

# *IBI Quarterly*

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## **Business with the Japanese – a review**

Dear reader,

It is my great pleasure to present to you the new IBI Quarterly: „Business with the Japanese – a review”.

The author of the book is Iris Kuhnert, whose company is based in Germany. Iris and I have been working together several times in both the US and Japan, where we facilitated workshops on Managing Virtual Multicultural Teams. Iris is specialized in business consulting for companies cooperating with Japanese and Korean partners. Her insights and tips based on many years of hands-on experience in working across these cultural lines are now brought together in her book „Business with the Japanese”. I hope you will enjoy the review by Nina Hesse and also, of course, the book itself.

I also have the pleasure to introduce four new members of the IBI Network who considerably add to the country-specific expertise that has become so vital in intercultural management development:

Iris Kuhnert: Business consultant and trainer for *Japan and Korea*

Lina Bilkha and Ann Means: Business consultants and trainers for *India*

Tao Yue: Country expert and trainer for *China*

Go to our website [www.ibinet.nl](http://www.ibinet.nl) / *IBI Team / Network* to find out more about their background and experience, and how the IBI Team can support our international client base doing business in Asia. Iris, Lina, Ann and Tao – welcome to the IBI Team!

And now enjoy the IBI Quarterly: *Business with the Japanese – a review*.

Ursula Brinkmann,  
Intercultural Business Improvement

Don't miss our next issue: *Organizational Culture and Innovation*, by Sebastian Theopold.

## **Business with the Japanese by Iris Kuhnert**

**Review by Nina Hesse**

book@web-books are young career-guides dealing with current business topics. What makes them different? It is their “internet linkage” – for every guide you will get access to a workshop free of charge where you can test your knowledge and exchange your views with other participants. The recent publication in this series is a book about how to deal with Japanese businessmen.

The Japanese culture appears to us strange and fascinating at the same time. It is worth the effort to find out more about this culture, as Japan (and not only China) offers considerable chances for business cooperation.

At least if you tackle it right. If you want to do business with the Japanese Iris Kuhnert’s book is highly recommended – her guide provides all relevant information in a concise and precise way.

In every sentence you realize how familiar she is with Japan and the Japanese. With all the hints and recommendations she offers, her book is a thrilling and essential reading adventure.

## **Asia’s Secrets**

Those who do not collect the respective information about the numerous peculiarities of Japan and the Japanese in time might fall flat on their face. The differences start with the color of the traffic lights (in Japan they are blue) and the way to call someone over: Don’t do it the Western way, as it is considered to be rude and ill mannered. In Japan you call someone over by turning your palm downwards. For managers it is important to know that Japanese businessmen should never be pushed and the usual time frame should be prolonged by the factor four to five.

You should also keep an eye on excellent preparation as – according to Iris Kuhnert – the Japanese are perfect in collecting information about their potential business partner and they love to draw a clear picture of this partner in advance. She also recommends: “Exactly clarify everybody’s position within your team in advance so you represent the team spirit of your company. Japanese love to ask the same question to different team members. They hereby want to find out if you really form a reliable integrated group.” If the answers vary, it will be judged as weakness.

Very well explained are the nuances of the social status and the way Japanese



distinguish between the “public” and the “informal” sphere. If you are aware of these differences and you are able to use them for your purposes, you can successfully solve conflicts, clear up problems discretely and get clear answers from your often restrained business partners by making a detour. Japan experts know that quite often the coffee break is more important than the meeting as such.

Those who read Iris Kuhnert’s book carefully learn a lot about Asia – and become more aware of their own culture. However, it is hard to achieve real “intercultural competence” by purely studying a book. Managers should pass an additional intercultural coaching before their first business trip to Japan. If you don’t have enough time you should at least go through the internet workshop accompanying this book.

The smart idea of combining online media and print media repeatedly rewarded the book@webs with the Comenius seal for “didactically and creatively outstanding multimedia products”.

### **Cross words in Japanese**

On many pages of this book you will find the book@webs-hint, referring to interactive exercises and additional material at the internet workshop. The most reasonable way for getting into it is to start reading this book

(or to read it completely) and to consolidate and to double-check the adopted knowledge by interactive exercises, tests and downloads. Registration will cost a few minutes and the navigation on this page is a little awkward, but it is worth the effort.

On the page of “Business with the Japanese” readers will find self-tests about several statements of a topic, where you have to put a tick against “right” or “wrong”.

Or you have to decide on the correct behavior in a certain situation, for example, this one: During a meeting you just made a proposal about the further procedure to your Japanese partner. The leader of the Japanese team moves back and forth several times, tearing loudly air through the gap between his teeth. How do you react?

Those who read the book will know that they should simply keep their patience in this situation.

“Japanese love to use silence as a strategic tool for putting a special emphasis on what was said. This behavior easily confuses Western business partner”, Iris Kuhnert explains. “Don’t let your uneasiness about a break lead you to start talking rashly!”

In accordance with the contents of the book there is a glossary with essential Japanese terms on the website (like “Gaijin” - foreigner – or



or “Honne”- private, informal). These terms can be practiced by solving cross words. That sounds difficult and indeed it is, but the website helps with little hints.

Finally you can start the automatic evaluation as usual and find out where you went wrong and where you were right.

Another interesting possibility of the book@webs is to get into touch with the author and to exchange thoughts with others, i.e., to build up a community.

At the workshop of “Business with the Japanese” you can describe your own experiences with Japanese businessmen, for example, and offer advice to others which exceeds the contents of the book.

The experience of the publishing house shows that in case of lately published titles there is not too much going on at the forum, but the discussion will start after a few weeks.

**Please contact IBI if you are interested in purchasing a copy of *Business with the Japanese*. (Note: At this stage, the book is available only in German.)**

