



Creating opportunity, Inspiring success

# WORKPLACE CULTURE GUIDE

TOKYO





Working in a new environment can be daunting, so this document will give you a few tips on the often unspoken rules and guidelines of an office in Tokyo.





**Internship Role-** As with all positions, your role will progress at a rate that your supervisor sees fit. Don't hesitate to take the initiative and set goals that both parties are comfortable with. A demonstration of ambition and independence will make you stand out from the competition in any business environment.



**Workplace Hierarchy-** In Japanese the word "Senpai" refers to those in positions of seniority. Big Japanese corporations tend to have a steeper hierarchy structure. Always show respect to those you report to, as well as your colleagues in general.

**What to Wear -** Dress codes in Japanese companies vary from one to another. While the norm is formal, conservative business wear, some companies are starting to open up to more casual / smart casual styles.

**Settling In-** Being a good host is part of Japanese culture- they will do their best to make you feel welcomed. Of course, you are also expected to meet them halfway and to treat your colleagues with respect, as they do with you. A positive working relationship will not only bring you friends, but serve as a key step to expanding your professional network.

**Things Not To Say** - Do not use swear words and avoid controversial topics of conversation. Every team and office are different in what is acceptable to discuss, but stay away from sex, politics, religion and moderate your language. Profanity may offend some colleagues and can look unprofessional.

**Mobile Phone Best Practice** - Manage your mobile devices. Have your phone/tablet on silent or vibrate and turn down your email alerts or other noises, as this can create a difficult environment for your coworkers.

**Making Personal Calls** - Try to avoid taking personal calls during the day. If you have to make sure you take them away from the desk – find a meeting room or somewhere public where you can talk more freely, as you don't want to disturb others.

**Be Punctual** – Arriving late for a meeting implies a lack of respect for someone else's time. In the same way, show respect for others' time and be observant of when people have time to talk and when they don't.







**Working Hours** – The standard working time in Japan is 9am to 5 or 6pm, five days a week. The Japanese workforce is highly committed and responsible. While tasks should be completed without delay, it is nonetheless very important to set realistic deadlines with your supervisors to avoid an overwhelming workload.

**Keep Your Desk Tidy** – Even if you don't mind the mess, it doesn't inspire confidence in your organizational abilities.

**Email Etiquette** - Who really needs to be copied in and do you really need to "reply all"? Adding unnecessary items to inboxes isn't helpful – the less thoughtfully you communicate the less effective it will be.

**Commuting** – If traveling to or from work on public transport there are a few common rules to follow. Make sure you let people off the train before you try to board. Be considerate to fellow travelers and avoid taking up more than one seat, give up your seat to anyone that needs it more (pregnant, elderly or disabled people). In subway stations, you should stand on the right and walk on the left of the escalators.



**Languages** – While the locals can read, write and listen, they might be less fluent when it comes to spoken English. Having said that, Tokyo is immensely popular as a travel destination and you should have no problem getting around in the city without speaking any Japanese.

**Be Considerate** - The main source of conflict at work is generally caused by a lack of consideration for others in what is a relatively confined space. Use your common sense to make sure that you are always courteous and considerate. Avoid doing anything that is likely to negatively impact your coworkers' ability to get things done and you will be fine.

**Teamwork** – Japanese companies value teamwork a lot. Some morning team exercises and after-work drinks are very common in Tokyo. Not only are they good for stress relief, they are also very important in building a successful team to achieve the company's goals.