to getting you off on the right foot.

4 SAVE

Don't choose the usual airlines. Better prices and higher comfort are offered by the companies such as Hainan, China Southern (partnering with KLM), Turkish airlines and the like. Transiting through a hub may add a few hours but will save you £000s!

5 SHARE

Tell your Chinese hosts how you got a great deal on the flights. It'll demonstrate that you take money seriously and start your positioning as a negotiator (see below).

6 SLEEP

Don't stay at the most expensive hotels. Going 'down a notch' might seem like a dangerous step into the unknown but choosing a cheaper hotel – ideally one recommended by your Chinese friends – will give three bonuses: You will save money, you'll show you know the value of money and your experience of China will be enhanced.

7 EXPLORE

Go to 2nd and 3rd Tier cities. There are scores of cities in China that have populations of over a million people that you will never have heard of. Go to some. They will blow your mind from the high-tech architecture to the high-end shopping malls and spending.

8 GIVE

Take gifts. The Chinese are big on gifts. They should not be big but they should be personal and appropriate. The giving of gifts is about building relationships, not influence. Ideally something from

your country or, even better, from your region, city or town that can only be obtained there and not in China. It shows you have thought about it and that you care.

9 TIME

Watch out for the holidays. Don't go straight before, during or immediately after the main Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) or the 1st May National holiday. No one is there and, if they are, they are on their way somewhere else!

10 HAGGLE

Learn the Chinese negotiation style. It's not based on anything you learn in Western management books. You need an insider to explain it, including the 'murder with a borrowed knife' tactic of asking difficult questions by using someone else to do it for you.

11 FOCUS

Go niche. Remember that a small market segment in the West could be multiplied a hundred times over in China. Focusing on one city area such as Chengdu and Chongqing opens up a 100 million market!

12 EAT

Chinese food is rich in flavour and complexity and you don't have to eat dog or donkey – though these remain on the menu in isolated places. Being open to the food allows you to socialise with your Chinese hosts and build relationships, which can remain for years into the future.

13 DRINK

The tales of baijiu (white spirit alcohol) drinking can be the stuff of legends. Don't get caught out over the expectation to drink with the Chinese (whether you are male or female). You will be expected to at least try. The drinking is only to build relationships and you'd better be there bright and breezy the following morning for the meeting and be prepared to enter into some hard negotiations as well as hard drinking.

14 BANK

Get a Chinese bank account. Clearly, if you don't plan on going there often, this isn't going to help but, if you are, having a Chinese bank account opens up a wider perspective on China that is worth the pain. You will be able to pay for most things including meals much more easily and it has significant 'credibility points' as it shows you are there for the long term.



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15 WECHAT

Get this multidimensional app and your life will never be the same again. It's a Chinese version of WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook and all other social media wrapped into a banking and money transfer system all in one. With over 760 million users in China, it allows you to send voice and video messages, make free voice and video calls from anywhere in the world, as well as send money, pay for things and many other functions.

16 'APPYNESS'

In addition to WeChat, check out such essential additional apps as Offo or Mobike (bike sharing) or others (only in Chinese unfortunately) for finding and booking the best or most popular restaurants, or taxis or travel.

17 PHONE

Get a local (pay as you go) Chinese phone. This will open up an instant-access channel, which will cost little and encourage locals to phone you at the lowest cost. International phones eat money and so do international calls (unless you are using WeChat – see above).

18 WIFI

Get your own local WiFi 'Hot spot' and your costs for using the internet will plummet. The downside of China is that you can't access many international sites and certainly all things Google are banned so 'to Google' is not a verb in China but a dream.

19 FACEBOOK

Forget it. Its banned in China so don't expect to be able to send all your favourite photos to the folks back home.

20 TWEETING

Nope. That's banned too (except if you link your LinkedIn account to Twitter when you are out of China, then it can automatically post while you are there).

21 SOCIALISE

Since you won't be spending your spare time on the Western social networks, use it to speak to people. The Chinese are very sociable and hospitable so, if you get an invite from them (clearly the ones you know and trust), accept it. These experiences will pay dividends in building your understanding of all things Chinese.

22 FACE

The notion of 'face' in China is an art form in its own right. The basic concept is of showing respect and giving or receiving face is an essential element of getting on in China. A good start is to use both hands when handing over your business card with a slight bow and receive theirs in the same manner. Then treat it like it is part of them. NEVER write on it or throw it on the table or stuff it in a pocket. You will cause instant loss of 'face' from which you will never recover.

23 BALANCE

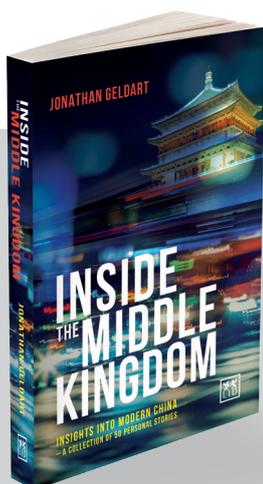
The Chinese are highly skilled at achieving balance in all things. It's about the basic notion of Yin and Yang, the universe in harmony and the like. Also, the Chinese have an extraordinary ability to hold two seemingly opposing ideas or concepts in their heads at the same time, take their dislike of spending one extra cent on an apple but the next minute spend thousands on acquiring a luxury brand.

24 PATIENCE

It can take a long time to build trust, and no more so than in China, but it is worth it. Once trust is built then you will find doors open and things happen with lightning speed where before it seemed that nothing ever got done.

25 SELF

Be it. The Chinese can smell insincerity at a thousand paces and will read between the lines of your comments and actions even when there are no lines to read between, so be true to yourself and the Chinese will respect you for it and forgive you too.



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