

Unit 9 Part 2 of an Interview with a professional conference and meeting planner:

Scott (from the university): Derek we have been speaking about event planning in general up to now. What about overseas meetings? For instance many global corporations now do business in China. What considerations would you include in meeting with a Chinese client?

Derek (a professional conference and meeting planner):

Well for one thing, I would dress conservatively, make no hand gestures, and make sure I had my business card printed in both Chinese characters on one side and English on the other. The Chinese really expect you to have a business card only carried in a special card case showing that you value the relationship. Then I would present it with both hands as that is the culturally accepted norm. I would be patient and establish a relationship with the clients first. This could take months. By the way if you want an appointment with the Chinese, make sure to get it months in advance of the actual meeting and then arrive early or on time, never late.

Since the eldest member of an entourage is venerated in Chinese culture, they will be the lead person and you should make sure that if you are young, to have an older person with rank and experience from your company be the spokesperson for the group. Address their meeting members using formal titles. Make sure you bring extra copies of all documents with you for the meeting; don't just rely on portable drives or disks.

Scott: Derek, what about gifts for the Chinese?

Derek: If you want to bring them a gift the safest bet is probably just hosting a banquet for them. Second to this is probably a great pen (but not in white, blue, or black as these are colors denoting death).

Scott: What about having women in meetings, what accommodations should be made by western business women?

Derek: Well certainly no alluring or revealing clothing of any kind — a blouse with a neckline that comes to the base of the neck, no high heels, long sleeves, simple hair style, limited makeup, and no bright colors — neutral colors — beige is a safe color.

Scott: If you take them out to a banquet what about the etiquette there?

Derek: If you host a banquet for them do not under any circumstances discuss business. Just think of the experience as an opportunity to build a relationship with the client. Make sure to taste everything but do not clean your plate at any point, as this indicated to the Chinese that you are still hungry and they will keep bringing you more.

Oh, and any women from the West [Western Hemisphere] should not drink anything during the meal, it is not customary. Tipping is not the norm yet, so I would probably steer away from that. Also, if you have to use chopsticks, don't drop them as that is bad luck according to the Chinese.

Scott: Thanks for all the useful advice Derek! We appreciate your sharing your expertise with us today.