

from each department to be in charge of the counters and to report the numbers. Are there any questions?

Aizawa: Why will we be using counters?

Tanimura: Because copy paper has been running out too quickly recently.

Aizawa: But we don't have that problem in our department.

Tanimura: Well, at any rate, if there are no more questions, let's choose someone to be in charge of our counters.

(P. 135) **Practical Conversation-4**
(On the phone)

Tsutsui: Sorry to disturb you during your day off, but I thought I'd let you know how things turned out.

Tanizaki: Okay. I suppose there were no problems, huh?

Tsutsui: Actually, there was some trouble.

Tanizaki: Huh?

Tsutsui: Mr. Chambers' wife is a member of an animal protection group, and we hadn't know about that, as it appears that she has joined just recently. So anyway, I took them to Fuyohitei in Ginza, and the table was lined up with iki-zukuri, so Mrs. Chamber's face turned white.

Tanizaki: Oh, that's terrible. And they say that Mr. Chambers is so devoted to his wife.

Tsutsui: Yeah, and so I got all flustered and tried to have server remove the iki-zukuri, but Mr. Chambers said that it's okay and then he calmed Mrs. Chambers. He said that since they have been to Japan several times before, they knew about iki-zukuri.

Tanizaki: Then what?

Tsutsui: Then since Mrs. Chambers couldn't eat it, she alone ordered something else, though she stared at the iki-zukuri for a while.

Tanizaki: So it probably would have better to have removed it, huh?

Tsutsui: Actually, Mr. Chambers liked it. So anyway, Mrs. Chambers got into a better mood around the time we had dessert, and she will be going with Mr. Chambers when he starts his observation of our facilities tomorrow. I just thought I'd let you know what happened.

Tanizaki: Okay. Sounds like you had a tough time. Thanks.

Tsutsui: Not at all. Well, I'm sorry I called during your day off.

(P. 137) **Practical Conversation-1**

Iwasaki: What's going on? There are

visitors waiting.

Takano: Oh, I'm sorry. Who is taking care of the visitors?

Iwasaki: Honda is. Here she comes.

Honda: Takano, what happened? Your nose is bleeding.

Takano: Yes. I got a nosebleed when I was out.

Honda: You know you should have called me. What with a visitors suddenly coming to see you. I just finished demonstrating the new software. That was the right thing to do, huh?

Takano: Yes. Thank you. I forgot today's guest completely. Shall I take over now?

Honda: No, that's okay. All there's left to do is just give him a catalog. You still have some blood under your nose. I told the visitors that you had to go to a client's place on urgent business, so shouldn't you greet the visitors later or call him after he returns.

Takano: Nice work, you saved me.

Honda: I can't believe it. I've got my own work to do, you know!

Takano: I'm really sorry, I'll be careful from now on.

(P. 139) **Practical Conversation-1**

Kimura: Hey, Takahashi, did you hear?

Takahashi: Hear what?

Kimura: About Mr. Yamazaki.

Takahashi: Of our Nagoya branch?

Kimura: Yes.

Takahashi: What's happened with him?

Kimura: I heard he was fired.

Takahashi: Really! Who said that?

Kimura: I got a call from a friend who entered the company the same time as me and is assigned to the Nagoya branch.

Takahashi: Is that so?

Practical Conversation-2

Anna: Is it true what I heard — you're quitting?

Hayata: Who did you hear it from? Don't tell anyone, okay?

Anna: I won't, but I'm a little offended that you didn't tell a friend like me.

(P. 141) **Practical Conversation-1**

Iwasaki: What's happened at the branch office in Nagoya?

Watanabe: I can't say it out loud, but I think they have a serious problem.

Iwasaki: Because they had had poor sales?

Watanabe: I think so. One reason is that we opened a fifth branch office in Chubu.

Iwasaki: You mean the Gifu branch

office, right? No matter how much you say it's to increase a spirit of competition, companies can do some harsh things.

Watanabe: That's right.

Iwasaki: I had thought the staff at Nagoya had done their best despite having their market area cut.

Watanabe: Oh yes, they did do their best!

Iwasaki: Then, what happened?

Watanabe: Eventually some salesperson were lured away to other branches and so on. And then the staff in Nagoya jumped on the director's case.

Iwasaki: Now that you mention it, Mr. Yamazaki came to the main office, didn't he?

Watanabe: Yeah, it was at that time.

Iwasaki: So what will happen to them?

Watanabe: Well Gifu will probably be turned into the Chubu regional headquarters.

