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Doing Business in China

Learning to do business in China

All too often today's businessman jumps on a plane and jets to an Asian country with little more than a passport and visa. Yes, some are more zealous and they do their homework to learn about the country they will visit, but more often than not they will rely on a local contact to smooth out the niceties of a business meeting and in the process they may learn a little about doing business the right way in say, China. I know because this is my profile. I don't condone it and am somewhat embarrassed by doing it, but when you are on the run, niceties take a back seat.

So we look for shortcuts. Anecdotal experiences, hints in travel magazines, clues from travel experts are some ways. A good travel book or perhaps the recorded experiences of others, if condensed for rapid reading, are good ways.

I found "China In Motion," by Mia Doucet (Bankerman Press) helpful on my first trip to China. It is an easy read and you can skip the chapters that cover things you've already experienced or situations that you will never run up against.

She has arranged the book as 17 secrets with a lot of interesting and entertaining examples of do's and don'ts, concluding with some helpful business protocols and appendices (a good read section) with useful information.

For example I learned, a little late, that in China business is treated very seriously, so someone that smiles a lot, that's me, may be looked on as not being serious. Fortunately I got clued to this early and I learned that humor is right for certain occasions and alright if done in the right way. I also learned that brainstorming meetings and stream-of-consciousness sessions are not acceptable.

Ms. Doucet may save you some embarrassment and then you will say this was the best \$26.95 I spent. You can communicate with her at mia@chinainmotion.com or, on my say so, just buy the book at orders@chinainmotion.com. As they say in New York, it couldn't hurt. -DAB

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