

International HR Best Practices Tip of the Month

December 2008

This Month's Challenge

When doing business abroad, not knowing the local customs can lead to serious embarrassment.

Best Practice Tip of the Month

A little preparation can prevent a lot of trouble. Get to know the local customs before embarking for an international business meeting.

When stepping into a foreign country, be sure to start on the right foot.

Doing business globally requires more than compliance with legal mandates. Knowledge of local customs is also critical, especially when making a first impression.

As 2008 draws to a close (none too soon), and we all look forward to greeting the New Year, we offer some tips on how to say hello in countries around the world.

With best wishes from the International Labor Group.

Country	Handshake	Hugs and Kisses	Business Cards	Gestures/ Physical Space	Eye Contact
EUROPE					
UK	A handshake is the most appropriate greeting.	Generally no kissing or hugging.	Customs similar to U.S.	Avoid excessive hand gestures and displays of emotion.	Direct eye contact is common and acceptable, but don't be too intense.

Country	Handshake	Hugs and Kisses	Business Cards	Gestures/ Physical Space	Eye Contact
France	A handshake is the most appropriate greeting and farewell. However, handshakes are not as firm as in the U.S. or Germany.	In social settings, friends do <i>les bises</i> (touching cheeks and air-kissing).	Cards should be printed in English on one side and French on the other. Business cards received should be treated with respect.	The U.S. sign for ok means zero in France.	Direct eye contact is common and acceptable, and sometimes intense.

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	In a business context with foreigners, a handshake is the most appropriate greeting.	Generally no kissing or hugging.	Customs similar to U.S.	Always use the right hand. The thumbs up gesture is offensive throughout the Arab world.	Direct eye contact is common and expected.

<p>In a business context with foreigners, a handshake is the most appropriate greeting; however, it may feel a bit more like a hand-hold.</p> <p>Women should follow their host's lead.</p> <p>Also, wait for the host's lead when greeting women.</p>	<p>Many Saudi men accompany their greetings with an embrace and cheek kissing.</p> <p>However, visitors who are not established close friends should not make physical contact except to shake hands.</p>	<p>Cards should have English on one side and Arabic on the other.</p> <p>Always receive cards with the right hand.</p>	<p>Always use the right hand.</p> <p>The thumbs up gesture is offensive throughout the Arab world.</p>	<p>Direct eye contact is common and expected.</p>
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	Handshake	Hugs and Kisses	Business Cards	Gestures/ Physical Space	Eye Contact
	<p>In a business context with foreigners, a handshake is the most appropriate greeting; however, it may feel a bit more like a hand-hold. Women should follow their host's lead. Also, wait for the host's lead when greeting women.</p>	<p>Men in Egypt tend to be more touch-oriented, thus a handshake may be accompanied by a gentle touching of the elbow with the other hand.</p>	<p>Cards should have English on one side and Arabic on the other. Always receive cards with the right hand and make a point of studying it before putting it away.</p>	<p>Always use the right hand. The thumbs up gesture is offensive throughout the Arab world.</p>	<p>Direct eye contact between men is common, and sometime even inter. It is considere a sign of honesty a sincerity.</p>

	<p>A handshake is the most appropriate greeting. However, a person may continue to hold the hand during the ensuing small talk.</p> <p>Women should follow their host's lead.</p> <p>Also, wait for the host's lead when greeting women.</p>	<p>Algerians may give each other a kiss on the cheek but only for friends and family.</p>	<p>Always give or receive business cards with the right hand.</p> <p>It is a good idea to have them translated into Arabic or French.</p>	<p>Always use the right hand. The thumbs up gesture is offensive throughout the Arab world.</p>	<p>Direct eye contact between men is common; however prolonged direct eye contact is acceptable between men and women.</p>
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	<p>A handshake is now customary, but a nod of the head or a slight bow is sufficient.</p> <p>Neither should include too much direct eye contact.</p>	<p>Definitely No.</p>	<p>Cards should be printed in English on one side and Chinese on the other.</p> <p>Present card with both hands and accept it using both hands to show respect.</p>	<p>Public displays of affection are not common.</p> <p>Personal space is smaller.</p> <p>Pointing should be done with an open hand.</p> <p>Beckoning should be done with the open palm facing downward with the fingers moving back and forth in a curling motion.</p>	<p>Prolonged direct eye contact consider impolite even intimidating</p>