Iwasaki: Really? So that means Nagoya will be absorbed by Gifu, right?

Watanabe: That's what will probably happen.

(P. 143) **Practical Conversation-1**

Itoh: What do you think will happen with Mr. Yamazaki?

Iwasaki: Well, I think he'll probably start his own business.

Takahashi: You should ask Miss. Kimura about that.

Iwasaki: What?

Itoh: Miss. Kimura, come here a second.

Kimura: Yes? What?

Takahashi: Do you know what Mr. Yamazaki is going to do?

Kimura: Oh, yes.

Iwasaki: What will he do?

Kimura: Someone said that he is going to work at the company of a former employee of our company.

Iwasaki: Mr. Hatada's company.

Takahashi: You mean Mr. Hatada...

Iwasaki: Yes probably.

Itoh: What is he like?

Iwasaki: He was a branch manager in Nagoya. When Hatada was manager, sales in the Nagoya branch became number one in Japan, I believe. In any case, they say he was a real go-getter.

Takahashi: Yeah, he was. After working as manager for three years, he quit and started his own company.

Itoh: What is he doing now?

Kimura: I'm not sure, but apparently his business is running well.

Itoh: I see, he'll probably hire on Yamazaki and expand his business, right?

Takahashi: Hatada sure is a go-getter.

■ **Chapter 9 Expressing opinions**

(P. 145) **Practical Conversation-1**

Funakoshi: Excuse me, Noyman, but I'm conducting an internal survey on our company's product packaging, and I thought I'd ask your opinion as I've heard you are into environmental issues.

Noyman: By "environmental issues," you mean recycling and cutting down on garbage?

Funakoshi: Right.

Noyman: Well, I'm not that into it.

Funakoshi: Well, let me go ahead and ask you — First of all, how do you feel about packaging materials?

Noyman: I don't think we need to use only paper and glass bottles.

Funakoshi: So plastic containers are okay?

Noyman: Yes.

Funakoshi: Meaning?

Noyman: Meaning that plastic doesn't break easily and it's light, so it's convenient for consumers and distribution. It's also cheap. If we use something bulky and heavy, then we'll need lots of trucks to transport the products, and then there will just be more exhaust pollution, right? The problem with plastic is when you throw it away. So if people don't throw it away, it's okay. When do people throw away containers?

Funakoshi: When they become empty.

Noyman: Right, so if they don't become empty, then it would be all right — that is, make it possible to refill them. If that's the case, then people will keep buying our products, so we kill two birds with one stone, right? Not only that, but our company will gain the reputation that we're concerned about the environment.

Funakoshi: Good idea.

(P. 147) **Practical Conversation-1**

Mogi: How's our new worker Kawaguchi?

Sekiguchi: Really good. He picks up things quickly, and he asks a lot of questions. He's a very active person. With all this, he'll likely become a real asset to us.

Mogi: Good.

Sekiguchi: However, he has such a strong sense of curiosity, he has trouble staying with one thing.

