

商务会议

BUSINESS MEETING

与中国人一起召开商务会议，有什么不一样的地方？又需要注意什么呢？



What are the different characteristics of the Chinese business meeting? What should you care about?

商务会议是商务合作中重要的一环。如果与中国人召开商务会议，在会议进入正题之前，中国人可能会先安排领导发言、表达对客人的欢迎、介绍双方与会人员和公司情况等。习惯于直奔主题、注重细节的合作伙伴往往不太适应，也许觉得这样太耗费时间，甚至认为他们说的东西太“虚”了。然而这些“虚”的东西在中国人看来是很重要的前提，一方面可以拉近双方感情，另一方面有助于合作关系的持久。这也与中国人的思维模式有关，中国人的思维模式是整体取向，习惯从整体到局部、由大到小、

从笼统到具体。反映到会议桌上，就形成了“先务虚、再务实”的解决问题的程序，也就是说先谈论有利于建立持久关系的总体原则，然后再就具体的问题进行商议。

那么，如何“务虚”呢？一般来说，会议进入正题前，与会双方的领导会正式地介绍自己的陪同人员；接着由会议主办方的领导发言，表达对客人的欢迎并对会议进行整体的介绍。如果是第一次会谈，一般还会对双方公司情况作介绍。此外，会议结束后，主办方的领导还要作最后的总结，并



The meeting is an important part of business cooperation. A business meeting in China generally starts with long speeches (always by the senior managers), welcoming the guests and introducing the participants and companies of the two sides before the formal discussions. As their potential partner, you may prefer to get right to business and discuss the details. You may think the Chinese are wasting time and their wordings are so empty. But these empty words are considered as necessary preconditions by the Chinese for the future cooperation. They are used to make close the relationship of the people and strengthen the partnership between the two companies. These empty words reflect the Chinese way of thinking: from macro to micro, from big to small and from general to specific. Sitting down at the meeting table, people will start the procedure in the order “from empty to practical”. In other words, the general principles should be settled down before the specific issues are discussed.

How to deal with “empty”, then? In general, the heads of the

two companies would introduce their accompanying personnel formally before the meeting begins. Then, the head of the hosting party will give a speech welcoming the guests and briefing the meeting arrangement. If this is the first meeting between the two parties, an introduction by the two companies is necessary. At the end of the meeting, the head of the hosting party will summarize the progress of the meeting and express the expectation for the next-steps in cooperation. It is normal that the opening and ending parts of a business meeting will last long and be important. It is suggested to listen to the speakers because it is impolite to interrupt any speeches.

Seating is a sensitive issue in Chinese business meetings, because it will show participants’ positions and status. What is a properly arranged seating? Generally, the seats facing the main room door should be kept for the guests to show respect. During a two party meeting, the hosts and guests will sit on either side of the table respectively. On each side, the heads will sit in the middle and the others will sit next to him/her



对下一步合作提出期望。由此可见，中国商务会议的开头和结尾会较长，也较为重要。这个时候，最好静静地聆听，随意打断发言者的行为是不礼貌的。

在中国，商务会议的座次是一个非常敏感的问题，因为它体现了与会人员的身份和地位。如何确定座次呢？一般来说，面门为上，即面对正门的一方为上，最好留给客方，以示尊敬。进行双边会议时，双方分坐于桌子的两侧，各方职位最高者在己方居中的位置，依次排列。有时为避免这种主次的安排，可以圆形桌为布局。在圆桌会议中，座次安排以门为基准点，离门较远的位置是比较重要的座位。

在商务会议中，中国人除了讲究座次，还讲究与会人员的选择。一般

来说，双方与会的最高职位者应职位对等，且与会人数也不宜相差过大。所以，与中国人开会时，最好提前提供一份己方与会人员的名单及职位，并请对方也提供一份与会者的名单。

会议过程中，你会发现中国人常常只有几个领导在发言，其他人则很安静、保持沉默，除非他们被领导点名发言，才会开口说话。即便是在自由讨论环节，中国下属也很注意自己的说话顺序及方式，他们常常等领导说完后再表达自己的看法。所以，如果你想听他们说话，那就要想办法引导，也可以用点名提问的方式请对方发表意见。中国人很少在会上直接发表不同意见，如果有不同意见，他们会以委婉的方式来表达，甚至选择在会后或私下单独跟你说。所以，中国人在会上的安静、沉默，甚至微笑、点头，并不能代表他们完全赞同你的观点。如果他们会后向你表达不同的意见，也不要觉得奇怪，他们是为了维护你在众人面前的“面子”和“形象”。

