

of doing business as by the content, it pays to be patient and to remain flexible.

From time to time, there may be quiet periods when nobody speaks. This does not indicate indifference and this silence should not be broken by off the cuff remarks or jokes among yourselves. Take your time and adjust to the situation. Decisions in Japan are reached by consensus and by precedent and once a decision is made, this bond is binding. Therefore, you should be well prepared in every way. Have all your company facts and figures ready. Be sure you have clearance for any samples you are bringing. Be alert to follow up on any interest shown.

As matters progress, you will be sure to enjoy typical hospitality and to be well looked after by your Japanese business associates. But do not expect to be invited into a Japanese home as this is rarely done.

While the Japanese do not expect foreigners to understand the finer points of their etiquette, they appreciate it if you make an effort. For example, it is not correct to walk on the straw matting (tatami) in a Japanese restaurant or home in shoes or slippers, so you should remove them when entering.

Most Japanese meals are composed of a series of small dishes. Naturally, it is polite to eat what is offered but hosts are understanding if their foreign guests decline a particular dish.

Japanese do not generally believe in discussing business over lunch or dinner. Business matters should not be raised during a meal unless the Japanese businessmen first encourage you to do so. Business breakfasts are definitely out as many Japanese live some distance from the business core of the city.

It is not always necessary that you reciprocate hospitality at the time but it is important that you extend warm thanks then and later when you meet or correspond. If your Japanese contact visits Canada, you will then have a chance to reciprocate. One meaningful way to say thank you is with good quality Canadian souvenirs or products taken with you to Japan. As you are allowed to take three bottles of liquor into Japan, you could include some top-quality Canadian whisky in your luggage.