- Mogi:** He gets tired of things easily?
- Sekiguchi:** Not so much that as, well, he's very smart and once he understands something, he wants to move right away to the next level. He certainly has the spirit to work, and he's really bright.
- Mogi:** I see.
- Sekiguchi:** When I look at something he has done, such as making reports from the data I give him, I'm really filled with admiration for his precision and insight. He quickly adapts to new situations.
- Mogi:** Is that so? Where is he training?
- Sekiguchi:** At the research facility in Kamakura. Apparently he's already become quite popular.
- Mogi:** Oh, Kurihara's place.
- Sekiguchi:** I've talked with him once. He says that he has the self-confidence to do things correctly, but he also tends to be a sort of jack-of-all-trades but a master of none. He's quite modest — I think that's why everyone likes him.
- Mogi:** Sounds like an interesting fellow. It will be fun to see him develop.
- Sekiguchi:** Yeah, I think he's got a bright future ahead of him.
- Mogi:** So you yourself have now gotten a nice underling. Be sure to forge him well.
- Sekiguchi:** Yeah, I'll push him hard.
- (P. 149) **Practical Conversation-1**
- Katsumata:** I'd like to ask about business trip to Osaka.
- Mitsuzuka:** Yes?
- Katsumata:** Could you possibly increase the advanced payment a little?
- Mitsuzuka:** 40,000 yen isn't enough?
- Katsumata:** Well, recently even hotels in the countryside have gotten expensive, so if I'm not careful I might go over budget. Could you raise it by at least about another 10,000 yen?
- Mitsuzuka:** But with the recession, Accounting has been tightening its purse strings.
- Katsumata:** Back when the economy was strong, it was no problem for us to even dip out of our own pockets at times, but now that our bonuses have been cut back, it's tough for me to have to wait for reimbursement.
- Mitsuzuka:** Sure, but advanced payment for business trips is only for our department. If we complain about it, all that will happen is that we'll be told to put in a request for a temporary advance like the other departments have to do.
- Katsumata:** That's the point you can use to make our appeal. I heard that the reason we have the automatic advance payment system is because our department has so many business trips and that they want to avoid all that paperwork. If I get 50,000 yen, then I'll have no problem finding a hotel.
- Mitsuzuka:** Okay, okay. I'll suggest it at the next managers' meeting. However, since your upcoming trip is earlier than that, you'll have to get by with just 40,000 yen.
- Katsumata:** Sure. Thanks a lot.
- (P. 151) **Practical Conversation-1**
- Momose:** Hey, take a look at this!
- Oda:** What?
- Momose:** This is the invoice for the translation.
- Oda:** 800,000 yen? What's the deal here?
- Momose:** Well, we did have them do a lot of translations this month, but this is ridiculous.
- Suda:** ITL, right? I've heard that Public Relations or some department has asked that our company stop using their services.
- Matsudaira:** Yeah, ITL makes a lot of errors, and we always have to check their translation up with the original texts.
- Oda:** How much are we contracted to pay them per page?
- Momose:** I made a rough calculation of a little over 5,000 yen.
- Oda:** I have long thought that they're not cheap.
- Suda:** But isn't that a reasonable price for technical documents?
- Matsudaira:** I don't think so. The place that Research uses is 3,800 yen.
- Oda:** That place is a lot cheaper.
- Momose:** Yeah. Sending us an invoice like this — the people at ITL must have no conscience.
- Oda:** Well, shall we start using the other place as of today?
- Suda:** Yeah, but we've had a long business relationship with ITL, and our section manager is pretty tight with Mr. Yamamichi of their company.
- Matsudaira:** Yamamichi — I know him. He's a pretty nice guy.
- Momose:** Well, I guess we're stuck with them.
- Oda:** No, I don't think we can say that at a time when we're trying to cut down

our expenses.

(P. 153) **Practical Conversation-1**

Seto: Hey, did you hear that the Merchandise Management Department is going to move?

Hino: Yeah, but it hasn't been fully decided, has it?

Seto: But if does happen, what will happen to the sales department? Everything will be thrown into confusion.

Hino: Probably. After all, the connection between Merchandise Management and Sales is so vital in something like handling orders. What will we do?

Seto: If they do move, where will they go?

Hino: I happened to hear something about their moving to a place near warehouse number 2.

Seto: Warehouse number 2? That's such an out-of-the-way area. If they move there, commuting will be rough. Only the bus runs out that way.

Hino: Yeah, I know.

Seto: Well, it's a good thing you're in our department. I heard that at first you were going to be in Merchandise Management.

Hino: Yeah, that's right.

(P. 154) **Practical Conversation-2**

Honda: What are you talking about? If you are talking about an interesting subject, I want to join you.

Nakamura: Oh, I have heard a big change in the staff will be made in the spring personnel changes. So I am wondering what will happen to us.

Kimura: Well, first, the manager will go to Hakata. And I have heard Itoh will go to the branch office in Sendai.

Honda: Really? I did not know about Itoh — he didn't tell me anything.

Kimura: I have heard he got an unofficial announcement. But it seems that Itoh is not happy with it.

Nakamura: I think so. I have heard that the branch office in Sendai gives a lot of work to its employees.

Honda: So who will be the new manager? The section chief?

Nakamura: I hope not. But it's possible.

Honda: Am I right or what?

Kimura: I don't want him to become manager.

Honda: Then will it be Iwasaki?

Nakamura: But he was hired in the middle of the period, right? Do you think that the company will give such a big promotion to him?

Kimura: If it's Iwasaki, then it would be

all right.

Nakamura: But if he were to become manager, he would be tough on us since he's such a go-getter.

Honda: That is the reason why he has a possibility, right?

Kimura: Yeah, I suppose. But if he becomes manager, then Honda will become the new head of our area.

Honda: If so, then I would be the first woman group leader in our company. That is too cool.

Kimura: You shouldn't let yourself get too carried away.

Honda: So you don't like it? When I become group leader, the first thing I'll do is let you have it!

Kimura: Give me a break!