从某种程度上说，在中国，有些会议更像是个仪式，会议的决议往往是在会前或会后确定的。

in accordance with their status. Sometimes, a roundtable will be used to avoid explicit host and guest seating arrangements. In this case, the farther the seat is from the door, the more important the participant is.

During the business meeting, the equivalence of participants' positions is also very important besides the seating. Generally speaking, the positions of the participants and the number of the participants from both sides should have some level of equivalence. It would be better to provide a list of the participants including their names and positions to the Chinese host and to ask the host to give the same list to you.

During the meeting, it is normal to find that only several Chinese senior managers give speeches while the others would keep silent unless they are asked by their bosses. Even in the free discussion part, the Chinese will pay careful attention to the timing and way of their speaking. They often tend to express their own opinions following the boss's speech. Therefore, if you want

to encourage them to speak, you should either guide them or ask them to answer your questions. Chinese people hardly express opposite views during the meeting. Even having different views, they would use implicit and euphemistic expressions during the meeting or talk with you in private outside the meeting room. If they are quiet and say few words during the meeting, and nod with a smile while you are speaking, it doesn't mean at all they fully agree with you. It is not surprising that they express different views after the meeting, because it's a way to keep your faces and maintain your reputation in public.

To some extent, meetings in China are more like formalities. The final decision is usually made before or after the meeting.



案例

Pierre 在一家中国企业工作，他发现每次开会时，一旦部门经理作出决定，大多数员工都不会提出反对意见。但是有一次 Pierre 发现，两个同事在会后私下议论经理的决定并不适合部门的发展。他觉得很奇怪，既然有想法为什么不在会议上提出来？


点评 在中国，级别、地位越高的人拥有的权力就越大，级别、地位较低的人一般会遵从上司的决定，不会提出异议。尤其是在众人面前，员工更是要维护领导的权威，当众提出不同意见可能会让领导觉得丢面子，被视为不敬。如果想广泛征求民意，可以多鼓励他们发言或尝试其他方式，如私下与员工交谈等。

行动指南

- 中国人开会时，一般会根据会议内容为重要的参与者准备好会议资料、纸、笔、纪念品，以及会议所需的设备，如投影仪等。
- 商务会议上，中国人一般会供应茶、咖啡、水等饮品。如果会议时间较长，还会准备一些点心、水果等。
- 在中国，会议开始前，主持人常常会提醒与会者关闭手机或将其调成静音。

 CASE STUDY

Pierre works in a Chinese enterprise. He found that once the department manager made a decision at every meeting, most staff would raise no objection. But after one meeting, he heard two colleagues talking in private that the manager's decision would not be good for the development of their department. Pierre was wondering why they had not said it during the meeting.

 **Comments:** In China, the higher one's ranking is, the more powerful one will be. In general, the people of lower ranking will follow the decision made by the superiors and will raise no objection. Especially in front of others, they try to uphold the authority of the superior because raising different opinions would make the leaders lose face or be regarded as an offense. If the boss wants to ask for different opinions in a large range, he/she could encourage them to speak or use different ways such as talking with the employees in private.

 ADVICE

- During the business meeting, you should address the senior people by the title and surname, like "title+ surname". If you don't know their titles, you can address them by the surname, like "Mr. xx or Mrs. xx". If you don't know their surnames, you can just address them as "Sir" or "Madame."
- Generally, for the meeting in China, the necessary written materials, pens, papers, souvenirs and other equipment, such as overhead projector, will be prepared for all participants by the hosting party.
- Tea, coffee, water and other drinks will generally be available during the business meeting. For a long meeting, refreshments and fruits will be offered.
- Before the meeting, the participants will be reminded by the facilitator to turn their cell-phones off or switch them to silent mode.