

Do's and Taboos Around the World for Women in Business

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*Do's and Taboos
Around the World*



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DO'S AND TABOOS AROUND THE WORLD FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

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Do's and Taboos Around the World: A Guide to International Behavior,
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Do's and Taboos of International Trade: A Small Business Primer, 2nd
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Do's and Taboos of Hosting International Visitors

Gestures: Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World

Do's and Taboos of Public Speaking

Do's and Taboos of Using English Around the World

Do's and Taboos of Preparing for Your Trip Abroad, *with John P. Healy*

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To Mitzi—R. E. A.

To my husband, David Marshall— M. C.

To Rick—M. B. L.

And to all the inspiring international businesswomen we've worked with. Your pioneering work has strengthened international understanding and cooperation in global business.

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INTRODUCTION

In the years ahead, more North American women will enter international business than ever before. The reason is simple: you can't stop them!

Morally, ethically, legally, no one can stop more women from moving steadily into the ranks of international management. Besides, they are needed—desperately.

In the 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s, male-dominated managements protested: "You can't send women out around the world on international business. It's too dangerous. Not only that, they won't be accepted." Slowly, we have learned that the attitude is an untruth, a myth—and a myth that is rapidly dissolving. Today, while the percentage of women compared to men in international business is still very low, more North American women are moving into top management positions, traveling the world, and bringing home extraordinary results.

You will read about their success stories in this book. You will learn how scores of women have broken the glass ceilings—and walls!—to enter what was solely and traditionally a male domain. You will also learn scores of tips and suggestions for becoming an effective international businesswoman.

The idea for this book sprang from a breakfast meeting in Minneapolis in 1990. Two of the authors, Margaret Corcoran and Mary Beth Lamb, sat down with Roger E. Axtell to discuss ways the two women might expand their consulting business, Transnational Strategies, Inc. Naturally, their strong suit was women in international business; for Axtell, it was his thirty-year career in international business, plus his experience in writing seven earlier books.

Over a period of four years the trio exchanged ideas and information and finally, in 1994, submitted a proposal to John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York. There, Senior Editor PJ Dempsey agreed that a book was timely and worthy of national publication.

In any collaborative effort, it is obvious that the authors did not produce the words in unison. We apportioned the responsibilities in the following manner:

Margaret Corcoran, with the assistance of Brenda Sauer, headed the research team. Over a three-year period, Margaret surveyed and interviewed sixty-nine experienced international businesswomen. Margaret was also responsible for

writing Chapters 22 and 24, for revisions to Chapters 25–32, and for assembling and writing all of Part Six (Resources).

Chapter 1, “Sex, Dating, Discrimination, and Harassment,” and parts of Chapter 4, “Safety When Traveling,” were a collaborative effort, with all four authors contributing ideas.

Roger E. Axtell prepared and wrote Chapters 2 through 21 plus Chapter 23. Much of the advice found in those chapters was drawn from the research material provided by Margaret and the team at Transnational Strategies, Inc.

Mary Beth Lamb and Tami Briggs were responsible for assembling the information for Parts Four and Five (Chapters 25–32), “The International Assignment,” with assistance from writer Camille LeFevre.

This book attempts to offer advice about *behavior*—an often elusive and changing subject. Much of that advice comes from scores of women with impressive experience and credentials. We ask you, the reader, to recognize that these are personal observations and opinions, and not necessarily infallible declarations by the authors.

HOW THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU

Ask a North American* businesswoman what concerns her the most about venturing overseas on business and the response you’ll hear is, “How do I survive in alien lands, where males have—and still do—dominate in the ranks of business?” Accordingly, this book begins with survival techniques for women in international business. And when it comes to survival, the first burning question women ask is: “What do I do about sex, dating, harassment, and discrimination when traveling and doing business overseas? What do I do when some guy in Caracas, Calcutta, or Copenhagen suddenly starts making moves on me?” Chapter 1 offers the answers in the form of a list of “Ten Do’s and Taboos of Sexual Behavior.” For women living and working abroad, it also provides instructions and advice on the two “hot” words in our business culture today: harassment and discrimination.

Chapters 2 through 6 deal with different types of survival problems:

*A note about that term “North American.” As it is used throughout this book, it means “from the United States and Canada.” Literally, of course, the continent of North America includes Mexico and Central America, but few people in those areas expect—or like—to be called North Americans.

knowing the culture, protocol, safety, how to stay healthy, and even tips on luggage and packing for trips overseas.

Part Two, beginning with Chapter 7, starts you on a round-the-world journey where you will acquire country-specific information and advice. In each chapter you will learn, first, about the status and conditions of local women. Then you will be offered a variety of helpful tips and do's and taboos for business behavior in each of twenty-six major countries or regions of the world.

In Part Three, you will learn how to step up and climb onto the career ladder in international business. Chapter 23 sets the stage by describing the past, present, and future for women in international business. Of special note is an explanation of why women are especially well suited for careers in international commerce.

Then, if you are wondering how you can break into international business, Chapter 24 relates the stories of twelve women who describe how they got their first job in international business.

Chapter 25 offers an inspirational note—profiles of three fascinating international businesswomen, their stories and their successes.

Part Four deals with one of the most challenging and fascinating facets of international business: the international assignment. What should you know and do when confronted with the prospect of being posted overseas? The answers are provided in seven chapters.

Part Five provides tips for the woman who is not currently employed by an international company, but wishes to find work opportunities abroad. Part Six lists dozens of resources to help you become an international business professional.

If you are one who enjoys spotting a trend, or detecting the beginning of a business wave, we believe one is building at this very moment. That trend involves the masses of women in North America who are considering, preparing for, or are currently involved in international business. At the beginning of this introduction, we stated that this infusion of women was desperately needed. Business, particularly in the United States, demands a strong new dose of energy, creativity, and talent to move products and services into overseas markets. Frankly, the U.S. business community has not performed well in this important business sector. Proof comes from the last two decades when the United States has run substantial trade deficits, often in the \$100-billion range. Simply stated, that means we, the people of the United States, are buying more goods from overseas sources than we are selling to overseas customers. That hurts the economy because it means that more and more U.S. dollars—and jobs—are going overseas.

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that there are

at least 200,000 businesses in the United States capable of exporting but are not doing so now. The reason—lack of energy, combined with fear of the unknown. Managers of thousands of key medium-and small-sized businesses are reluctant to take their catalogs and samples abroad because they don't understand how they will get paid or how to ship products overseas; they also feel insecure and apprehensive about dealing with other cultures. Ironically, each of these alleged “obstacles” can be quickly and easily overcome.

What is needed is a new force, a new surge of energy and spirit. We believe having more women involved in international business will provide precisely that force.

Roger E. Axtell
Tami Briggs
Margaret Corcoran
Mary Beth Lamb

Note: If you have anecdotes, case studies, resources, or object lessons pertaining to this subject, we would like to hear about them and consider them for future editions. Please send your material to:

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