Nakamura: But if all this happens, then we will be the strongest team in our company. We all get along so well.

Kimura: But what if some strange person come from outside our office to fill Itoh's position.

(P. 157) **Practical Conversation-1**

Enoki: You are the person in charge of that company, right?

Fujimoto: What?

Enoki: I have heard that the president of that company has disappeared somewhere. Is it true?

Fujimoto: Yes. He has done it several times before.

Enoki: Is it O.K. for you to say such a thing? Is he doing it to delay payment?

Fujimoto: It was delayed last month.

Enoki: You haven't received this month's payment yet?

Fujimoto: I telephoned and pressed them for it, but the staff there always said that he was not there.

Enoki: Does the manager know about it?

Fujimoto: Yes, more or less.

Enoki: Is he running off because he can't come up with the money?

Fujimoto: I don't know for sure.

Enoki: It is serious, isn't it?

Fujimoto: I have decided that I would wait until the end of this week.

Enoki: We should do something before it's too late. Do you have any idea?

Fujimoto: Unless they give me an answer until this weekend, I will go there to see him.

Enoki: Hmm. Your other clients haven't had any problems?

Fujimoto: Actually, there's another company with whom they're behind in payments. I haven't told the manager

about it yet.

Enoki: That's no good. You had better tell him and do something.

Fujimoto: You're right. I'll go talk to him now.

(P. 158) **Practical Conversation-2**

Sakurada: Thank you very much for giving time out of your busy schedule for me. My name is Sakurada of Hot Planning Co.

Shinohara: My name is Shinohara.

Sakurada: Sorry to ask this of you right away but I'd like for you to look at this pamphlet. You can use our 13 Sports Clubs in Tokyo whenever you like. In addition, you can book a resort hotel or other facilities for company training sessions, meetings, or relaxation with just one phone call.

Shinohara: Sounds good.

Sakurada: Yes. Many of our current members have told us how satisfied they are. And it has all been designed for contributing welfare of your company's employees.

Shinohara: You seem to have a lot of members already. So are there cases where the difficulties are all booked up, or even if you can go, they're always crowded?

Sakurada: Well, there's no such worry, as we survey current members' opinions before soliciting new members. We always put our members' convenience first.

Shinohara: I see. About the price ...

Sakurada: I don't think it is an unfair price.

Shinohara: Hmm ... I cannot reply now. For now, I'll just take your pamphlet.

Sakurada: Please consider our service. I will call you again.

(P. 159) **Practical Conversation-3**

Ide: Do you know Mr. Imamura, the man who's being transferred to our office?

Okudera: Yes, I suppose.

Ide: Is it true what I heard that he sexually harrasses women?

Okudera: So they say. But there's no clear proof, so I can't say. I've worked with him before and didn't have such a problem.

Ide: But it's disgusting, isn't it?

Okudera: We don't know for sure since it's just a rumor.

Ide: But where there's smoke, there's fire, don't you think?

Konno: What are talking about?

Ide: Oh, hello. Do you know Mr. Imamura?

Konno: The guy who's being transferred here?

Ide: Right.

Konno: Yeah, I do. He's tough to please in regard to work, but he looks after others — he's a nice guy. He has taught me a lot.

Ide: Hmm. But do you know the rumors about him?

Okudera: Why don't you forget about it.

Konno: What? Tell me. What about him?

Ide: Women don't like him because he sexually harrasses them.

Konno: Sexual harrassment? You're joking. However, if Mr. Imamura drinks, he starts touching women. Even if it's said that's sexual harrassement ...

(P. 161) **Practical Conversation-1**

Sakai: Hey! Someone left the lights on the warehouse. Who was the last one there?

Kinoshita: It was me. I am sorry.

Toriyama: I remember they were left on yesterday also.

Kinoshita: It was not me.

Toriyama: But, you always go to the warehouse, Kinoshita, don't you?

Kinoshita: Uhh.

Sakai: Anyway, the last person should have the responsibility to turn off the lights.

Toriyama: How about this?

Kinoshita: That is good.

Toriyama: Wait, I haven't said my idea. If we just say the last person should have the responsibility, then Kinoshita will still forget to turn off the lights.

Sakai: O.K., O.K. And?

Toriyama: It is not an important suggestion, but why don't we attach the notice for checking the lights out somewhere noticeable.

Kinoshita: Good idea, Toriyama! The wisdom of the old.

Sakai: Anyway, where is the best place where we can see it easily?

Toriyama: Why don't you attach it at Kinoshita's eye level?

