

PRESENTING IN JAPAN

Pitfalls and Traps to Avoid

Purpose

Sempre Avanti Consulting has prepared this Position Paper to assist you in understanding the issues relating to making presentations in Japan. This brief introduction is only an overview on the importance of understanding the issues you will have to consider when presenting in Japan. Please contact Sempre Avanti Consulting for an assessment personalised to your own particular needs.

Introduction

For New Zealanders who are about to make presentations (verbal or written) in Japan there are a number of critical issues that you need to consider before you make the presentation. You will have to consider language, colours, translations and religious beliefs to name a few.

This introductory guide provides an initial understanding of the issues you may face when presenting in Japan. While the focus of this document is on making presentations in Japan, all of the concepts raised in this document apply to presentations in other Asian countries.

Presenting in Japan

Though English is Japan's second language outside the main cities in Japan few Japanese have encountered a native English speaker. English is taught in Japan at secondary and high schools for 6 years. Most of the post baby boomer generation in Japan can understand (read and write) and speak some English.

Use of Language

It is important to consider your use of language when you are presenting to an audience of non English speaking people or to an audience where English is a second language. You will have to pay attention to sentence construction, technical terms and the use of bullet points within PowerPoint.

Translations

If you are presenting to a bilingual audience then it is strongly recommended that you have any written presentations translated into the native language. There are many translations services that can assist with this. A point to note here is that literal English translations to another language do not always have a one to one equivalent and may not have the meaning you are trying to convey. For example there is no literal translation in Japanese of "How are you?"

Colour

Depending on the country you are presenting in, you will have to research what colours may offend and to not use these in written or PowerPoint presentations. In Japan it is highly offensive to produce written correspondence (especially someone's name) using the colour red.

Religion

In any Asian country your audience will be made up of people from a number of different religious backgrounds. You will need to carefully consider your use of language especially the use of humour so as not to cause offence. In Japan the two major religions are Shinto and Buddhism. The post baby boomer generation in Japan may not practice a religion but with a cultural upbringing based on religion, offence may be caused if religious beliefs are not considered.

Business Cards

The exchange of business cards in Japan is a highly significant event. The business card exchange can set the tone for the rest of the relationship. It is recommended that if you do not have a business card holder that you purchase one before visiting any Asian country. In Japan it is critical that you keep your cards in a business card holder and when you receive a business card that you examine it carefully and try to pronounce the name. Then make sure you are seen putting it carefully in your business card holder.

Basic Foreign Language Skills

It is highly recommended that before you visit Japan you learn some basic terms and how to introduce yourself. Consider learning the following:

My name is	Watashi Wa (YOUR NAME) dess
Good Morning	o-hayo gozaimass
Good Afternoon	Kon-nichi wa
Excuse Me	Sumimasen
Please	O kudasai
Thank You	Arigato
No Thank You	i-e kekko dess

Sempre Avanti Consulting recommends the use of professional assistance in the preparation of any written or verbal presentation in Japan as you only have once chance to make a good impression.

Sempre Avanti Consulting can help you assess the impact of the written or verbal presentation that you intend to present in Japan or in any other Asian country.

For more information on this topic and to receive your 15 minute free assessment please contact Sempre Avanti Consulting.

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