

Who works well with the Japanese?

Some types of people seem to adapt more readily to doing business with the Japanese. The following are some of their common characteristics.

Flexible • Willing to try new ways of doing things

Forward-thinking • Anticipates needs and issues

Organized • Stays on top of information and details

Even-tempered • Able to deal with stress and communication difficulties

Patient • Prepared to work toward goals one step at a time rather than in giant leaps

Persistent • Doesn't 稚 give up when things take longer than expected

Collaborative • Able to work closely with others to meet project objectives

Friendly • Able to develop positive working relationships

Good listener • Pays careful attention to others

Modest • Willing to share the glory rather than toot one's 痴 own horn

Curious • Interested in learning about Japanese culture and business practices

Diplomatic • Diffuses potential misunderstandings before they escalate

Subtle • Can get a point across without hitting someone over the head with it

Rochelle Kopp is Managing Principal of Japan Intercultural Consulting, which assists American firms doing business with the Japanese and Japanese firms doing business in the U.S. She is author of *The Rice-Paper Ceiling: Breaking Through Japanese*

Corporate Culture (Stone Bridge Press). Contact: phone 773-528-1370, fax 773-528-4233.

So you don't drink and play golf?

Getting to know Japanese colleagues on a personal level, for example by having lunch with them, playing golf together, or going out for drinks together at the end of the day, will enable you to improve your communication with them. Socializing with business colleagues is common among Japanese businesspeople. It provides an opportunity to develop the close personal relationships that are essential to Japanese-style management. It is also a way to iron out tensions that develop at work.

Many Americans have the misconception that drinking large amounts of alcohol is a requirement of this type of socializing. What's important is the time spent together, not the alcohol consumed. Turning down a beer or sake won't ruin the relationship you are building. However, you should be prepared to explain why you're not drinking, since this is uncommon in Japan. Do so simply without making a big fuss about it. For example, "My religion forbids it," or "for health reasons" is sufficient.

What do you do if you want to entertain a Japanese business contact but you don't play golf? Japanese tend to also like other outdoor activities, such as hiking, fishing, and tennis. Sporting events are welcome. Cultural activities, such as going to a play, concert, or museum are also of interest. But be sure to combine anything you plan with a nice meal!

Rochelle Kopp is Managing Principal of Japan Intercultural Consulting, which assists American firms doing business with the Japanese and Japanese firms doing business in the U.S. She is author of *The Rice-Paper Ceiling: Breaking Through Japanese Corporate Culture* (Stone Bridge Press).