Kinoshita: But Toriyama won't be able to see it at my eye level unless she grows taller.

Toriyama: I don't need to see it. I don't forget to turn them off.

Kinoshita: Hey, I never forget.

Toriyama: Well, what about just now?

Sakai: All right, both of you. At any rate, let's try putting up a notice.

Toriyama: Shall I write it?

Sakai: Yes, please. Kinoshita, put it

somewhere that everyone can see.

■ Chapter 10 Exchanging opinions
(P. 163) Practical Conversation-1

Miyamoto: The price of the new product is too high isn't it?

Kuroki: Do you think so? I think it is going to sell well as we have changed the style. And it has a lot of new functions also.

Miyamoto: But, we can not compete since it is 20,000 yen higher than Banny's similar product.

Kuroki: I do not think so. Well, the new style is good, isn't it? And, consumers may like it even if it is a little expensive. The important thing is how to advertise extensively. In other words, we should show how special this product is. We should ask the sales department and the public relations to push its uniqueness.

Miyamoto: That's right. If we emphasize that, the new product may be accepted by consumers.

(P. 164) Practical Conversation-2

Morisue: I'd like to speak about the discount rate of the new product.

Iida: You mean for selling it to wholesalers?

Morisue: Yes. We have decided to discount 45% on all products when we sell to wholesalers at the previous meeting, as you know.

Iida: Right. What is the problem?

Morisue: After the previous meeting, I checked the cost of the product. Won't it be hard to sell at this price?

Iida: Can I see it? Maybe you overestimated?

Morisue: Yes. But I think that we are too optimistic in our sales expectations.

Iida: Maybe we're optimistic, but we are going to sell it at 80 percent of the price?

Morisue: Is it no good?

Iida: I don't think the sales department will have a positive answer. If Sales opposes and says that a 45% discount is no good, then everyone will have to accept it. But if our department opposes, especially with a wholesale price of 80%, Sales will complain that we really don't know the market or something like that.

Morisue: Well, how about this? I estimated it at the minimum rate.

Iida: Hmm ... It is at 65% of the price? Anyway, it is not so bad. By the way, you are going to ask this at today's

meeting, right? Why don't you do that?

Morisue: Sales will say something about it.

Iida: Maybe, but other departments felt they were pushed by Sales at the last meeting, and it's not the case that they consented to the 45% discount. Maybe we get other departments to agree with us.

Morisue: Well, I'll make the proposal.

(P. 165) Practical Conversation-3

Fujii: We will tidy up the preparation room and remodel it into Mr. Smith's office. However we will have no place where we can smoke, since we used it as a smoking room. So I'd like to strongly propose having no smoking at our office.

Fukuda: Could you wait to decide. Please think about smokers. That isn't so easy to decide.

Mizoguchi: That's right. When we talk about the subject of non-smoking, people always highlight non-smoker's right.

Tanabe: It is said that smoking is harmful and no good. I know a person who was hired at the same period as me. He was a heavy smoker and he was assigned to the laboratory. Since, the laboratory was non-smoking, he had to reduce cigarettes gradually. As a result, he said he was very happy to quit smoking by himself.

Mizoguchi: That's good. Anyway, as smoking is a personal taste, we cannot make them give up the habit of smoking.

Tanabe: Actually, they are going to go to the break room in order to smoke right? While they are smoking, we have to go there and call them to the phone.

Mizoguchi: That is the same thing as when they are in the restroom, isn't it.

Fujii: Hey, we are speaking about a different subject.

Fukuda: If we have a smoking place, only the break room is allowed. And then visitors may see we are smoking during office hours.

Tanabe: That's right. Apart from the break times.

Mizoguchi: I think so, too.

Tanabe: It might be hard not to smoke though the smokers may be able to quit smoking if they make an effort.

Fukuda: Well, this is how the times are. We need an excuse to give up

smoking.

Mizoguchi: It is good for us to have no smoking, but I have heard that people get fat if they stop smoking.

Fujii: Anyway, I will make an effort not to smoke. Why don't we try it?

(P. 167) **Practical Conversation-1**

Narita: It has been proposed that a service center be opened. What do you think about it?

Willy: I basically agree, but I think it should occur in the future rather than now or within the year.

Narita: But with the way things stand now, there's a heavy burden on the sales department, and a lot of consumers have complained that they can't get through on the phone to us, and the switchboard's practically overloaded. I think that the sales department can't handle it alone.

Willy: How would this be? Have the customers direct their inquiries to us by phone, fax, or letter, rather than by going to a service center. Then we could partition off some of the sales department room and hire two or three people to help handle the inquiries.

