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Learn Your World: Japan

Career Development



To support your global practice, ACC Docket offers country-specific fun facts from your peers who've been there — literally.



Economy

GDP (purchasing power parity in USD) \$4.843 trillion

Population

126,434,964

Corruption

According to Transparency International's "2014 Corruption Perception Index," Japan is the 15th "cleanest" (i.e., least corrupt) country out of the 175 surveyed.

Economic Forecast

Output growth slowed to around 0.5 percent in 2014, reflecting in part the impact of the consumption tax hike. Output growth is projected to rebound 0.75 percent in 2015 and 1 percent in 2016, supported by improving labor market conditions and expanded monetary easing. The weaker yen is expected to help sustain export growth and push inflation closer to the 2 percent target, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Additional Resources

[English language Japanese newspaper](#)
[Japan National Tourism Organization](#)

Business and social protocols vary from country to country, from culture to culture. Some Western business people consider Japanese customs a bit peculiar and rather "exotic" and sometimes

confusing. Do not worry too much! In Japan's business society, protocols and etiquettes show plenty of variety depending on the business field and region. Even some Japanese are sometimes puzzled.

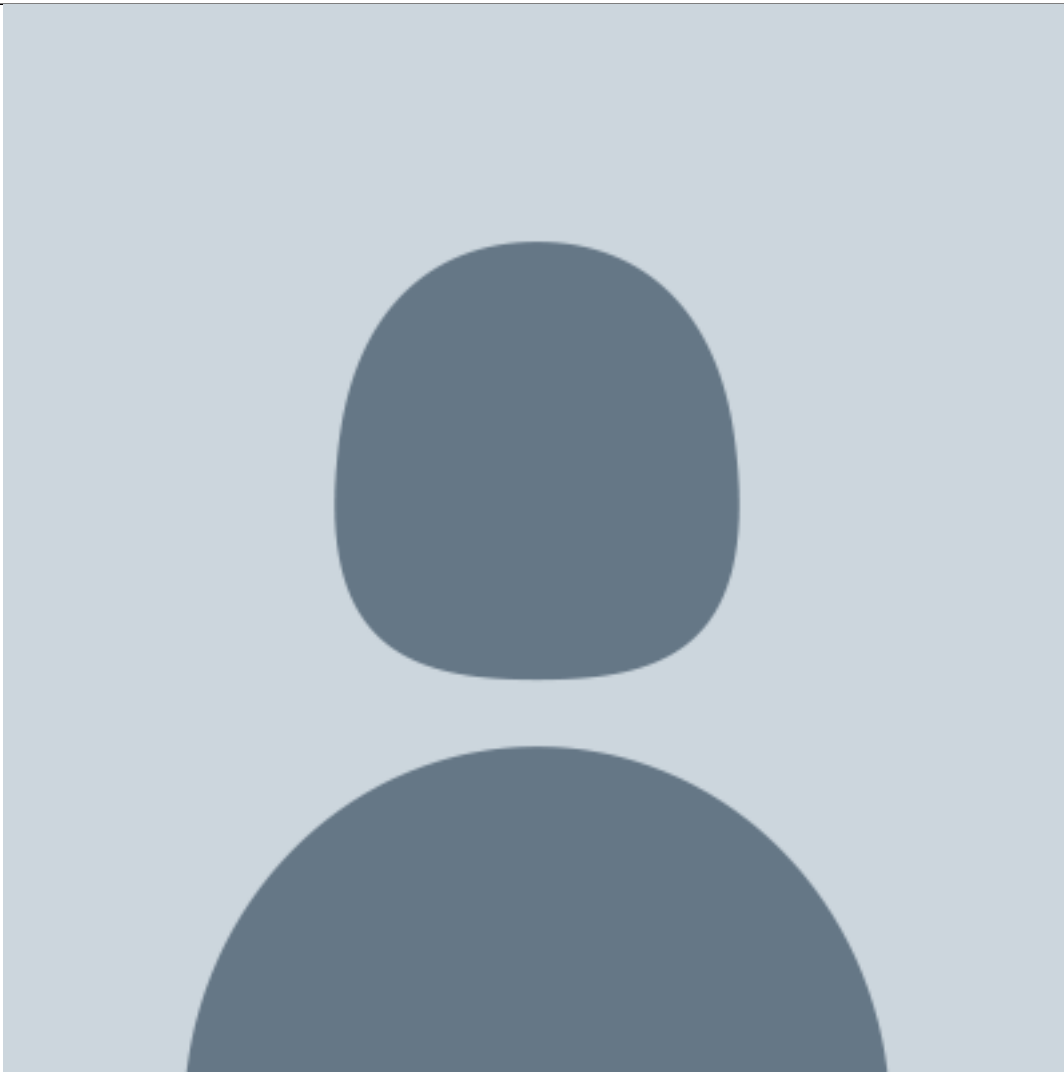
One of the most well known examples could be escalator etiquette. In Tokyo, in eastern Japan, people who do not walk on the escalator should stand on the left to keep the right side free for those who want to walk. However, in Osaka, the second largest city which is in the western part (Kansai region), the custom is reversed, i.e., the left side should be kept open. There has never been a reasonable justification for the difference.

Other things you might wonder is how to get on a lift or elevator. Prevailed practice seems to let seniors "first-in and first-out" and a position distant from the door is considered as a highly prioritised one. But this sometimes causes practical confusion. "First-in" would be OK if people are going to the empty lift. But what do you do if the senior person rides in the middle, particularly if the lift is crowded? And when he is exiting the lift? You have to be genius to successfully compromise practicality with etiquette.

Again, even I am puzzled with the protocol of seating in a car. Japanese custom generally considers the seat just behind the driver as the most prioritised position; thus, the most senior person should be there. Some people justify this as the safest position in the car, but that explanation is hardly convincing. I think this is another reflection of the "first-in" concept. Nevertheless, this is, I believe, different from Western business protocol. So, some Japanese businesspeople accustomed with the Western world would take the seat behind the assistant driver ("shotgun"). Even some conventional Japanese prefer that seat, claiming it's more comfortable because it has more space.

So, what could I advise? Perhaps, the best I can say is to relax and be flexible. Do not worry about a "mistake" or two...

[Masahiro Homa](#)



Executive Officer and Chief Legal Officer

Nissin Food Holdings Co., Ltd.