	<p>Bowing is traditional, but a handshake with a light grip accompanied by a slight bow is a good show of respect for traditional custom.</p> <p>Avoid too much direct eye contact.</p> <p>The person of lower rank bows first; a formal bow is 30 degrees, an informal bow is 15 degrees.</p>	<p>Definitely No.</p>	<p>Cards should be printed in English on one side and Japanese on the other.</p> <p>Present card with both hands and accept it using both hands to show respect.</p>	<p>Standing with your hands in your pockets may be considered rude.</p> <p>Overly demonstrative behavior should be avoided.</p> <p>Pointing should be done with an open hand.</p> <p>Beckoning should be done with the open palm facing downward with the fingers moving back and forth in a curling motion.</p>	<p>Prolonged direct eye contact is considered impolite even intimidating.</p>
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	<p>Bowing is traditional, but a handshake with a light grip accompanied by a slight bow is a good show of respect for traditional customs.</p> <p>Women usually do not shake hands, especially with men, but usually just nod slightly.</p> <p>The senior person offers to shake hands first, but the junior person bows first.</p>	<p>Definitely No.</p>	<p>Cards should be traded respectfully.</p> <p>Keeping it on the table in front of one is a sign of respect.</p>	<p>Pointing should be done with an open hand.</p> <p>Beckoning should be done with the open palm facing downward with the fingers moving back and forth in a curling motion.</p>	<p>Prolonged direct eye contact consider impolite even intimidating</p>
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	<p>The handshake has become the customary form of greeting, but without too much direct eye contact.</p>	<p>Definitely No.</p>	<p>Cards should be traded respectfully, keeping it on the table in front of one is a sign of respect, but do not scrutinize it in the presence of the other person.</p>	<p>Avoid loud boisterous behavior. Pointing should be done with an open hand. Beckoning should be done with the open palm facing downward with the fingers moving back and forth in a curling motion.</p>	<p>Prolonged direct eye contact is considered impolite and even intimidating.</p>
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	<p>The handshake has become the customary form of greeting in westernized urban settings, but there are also the customary forms of greeting among Hindi, Muslims, and Sikhs.</p> <p>When shaking hands with a woman, wait for her initiative.</p> <p>If she does not offer her hand, use the traditional greeting, which is used between Indians:</p> <p>hold the palms of both hands together under the chin, smile, bow slightly and say Namaste.</p>	<p>No, especially between a man and a woman.</p> <p>Indian culture is fairly conservative about physical contact.</p>	<p>Business cards only in English are fine and are normally handed out at the beginning of the meeting, taken with the right hand, and put respectfully in the pocket.</p> <p>However, be sure that there are enough for everyone present.</p>	<p>Standing with your hands on your hips is considered an aggressive posture.</p>	<p>Prolonged direct eye contact is considered impolite and even intimidating.</p>

	A handshake is the most appropriate greeting.	Close male friends will shake hands and/or embrace each other. Close female friends will kiss each other.	Cards should be in English on one side and Spanish on the other. No formal ritual.	People converse with each other at a much closer distance and may maintain physical contact while conversing.	Maintaining eye contact is important.
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	<p>A handshake is the most appropriate greeting.</p>	<p>Generally no kissing and hugging, but touching of shoulders, backs, and elbows is fairly common.</p>	<p>Cards should be in English on one side and Portuguese on the other. No formal ritual.</p>	<p>People converse with each other at a much closer distance and may maintain physical contact while conversing. The ok sign is considered vulgar.</p>	<p>Maintaining eye contact is important.</p>
	<p>A handshake is the most appropriate greeting.</p>	<p>Generally no kissing and hugging.</p>	<p>Cards should be in English on one side and Spanish on the other. No formal ritual.</p>	<p>People converse with each other at a much closer distance.</p>	<p>Maintaining eye contact is important.</p>

	<p>A handsake is the most appropriate greeting.</p>	<p><i>Abrazos</i> (embrace) is common between good male friends, while female friends hug and kiss each other on both cheeks.</p>	<p>Cards should be in English on one side and Spanish on the other. No formal ritual.</p>	<p>People converse with each other at a much closer distance and may maintain physical contact while conversing.</p>	<p>Maintainin eye contac shows interest ar sincerity.</p>
	<p>A handshake is the most appropriate greeting.</p>	<p><i>Abrazos</i> (embrace) is common between good male friends, and women friends may give each other a kiss on the cheek. However, touching of arms and shoulders while conversing is common.</p>	<p>Cards should be in English on one side and Spanish on the other. No formal ritual.</p>	<p>People converse with each other at a much closer distance and may maintain physical contact while conversing.</p>	<p>Maintainin eye contac is importan</p>

	<p>A handshake is the most appropriate greeting; however, wait for the woman to offer her hand first.</p>	<p><i>Abrazos</i> (embrace) is common between good male friends, and women friends may give each other a kiss on the cheek.</p>	<p>Cards should be in English on one side and Spanish on the other. No formal ritual.</p>	<p>People converse with each other at a much closer distance and may maintain physical contact while conversing.</p>	<p><i>Not making eye contact</i> may be a sign of respect.</p>
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