Narita: How does everyone feel?

(P. 168) **Practical Conversation-2**

Okabe: About the new product ...

Terao: Yes?

Okabe: As we're still in the process of planning its sales promotion, there's some people who feel that the price is too high.

Terao: Well, I just felt that it would be best to make it a little high.

Okabe: Yeah, but they think that the price would be too much of a burden for the age group we're targeting.

Terao: Couldn't we get them to buy it if we give it a high-class image and make it very appealing?

Okabe: But compared to the Ritz Corporation's similar product, I can't help but feel that ours is over-priced. Besides, because of the recession, consumers' purse strings are drawn tight, so they aren't going to go for something just because it's high-class.

Terao: Yeah, maybe so.

Okabe: In the first place, there's little difference to distinguish our product from Ritz's, other than just a novelty in design. With just that, it'd be difficult for sales staff in stores to explain the difference from that of Ritz. Also, today's young people are much more

clever when it comes to shopping.

Terao: All right. We'll have an urgent meeting on this, so I'd like for you to explain this again to everyone.

Okabe: Sure.

(P. 169) **Practical Conversation-3**

Masaoka: Endoh, could you come here a second? I'd like to ask you something about the staff for the new project.

Endoh: Yes.

(He goes to the manager's desk)

Sorry to have kept you waiting. What would you like to know?

Masaoka: I just thought it's a little strange that Suda isn't on your list. I mean his sales have been so good, but is there some problem?

Endoh: No, not at all.

Masaoka: I believe that it's the duty of management to provide talented employees with an environment where they can fully put their talents to use. Don't you agree?

Endoh: Yes, of course.

Masaoka: Well, then, shouldn't Suda be the first name on the list?

Endoh: Yes, but Suda isn't the only one who wants to do this project—there's several other people with the necessary ability who want to do it as well. I feel that the five people on the list are the best. Besides there still are quite a few other opportunities for Suda.

Masaoka: But do those five have the sales drive that Suda has? I somehow doubt it.

Endoh: But mere aggressiveness alone isn't good. After considering other qualities such as cooperativeness, I just felt that Suda perhaps isn't right for this project.

Masaoka: Hmm, maybe so. Well, I'll trust you on this one.

Endoh: Thank you. I really want to push these five on the project.

Coffee Break

[Not all new employees can get their desired posts] (P. 19)

Most Japanese companies have a lifetime employment system (although this is changing recently.) As a result, a company expects that new employees will become competent businesspeople through many business experiences. In other words, not all new employees can get their desired posts. It is thought that businesspeople should experience various situations, to gain business know-how, before they can get their desired posts.

[Keeping a poker face can be a communication skill] (P. 21)

Japanese are sometimes said to not use much facial expression-like a person with a poker face. Indeed, Japanese modestly express their feelings. The Japanese put importance on speaking with reserve. For example, Japanese dislike people who directly look displeased to others or those who scold their subordinates in front of coworkers. Having a poker face can be an important communication skill — You should be moderate in expressing negative things.

However, it can be tiring to always use such reserve. Drinking after work with coworkers gives Japanese businesspeople a chance to unwind from this stress. Informal language used in these after-hours unwinding is also taught in this text.

[Suggestions about business cards] (P. 25)

When you first meet a client, you normally exchange business cards, according to the order of introduction. Generally, Japanese is written on the front of one's card and English is written on the other side. However, many Japanese businesspeople have business cards in Japanese only.

When you give your business card, you should show the side on which Japanese is written. You should give it with both hands to the client. When receiving a client's business card, you should receive it with both hands. However, it is rude to write on the client's business card in front of that client.

During the meeting, you should avoid bending it, writing on it or playing with it. And it is also not good to leave it after the meeting. You should not put it into your pocket directly. A client's business card should be placed in your card holder.

Having a business card is indispensable

for keeping in touch with Japanese clients, and you may need your name in Japanese. It should be written in katakana. The best way is to ask your coworker to help you when making your business card.

For example, he or she might suggest including your middle name or might help with how to put your name into katakana. Chinese or Korean people may write their names in kanji, but should include furigana to show the correct native pronunciation. People from places where kanji are not used should not put their names into kanji because some Japanese might take it as a joke.

