

# Global Protocol

## Embracing differences to do business



### Case Study - Background & Introduction

Working in the global business market can be exciting. You may have the opportunity to travel to other countries, or work with colleagues who live overseas. Although you may be excited to get to your meeting or jump on the plane, it is essential that you take time to better understand the protocol of their country so you can do your best to connect with them and start your business dealings off on the right foot.

If you've ever met someone from another country, you might notice they do things in a slightly different way. Greetings and introductions can vary significantly from country to country. Business dealings in the United States may start with a handshake, while in Asian countries they may begin with a slight bow and presentation of business cards, or in European countries they may begin with an embrace and a kiss on each cheek.



Protocol is what we call the rules for international politeness in a given country. Similar to etiquette, knowing proper protocol for the country you are doing business with helps to bridge the cultural gaps. In most cases following protocol serves to show you will respect your



colleagues and it opens up the doors to strong business dealings. However, there are some times where knowing protocol can help keep you from offending your colleagues. Hand gestures like "thumbs-up" or "a-ok" have offensive meanings in some cultures, and things like showing the bottoms of your feet or eating with your left hand might make your colleagues uncomfortable.

Protocol can also prepare you for unusual situations. In Japan it is customary to remove your shoes in many buildings. Although they may supply you with slippers, you will want to make sure to wear socks with no holes, or get a pedicure before traveling so that you aren't embarrassed to take off your shoes!



Gaining a better understanding of the language and culture of a community can lead to stronger business relationships. In some cultures it is essential to take time to connect with clients in order to establish trust in business dealings. This may mean it is customary to have a meal together before signing a contract.

Additionally, you may want to manage your own expectations as some cultures like to begin events or meeting promptly, with people showing up early, while in other cultures it is normal to start a meeting much later than the listed time. Some businesses will have a more casual atmosphere while others will be more formal, and there are cultural influences for this as well.



## References

---

<http://www.globalnegotiator.com/international-trade/dictionary/international-business-protocol/>  
<http://www.examiner.com/article/what-does-protocol-mean-to-me-today-s-business-world>  
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/cultural-faux-pas-body-language.htm>

