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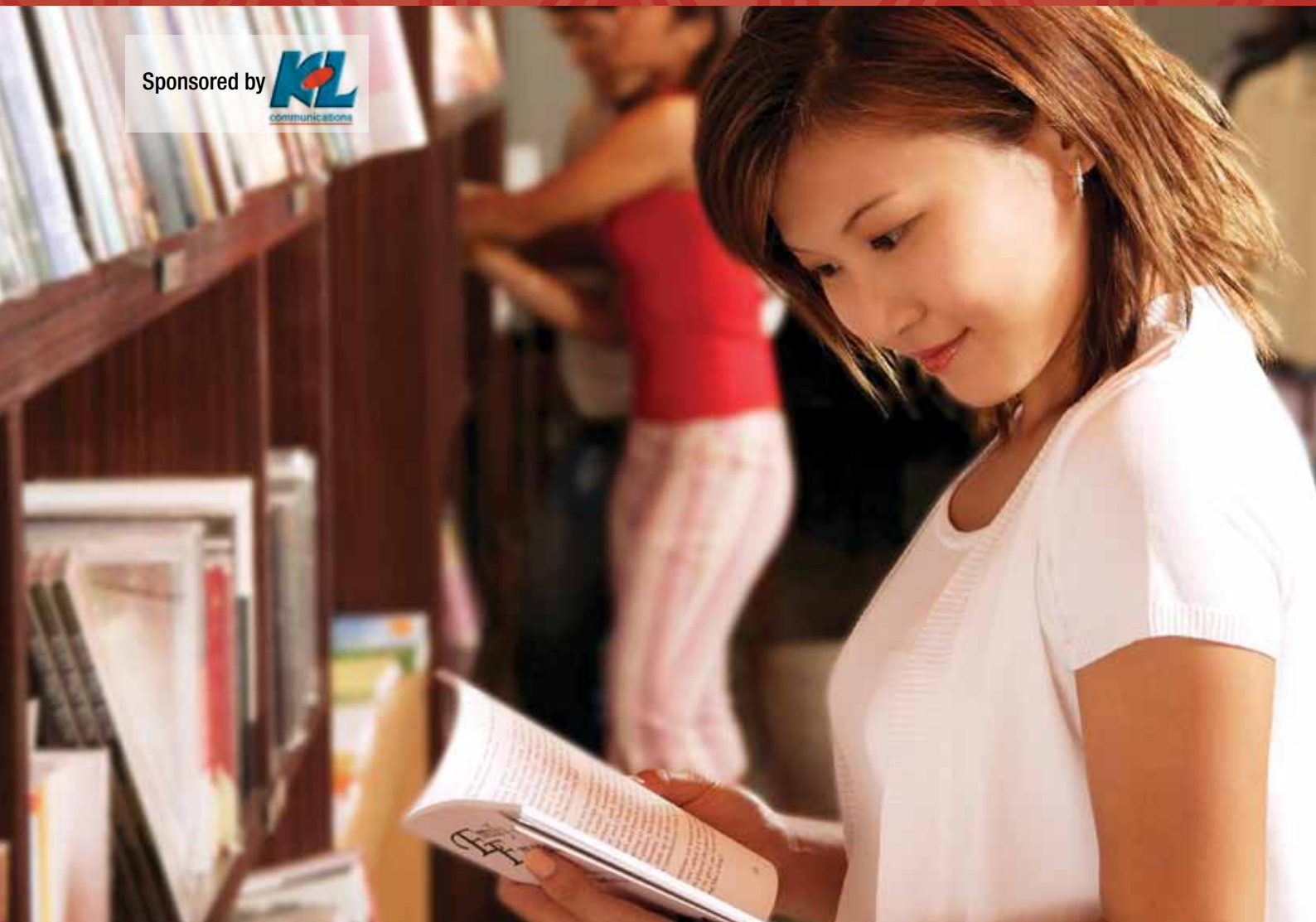
China Market Insight

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Trading with China

By Madeleine Sturrock, Managing Director, PanCathay Consulting Ltd



Madeleine Sturrock was Deputy CEO of the CBBC until she formed her own company, PanCathay Consulting Ltd (www.pancathay.com), which assists companies in China and the UK to access each other's markets. With husband Philip Sturrock, former Chairman of Continuum and Cassell, and Sonny Leong, former owner of Cavendish Publishing, she has established the Publishing Partnership (www.thepublishingpartnership.com) to assist Chinese publishers in the formulation of their international growth strategies.

Before we consider how business culture will influence the way you'll work in China, it's crucial to understand two fundamental points.

If there's one characteristic which is key to understanding how Chinese business culture works, it is *guanxi*, or relationships. The Chinese have a much more structured and sophisticated sense of their place in a network of relationships than we do. We have networks in our own lives but we're not so assiduous at keeping them up or making use of them in different ways for different situations. A Chinese person has a whole network of relationships, built up almost from birth. Chinese culture is based on relationships. Even now, it's often who you know, not what you know, that brings success. To do business in China effectively, you need to pay attention to the relationships you're building – they will help you get things done. Take your relationships seriously and you'll be given generous assistance. But be sure to fully understand the motivation of those doing business with you, as relationships bring with them an obligation to reciprocate.

The other characteristic to bear in mind is Face. Chinese people are polite and hospitable. They will treat you with courtesy and kindness. English society is also fairly polite but we are rather thick-skinned about criticism. This is where the two cultures differ. The Chinese pay great attention to Face and don't like to lose face. Be careful what you say in public that might affect your host's standing or position.

