Greetings / Gestures

- common in most countries: handshake
- don’t pull your hand away if an Arab businessman walking with you takes your hand and holds it as you go. It’s a sign of friendship
- kisses or embraces are common in Latin America and Southern Europe
- in some countries of the Middle East you have to get your shoes off before entering your hosts home
- In Paraguay the guest usually greets the host with a short, formal speech and asks permission to enter
- The left hand:
  - in most countries of the Middle East and Asia when you may have to eat with your hands, don’t use the left one or even touch food with the left hand!
- Punctuality:
  - in Germany it’s more important than in any other country
  - in England you may be ten minutes too late but never be too early!
  - only taken seriously when attending a bullfight in Spain and Peru

Do‘s and Taboos Around the World

Source: DO’S AND TABOOS AROUND THE WORLD
BY ROGER AXTELL
Presented by Marcus Linhard

Prof. Dr. Waldemar Pelz
International Management and Marketing
THM Business School
and
Institut für Management-Innovation
Gifts (1)

- white lilies suggest death in Britain
- dahlias and chrysanthemums are associated with death in Spain
- in Brazil send flowers the next day, attention: purple flowers are a sign of death
- unwrap flowers in the entrance hall, don’t take 13 or an even number of flowers, no red roses in Germany
- business gifts are not common in Ireland
- don’t offer gifts to government officials in Zambia
- In Uruguay it’s usual to send gifts before visiting
- presenting a knife to a Japanese is symbolically suggesting suicide

Gifts (2)

- be careful about admiring your host’s watch..., Arab businessmen are often very magnanimous - Don’t refuse gifts!

In the Arab countries do not admire an object openly. You may be the recipient of it
Eating / Drinking (1)

- In Chinese cultures you have to say no without saying it
  - bad manners for the host not to keep filling your dish
  - and for you not to keep eating as long as your dish is full
  - non-win-situation
- In Egypt it’s impolite to eat everything on the plate
- never smoke before the Loyal Toast (toast at Her Majesty’s health) at a formal dinner in Great Britain
- no shoptalk over drinks and dinner (as soon as the day is done so is business) in Britain
- don’t ask for alcoholic drinks in the Middle East (in some countries alcohol is prohibited)

Eating / Drinking (2)

- toasting in Sweden:
  - never toast your host until he does
  - never touch your drink until the host has said „skoal“
  - skoal: move the glass form the waistline to the eyes, look the other person directly in the eyes, say „skoal“, drink, make a wave of the glass towards you hosts eyes and bring it back down on the table
- in Zambia the guest should ask for food because it’s impolite for the host to offer food first
- refusing meal twice before accepting it in Jordan is customary
Misunderstandings

- midwestern executive asked his Peruvian manager to send him the factory and office headcount broken down by sex. The reply: “249 in factory, 30 in office, 3 on sick leave, none broken down by sex - our problem is with alcohol.”
- “thinking is in parallel” means for Americans agreeing, his Japanese partner looked in the dictionary which said “parallel - two lines that never touch”
- American manager wanted to make a compliment to the short trousers of an Englishman calling them “knickers” instead of “plus fours”. He turned crimson because in GB “knickers” are ladies’ underpants.
- when an Englishman says that the project will be finished “at the end of the day” that means it will be done when it’s done

Tips (1)

- England, Scotland and Wales:
  - avoid the word „English“, use „British“
  - the Scotch is what you drink -> Scots or Scotsmen
- Ireland:
  - offer your host to pay for a phone call
- Russia:
  - don’t export art objects
  - don’t change money with private citizens
  - never drop anything in the street
- Also in Singapore streets and other places are kept wonderfully clean -> don’t drop cigarette butt...
- never touch a persons head in Thailand
Tips (2)

- South Korea
  - blowing your nose in front of others is considered bad manners
  - women are not very liberated
    - men go through doors first
    - women help men with their coats
- Don’t talk about the Persian Gulf in the Middle East, it's the Arabian Gulf!
- In Saudi Arabia women are forbidden to drive cars or ride bicycles
- in Pakistan most businesses are closed on Fridays
- Don’t discuss about Argentina in Brazil
- Colombians like discussions about black Colombian coffee before any business is transacted

Tips (3)

- In Haiti at 8 A.M. and 6 P.M. a bagle is played and a flag raised: stop and stand respectfully
- Americans often use baseball expressions in business
- Body language: the finger-circle
  - America: okay
  - Germany / Brazil: considered vulgar or obscene
    - so happened in Brazil where an American gave the okay sign because of concluding a sale -> caused sudden silence and deep freeze
- Greece / Russia: impolite
- Japan: money
- southern France: zero or worthless

How do other people perceive your behaviour?
Do a 360°Degree Feedback; see: www.360-grad-feedback.net