

BUSINESS GIFT GIVING ETIQUETTE

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Within the interdependent, global and multi-cultural marketplace of the 21st century, cross cultural differences in the approaches to and practices of business people across the world are important to learn.

One area of importance in cross cultural awareness is in the different gift giving etiquettes of the world. Understanding gift giving and the etiquette surrounding it can help international business people cement better relationships with foreign colleagues, clients or customers.

The last thing you want to do is give a gift that might offend the recipient, so **follow this advice to choose an appropriate present.**

1. **Avoid giving personal gifts** (this is usually considered to be a product or service that involves touching the skin), **joke gifts, alcohol, tobacco products, products promoting your company, money, jewelry, expensive electronics and religious gifts.** Travel accessories, personalized desk accessories, entertainment tickets, computer accessories, books and CDs are usually safe bets, provided you know something about your intended recipient's habits in these areas.

2. **Appropriate gifts include gift cards** (cards to companies such as book stores are safe and generous), **flowers, photo frames, chocolates and fruit.** Some individuals choose to gift alcohol or meat, especially around the holidays, but it's important to make sure the recipient approves of these gifts. You would not want to provide alcohol to an alcoholic or non-kosher meat to a person keeping kosher or a vegetarian.

3. **When giving business gifts to international colleagues or clients, it's best to consider cultural differences so that recipients will not be offended.** For instance, in China, it is customary for the gift recipient to refuse the gift three times before accepting it, so as not to seem superficial. In many parts of Asia, gifts that you wrap in black or white paper are distasteful and represent death.

Muslim colleagues should never receive gifts that contain pork or alcohol. Being aware of these customs will make the gift that you choose very well received, and will help you to avoid any uncomfortable moments that could affect your business relationship.

4. **Remember where the road paved with good intentions leads.** Gym passes, health club memberships or exercise equipment could offend an overweight person, even if they have expressly told you they want to lose weight or that they are on a diet.

5. **Keep a close eye on the price tag. Gifts that are too expensive may make the recipient uncomfortable or uncertain about the intentions**

behind the gift. Checking with the recipient's company to find out the acceptable amount to spend on a gift is ideal, since some businesses do not allow employees to accept gifts that cost above a certain dollar amount. In the United States, the general standard amount is \$25, in Sweden are permitted to accept up to \$200.

6. It is not proper etiquette to include a receipt with the gift you're presenting to a colleague.

7. Pay special attention to the presentation, wrapping or packaging of your gift. First impressions are hard to change.

8. Consider a secular message during the holiday season, such as "Season's Greetings" or "Happy Holidays" to include people of all faiths, especially if you do not know the faith of the gift recipient.

9. When to Send Gifts. It is proper etiquette to send business gifts in a timely manner. When sending a gift to a boss or colleague for a birthday, it's most appropriate to time the delivery of the gift so that it arrives on the coworker's actual birthday. You send Christmas or holiday gifts during the week before employees go on vacation.

Try sending gifts at times other than major holidays. These occasions could include a promotion, a new baby, a birthday, a new business referral.

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