BUSINESS CULTURE

Doing business in China is very different to the west. First, when you arrive for a meeting, you'll probably be faced by several people, maybe from different departments, whereas you're likely to be travelling alone or with just one colleague or

an interpreter. Don't be put off. Your hosts will be very keen to hear what you have to say. Second, notwithstanding the terrible traffic in some Chinese cities, your meeting will probably take place on time: the Chinese are very punctual. The time of your meeting may also be pertinent. The Chinese eat early – generally between 11.30 and 12.30 for lunch and around 6pm for dinner. So if you've been invited to a meeting at, say, 11am, it's wise to ask what time the meeting might end otherwise you'll be trying to organize a further meeting before lunch (according to our western timetable) and find either that you've been invited to stay for lunch or that your intended second meeting cannot be fixed because they're all out for lunch.

It's advisable to have your name cards translated by a reputable agency which will choose an auspicious name for your company – you may be stuck with it for some time. You should have your name translated into something which works in Chinese (try to stick to three or four characters, despite how many are required for your full name). The Chinese are interested in your choice of name. If it has a meaning in English, translate that name. If it has a particular sound, find a Chinese word with a similar sound. But do check it out with your adviser – you can easily make an embarrassing mistake.

Chinese banquets are a whole story in themselves but it's good advice to watch your hosts and do as they do. There are, however, two key pieces of advice: you don't have to eat everything you are given (just leave it on your plate and it will disappear) and beware pungent, colourless alcohol – it's more lethal than it looks.

It's customary for your hosts to give you small gifts. You should reciprocate. I find taking inexpensive gifts which are representative of Britain and British culture go down well – CDs of British composers, picture books about the UK. First-day covers are also well received and light to pack.

与中国做生意

罗曼蒂 (Madeleine Sturrock) 在成立自己的公司磐华咨询 (PanCathay Consulting Ltd) (www.pancathay.com) 前, 曾一直是英中贸易协会的副首席执行官。磐华咨询旨在帮助中国和英国的公司进入彼此市场。她与丈夫菲利普·斯特罗克 (Philip Sturrock) 以及凯文迪什出版社 (Cavendish Publishing) 原所有权人梁辛尼 (Sonny Leong) 一起创建了英华联盟出版事务所 (the Publishing Partnership) (www.thepublishingpartnership.com), 旨在帮助中国出版商规划国际发展战略。她的丈夫是编延与卡塞尔出版社 (Continuum and Cassell) 的前任主席。

磐华咨询有限公司 (PanCathay Consulting Ltd) 董事总经理罗曼蒂

在考虑商业文化会如何影响您在中国的工作方式之前, 有两个基本点必须掌握。

如果说有一个特点对理解中国商业文化的运作方式十分关键, 那就是关系或人际关系。中国人对自己在关系网中所处位置的理解要比我们的理解更有系统, 更为复杂。虽然我们在生活中也有关系网, 但是不会在不同情况下, 用不同方法孜孜不倦地维持或是利用关系。中国人几乎从出生那天就建立起了关系网。中国文化就建立在关系上。即使现在, 给您带来成功的也经常是因为您认识的人, 而不是您掌握的知识。要想在中国把生意做好, 您需要关注建立人际关系, 他们将帮助您把事情做成。重视人际关系, 就会得到慷慨的帮助。但是一定要充分理解那些与您打交道的人的动机, 因为人际关系本身就带有回报别人的义务。

另外不能忘记的一个特点是面子。中国人很有礼貌, 也很好客。他们会很有礼貌、很善意地款待您。英国社会也相当有礼貌, 但是我们脸皮比较厚, 不怕别人批评。这正是两种文化的不同之处。中国人很注重面子, 不喜欢丢脸。小心您在公众场合的言辞, 因为它们可能会影响主人的地位。

商业文化

对于西方人而言, 在中国做生意非常难。首先, 参加会议时, 您或许要面对好几个人, 来自不同部门, 然而您可能是独自前来或仅

带了一个同事或翻译。不用担心, 主人将非常希望听到您的想法。其次, 虽然中国某些城市交通很糟糕, 但是您参加的会议很可能按时举行: 中国人都非常守时。会议的时间安排也要妥当。中国人吃得早, 午餐通常在11:30到12:30间, 晚餐在下午6点左右。所以, 如果您已经受邀参加会议, 假如是在上午11点, 问问会议可能何时结束是很明智的。否则, 如果您午餐(根据我们西方的时间表)前又安排了一次会见, 就会发现自己或是已经被邀留下吃午饭, 或是发现原来安排的第二个会见无法进行, 因为大家都出去吃午饭了。

让一家著名代理机构翻译名片是很明智的, 能够为贵公司选个吉利的名字, 而且短时间内还不能不用这个名字。翻译名字时要注意必须在中文里能起作用(不管全名需要多少字, 尽量只用三或四个汉字)。中国人对您选的名字很感兴趣。如果名字在英语里有意义, 就翻译出来。如果有特别的发音, 就找带有相似音的中国字。但是, 一定要让顾问检查一下, 否则很容易犯令人尴尬的错误。

中国的宴会有自己的一整套规矩, 但是可以看主人怎么做, 并且照着做, 这是个很好的建议。然而, 还有两条建议很关键: 给您上的东西没有必要都吃(留在盘子里, 它会消失的)。小心刺鼻无色的酒, 实际威力比看起来要致命得多。

主人按照惯例会送您小礼物。您应该有所答谢。我发现送些能代表英国和英国文化的而又不太贵重的礼物就很受欢迎, 比如英国作曲家的CD、有关英国的图画书。首日封也很受欢迎, 带着也很轻。

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Nermin Molloaglu, Kalem Agency

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