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## V. JAPANESE BUSINESS AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS

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It is recognized that Japan is not an easy market to enter and you need all the assistance you can get.

With the help of the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo and the Canadian Consulate General in Osaka, you will be able to avoid calling on business prospects without a proper introduction. Japanese companies like to know ahead of time who you are and what organizations you represent. You will not necessarily meet with top management at first as middle management in Japan can recommend and initiate high-level decisions. Key decision makers come in at a later stage but may monitor all proceedings.

Decisions may be slow in Japan but their implementation is fast. You may decide to hire a Japanese representative to promote your company's interests after the preliminary meetings. Another option is to send a company representative to work out the details at a later date.

Language is likely to be the single largest problem you will encounter on your trip to Japan. You may experience difficulties locating someone who speaks fluent English or French. Knowledge of other foreign languages is also limited.

Be sure to have explicit instructions written in Japanese before you embark on any trip, either inside or outside the cities. Do not expect to get by with a few words of Japanese if the going gets tough. Japanese is a difficult language to use even in its elementary form. Because of its complexity and the consequent risk of being misunderstood, it is recommended that you do not speak Japanese in a business meeting unless you have a high degree of fluency. It is further suggested that you avoid the use of slang or jokes as a means of making a point during a serious business conversation.

Major Japanese firms with international dealings will invariably have English-speaking staff. It is advisable, however, to hire your own interpreter. This ensures that