[Japanese favorite questions] (P. 29)

Many Japanese are apt to ask personal questions even though it might be the first time for them to meet you. For instance, they might ask 「おい、くつですか。(How old are you?)」, 「結婚していますか。(Are you married?)」, 「奥さん [ご主人] は日本人ですか。(Is your wife/husband Japanese?)」, 「お子さんは (Do you have any children?)」, 「何人いらっしゃるんですか。(How many kids do you have?)」 etc. However these are important for Japanese speakers. When they speak to others, Japanese change their speech styles in accordance with a person's age and status. In addition, Japanese may get a sense of closeness from personal information. As a result, Japanese may be able to get an appropriate distance to you. If you feel you are embarrassed to be asked such personal questions, you can avoid answering by asking the person a question. In case of a rude question, you may refuse to answer. However, yelling at the person or leaving your seat is not good because Japanese dislike confrontation. When you are asked an unpleasant question, you should look displeased, reply with a vague answer or a joke to them. That is a good way to respond without having trouble. For example, 「それは秘密です。...それも秘密です。(That is a secret. And that is also secret)」, 「ご想像にお任せします。(I leave it to your imagination.)」 ... etc. You should not express direct refusal to them such as with 「そんな質問は失礼です。(That is a rude question.)」, 「答える義務はありません。(I don't need to answer you.)」. In that case, most Japanese may be taken aback and feel great embarrassment. As a result, you might damage chances for good relations.

Furthermore, since many Japanese can

not imagine foreigners who can speak good Japanese and understand Japanese culture and customs, they may ask such questions such as 「漢字は読めますか。(Can you read kanji?)」, 「箸は使えますか。(Can you use chopsticks?)」, 「納豆は食べられますか。(Can you eat natto?)」, etc. Though you may be asked these everytime by Japanese, you should answer with politeness. That is the best way to keep good relations with Japanese.

[Expressing humility] (P. 33)

Humility is one feature of the Japanese language. For example, a new employee might say something like "I fear I may burden you with some trouble since I am a new employee, but I'll try my best" when meeting members of the company. This is not an unusual greeting among Japanese. In this case, he expressed not only his motivation but his situation as well. This idea of being humble is shared among the Japanese.

Saying something to yourself (1) (P. 41)

◎How do you show your happiness when something good happens?

- ①You got a new contract.
- ②You're being promoted.
- ③You now have workers under you.
- ④New computers have been installed.
- ⑤You got a paid vacation.
- ⑥Your section's sales have risen.

Saying something to yourself (2) (P. 51)

◎How do you express your disappointment about something that has gone wrong at work?

- ①You lost a contract to a competitor.
- ②Your bonus has been reduced.

[Kanji: the devil's letters?] (P. 65)

"What's the most fun in learning Japanese?" "What's the hardest thing?" Interesting enough, "Kanji" is the top answer for both of these questions. It seems that foreign students of Japanese who don't use kanji in their native countries can be divided into two groups: those who love kanji and those who detest kanji. In either case, such feelings can be explained by the uniqueness of kanji and the difficulty of the way in which they are used in Japan. Created in ancient China, kanji spread to surrounding nations where they greatly influenced the local languages. Japanese was the most influenced, as the Japanese people have always been good at importing useful ideas and things from abroad and adapting them to fit Japanese circumstances.

Let's now take a look at why kanji are

interesting and why they are difficult to use. Take for example, the kanji 日 of 日本. It is pictograph which represents the sun. The characters 日本 means "origin of the sun," as Japan was, for the ancient Chinese, the place where the sun rises. Also, like the sun in "Sunday," 日 is also in 日曜日 (Sunday). In addition, 日 can mean "day."

As you can see from this kanji are difficult because of their many readings. But the Japanese have found them to be useful in their word-forming power and visual appeal. No matter how difficult a word might be, if you have knowledge of kanji, you can more or less grasp the meaning of words you haven't seen before. Kanji certainly aren't the Devil's letters! You're sure to gain a lot by learning them.

[How to read proper nouns] (P. 79)

Not just foreigners, but even Japanese sometimes have trouble catching names of Japanese people or places when spoken.

For example, Saitoo-san can be mistaken for Satoo-san, and Oosawa can be mistaken for Ozawa.

Japanese often have trouble catching foreign names when heard just once. It is especially difficult to distinguish the regular syllables of Japanese from their voiced counterparts (such as "ke" from "ge," "sa" from "za" etc.) or from the palatalized syllables (such as "so" from "sho," "ki-yo" from "kyo," etc.). Thus it is a good idea to practice how to explain the syllables in your name for self-introductions, such as by saying, "It's like the 'pa' in 'pan'" or "It's like the 'ryo' in 'ryokoo.'" You should also take care to clearly enunciate long vowels (such as "too" versus "to") and double consonants (such as "kakko" versus "kako").

