

## CULTURAL TIPS FOR CHINESE NATIONALS



You will encounter many foreigners if you are contracted with Trainor or with one of our clients. Many of these foreigners will find China fascinating but they will also find many differences from their home countries. Some of these differences are difficult for the foreign people to accept – or it might be difficult for them to adjust to. Many Chinese habits and behaviors would be considered very offensive, and maybe disgusting to the foreigner in their own country. Some behavior of the foreign people may also be offensive to Chinese people even though they are not aware of it. You will sometimes have the opportunity to modify some of your habits slightly to make the foreigner feel more comfortable, without causing yourself or your colleagues too much inconvenience.

Some of the most common habits that foreigners find offensive are : spitting and hacking. They will invariably find this habit terrible and will never get accustomed to it. Most foreigners who are educated, are taught as children not to chew food (eat) with their mouth open. People who eat with their mouth open, or those who make loud noise and slurping while they are eating, are considered poorly educated (*Loong Min*). The same applies to picking or cleaning your nose in public. Try to avoid these habits when around your foreign guests and colleagues. This is especially true of managers or potential clients. They may consider you to be an embarrassment and may exclude you from being invited or included in a business function due to such behavior. This may affect your business and level of success with that person so you should take this advice seriously.

In general, foreign people are more private about their personal and financial situations, so you should approach such conversation and questions with care, and try not to be too direct for example asking how much a person earns. Instead, ask what the ‘average person’ earns in their country.

Some foreigners may also be unaware of certain Chinese customs. When a foreigner accepts your business Card, they may accept with one hand only. In the West, this is quite an acceptable and polite way. You may help foreigners sometimes while chatting, to inform them of such things to help them get used to the local customs. They may also not understand what the normal procedure is for eating during a Banquet or other Chinese meal in a restaurant. Again, you can take the lead and explain what the protocol is i.e. “Please, you are our guest, so you should go first....” Many foreigners also can not use Chop Sticks very well so you can try to teach them, or maybe you can ask the restaurant staff to provide a Knife and Fork for your foreign guests when necessary.

Foreigners may not always understand the customs when you go out to a restaurant especially about paying the bill. Many foreigners will assume you will ‘Go Dutch’ when paying a bill which means you pay for your own share only. This may be embarrassing if the foreigner has invited you and or maybe a large group of people, to go out for dinner in a restaurant. You may be able to discreetly check with the foreign guest that he or she understands the consequence of inviting people or being invited to go to a restaurant, especially if there are to be a larger number of people in the party.

Most foreigners will quickly learn these customs though there may be times where you find yourself in an embarrassing situation, so try to work out a friendly solution if this does happen, and explain to the foreigners what the normal custom so they don’t make the same mistake in the future. Just remember to keep things in perspective and don’t get too concerned when things aren’t perfect.