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Business in China: Singing for Your Supper

In helping executives prepare for **business in China**, we are often asked whether or not people really *DO* karaoke during business and whether it is necessary to sing.

The simple answer to both questions is YES.

Karaoke involves singing along with a music video or soundtrack. The background music and written lyrics to the song are provided. The karaoke participant follows along with the video prompt and sings the lyrics into a microphone—usually while standing in front of a group—facing the video screen and not the audience (who are also the participants).

For those who have not grown up with this tradition, the idea of singing in front of an audience, over a public address system is akin to the thrill of dental surgery. However, with the right approach, karaoke can be fun and beneficial to your business. Keep these tips in mind:

1. Karaoke is one way to fast-track business relationships. Being open to the idea shows goodwill and good character—both are necessary for doing business in China.
2. The karaoke singer is not penalized for lack of singing ability though he/she may be viewed negatively for not participating at all.
3. Reluctant singers may be more comfortable singing with a partner or in a group—this is acceptable. Give at least give some appearance of singing. If you sing well or are used to karaoke, help the non-singers.
4. Singers should choose songs in a language in which they are fluent, or should sing a song they already know well. Written lyrics pop up very quickly on the video screen.
5. Praise the singing ability of others. Some people are genuinely good; most appreciate the reassurance.
6. Alcohol and karaoke go hand-in-hand. Drinking water or juice, in addition, helps to prevent hoarseness and bad business decisions.
7. Karaoke is a socially acceptable forum to “let loose”. Participants should do their best, but should not take themselves too seriously. Like life, karaoke can be as fun as the individual makes it!

Blue Heron Holdings provides executive briefings, advisory service, and intercultural business training for organizations seeking to thrive in the US-China arena. For more about how to be successful in China, review our [free articles](#) or [contact us directly](#).

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