[Sumimasen] (P. 83)

There are many meanings to "sumimasen." For example, it can be used to get someone's attention, to apologize, or to show one's gratitude. Consider this conversation:

- A: すみません。
 B: はい、何ですか。ああ、それは、後でねっ、今忙しいから。
 A: すみません……。
 B: しょうがないな。わかった、今見るから。
 A: すみません。

An expression for parting can be used in place of this sumimasen, but it would leave the conversation incomplete and un-

natural. That is, in this case, expressly apologizing or thanking the person isn't necessary, but just saying "Good-bye" or something like that wouldn't be enough. Sumimasen is perfect for such cases.

[How to say a telephone number over the phone] (P. 89)

Generally read the number by each digit. The hyphen between the city code and area code should be read "no."

You can read "0" as "zero," "ree," or "maru." For "2" pronounce it "ni-i," for "5," "go-o" (slightly longer than usual). For "4" say it "yon" (don't say "shi"). For "7" if you say "shichi," it can be mistaken for "ichi," so use "nana."

You don't need to mention the area code when both the caller and receiver are in the same city.

The area codes for Tokyo and Osaka have 2 digits, the other big cities have 3, smaller cities have 4, and country towns have longer numbers.

The exchange number for Tokyo has 4 digits, the other big cities have 3, smaller cities have 2, and country towns have 1 or sometimes none at all.

e.g.) 0 4 4 — 2 0 5
zero-yon-yon no nii-zero-goo
— 3 1 0 7
no san-ichi-zero-nana

You need to be very careful when you pronounce the numbers. For example, if you pronounce "yon-yon" and "san-ichi" as "yo-nyon" and "sa-nichi," the other person won't recognize the numbers at all. So make sure to say each digit separately and clearly.

[Aizuchi] (P. 121)

Aizuchi, or words and gestures to show that one is listening, are used in many languages, but to Westerners it might seem that they are overused in Japanese. "Hai" and "un" are examples of the words and nodding one's head is such a gesture and they all serve to keep the flow of conversation smooth. That is, they affirm to the other person that you are listening. If they aren't used, the speaker will have to keep confirming that you are listening, thus breaking down the flow.

The spacing between aizuchi depends on the speed of the speaker, but doing them at each breath or pause helps make the flow smooth. When the speaker is fast, you can just nod and then say "Hai" at the pauses.

Aizuchi are absolutely necessary in Japanese conversation. To Japanese people, the interval between aizuchi in

Western languages seems too long and they wonder if the other person is really listening. Try to grasp the necessary timing of aizuchi in Japanese by listening to two Japanese people speak. You've probably seen Japanese people bowing or nodding when speaking on the phone, and this goes to show how ingrained the need for aizuchi is in Japanese people.

[Private calls] (P. 123)

Japanese companies generally do not allow employees to make private telephone calls in the office.

If you need to call your friends or family, you should use a public telephone during lunch or tea time.

If your friends or family call you, you should finish the conversation as soon as you can.

Many Japanese businesspeople don't let their family members call them at the office, so it may be better to tell your friends not to call often.

The best thing is to have them call you during your lunch or tea time if they need to call you.

Saying something to yourself (3) (P. 125)

◎How do you express surprise?

①A client has gone bankrupt.

②Your computer breaks down.

[Japanese can't say "no"] (P. 129)

Japanese people usually do not directly express their thoughts and opinions, but rather express them in an ambiguous and roundabout fashion. Also, as many Japanese wish to avoid direct confrontation, they find it difficult to directly say no to something. This is seen in the use of such expressions as "～だと思えます," "じゃないでしょうか," and "ちょっと..." and it is sometimes difficult for even Japanese people to know what another person is thinking. In such cases, it is necessary to rely on facial gestures and the overall flow of the conversation for communication clues.

Foreign businesspeople who are unfamiliar with this Japanese trait are likely to have a tough time in the Japanese business world. In cases where you can't ascertain a Japanese person's true opinion, if you ask another Japanese person who was present during the conversation what the true opinion was, you are likely to become accustomed to this trait.

Saying something to yourself (4) (P. 155)

◎Things don't necessarily always go well at the workplace. There are many cases where things go wrong and we are likely to complain.

1. I really don't like this work when I have to work overtime every day.
2. Why do I have to do so much? ちやうど
3. I can't take it anymore!
4. That section chief is too much of a stickler for details. けしこ

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