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HOSTING CHINESE DELEGATIONS: TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY

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The time, effort and dollars spent on arranging for a delegation from China can be great... HOWEVER, the impression of the visit on your Chinese guests goes a very long way in helping your partnership succeed. This applies not only to long-term partners and employees but especially to potential new customers, suppliers, and business partners. Making the most of a delegation's visit is an opportunity for good hosts to gain a long-term competitive advantage.

While the specifics of hosting vary based on the nature and purpose of the delegation, the suggestions below are basic, proven tactics for facilitating these intercultural events and for optimizing the host's entertainment budget and resources.

1. Understand the agenda

Be clear on the reason for the visit, from both your perspective and your visitors' and prepare accordingly. This very simple step is often overlooked, resulting in a waste of time and money. Prepare to "talk to" what the delegation is interested in. This also applies to visiting overseas employees. Understand the reason for their trip and your purpose in hosting them.

2. Provide Chinese language printed materials

Some members of the delegation will not be fluent in English and may not understand it at all. Even with a translator present, having handouts in Chinese that can be referred to later, is important. For delegations from China, use simplified Chinese characters. Traditional Chinese characters are used in Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

3. Match the ranks of the hosts and guests

If officials from the Chinese company or government are part of the delegation, arrange for equivalent-level US corporate or government officials to greet the delegation. This shows the proper respect to the visitors. Understanding the position of the Chinese guests and the profile of the Chinese company is part of the planning process.

4. Paint the picture and communicate well.

To create a framework for broader understanding, start by presenting relevant background information about the company or organization; then move to specifics. Presenting examples and precedents is also effective in making a memorable impression. For example, if you are trying to convince the delegation to invest in your company or region, highlight other successes and they were achieved.

5. Use an informal intermediary who speaks Chinese.

Arrange for a Chinese speaker(s) to be present to interact with the guests, especially if the delegation includes non-English speakers. This allows guests to ask questions informally, to have side conversations that will make them feel more at ease, and to get a better feeling for you as a host. This intermediary or



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cultural ambassador should be someone IN ADDITION TO the formal translator/interpreter and also somewhat familiar with the goals of the delegation's visit.

6. Carefully consider the food

Chinese delegations will be interested in sampling local fare, but in the longer term are most comfortable with Chinese food. Fish, vegetables and soup are the most appreciated alternatives. Serve warm and room-temperature beverages; iced tea (or iced anything) is not a favorite! If sandwiches are offered, make sure they can be picked up with a napkin or are wrapped in paper. Food is a great enjoyment for Chinese individuals. If there is a story behind local specialties, tell it: this makes it even better!

7. Make time for sightseeing and/or shopping

Delegation guests will be interested in local sights and shopping. Exceptions to this are rare, so *at the very least*, plan to point out local highlights—even if en route to somewhere else. Plan to take a group photo at a famous local spot or in front of the company building (with logo/sign) to commemorate the visit.

8. Arrange appropriate gifts

The best delegation souvenirs include locally produced products, food that is easy to transport, items with local company logos, things depicting the local area, and local items that may be appealing to children. Providing a modest gift for each delegation member is appropriate.

For more information or assistance hosting Chinese delegations, please contact us at info@blueheron8.com.

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