

Few books get to their main subject faster than *Kiss, Bow, Or Shake Hands*. A single-page introduction, four more pages providing a brief cultural orientation, and off you go. What follows are chapters on each of 60 countries around the world. From Argentina to Venezuela, from Belarus to Ukraine, from Belgium to Turkey, and from China to Thailand, many places are covered, and there's a wealth of information to be had. A few countries are missing that you might be looking for, though, such as Austria, the formerly Yugoslav countries, or South Africa. The content provided follows the same pattern for each country:



- Country Background

This section lists facts about the country's history, government, language(s), religion, and demographics. With little more than a page in most cases, it is far from comprehensive, but it can nonetheless be useful for the hurried traveler.

- Cultural Orientation

Cognitive styles (how information is organized and processed), negotiation strategies (what people accept as evidence), and value systems (the basis for behavior) are introduced in this section. Alas, the information is often shal-

low and at times misleading. For all but the most cursory cross-cultural interactions, you may want to familiarize yourself with the target culture through other sources.

- Business Practices

Here, the book gets a lot meatier. Topics such as preparing for appointments and conducting meetings, negotiating, and business entertaining are extensively covered, including many hints on attitudes, manners, and proper behaviors. This part is both relevant and practical.

- Protocol

The remaining section for each country covers greetings, titles and formal address, gestures, giving and receiving gifts, as well as recommended dress. While brief, the content is usually appropriate and effective.

First published in 1994, this book has not yet been updated. Accordingly, some of the information is a bit dated, but don't worry: cultures don't change that quickly. Worst case, you may appear a little old-fashioned.

Don't rely on *Kiss, Bow, Or Shake Hands* if you're seeking to understand the principal values of a foreign culture that you're dealing with. It won't give you enough insight. Used as a preparation guide to understand what to expect and how to behave in standard business situations, however, it will prove valuable and let you avoid many common cultural pitfalls.

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A seasoned former executive of a Fortune 500 company, he regularly interacted with employees, customers, outsourcing partners, and third parties in more than 25 countries around the world. These included many parts of Asia, e.g., China, India, and Japan. Originally from Germany, he has lived and worked both in the United States and in Europe.

