

# How To

## Attend Chinese Trade Fairs More Effectively

### Volume II



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## **Chapter 1 - Reasons You Should Attend Trade Fairs Regularly**

Attending Chinese Trade Fairs is essential to maintaining a good relationship with existing suppliers and building new ones. The Chinese business culture favors frequent personal contacts with their overseas trading partners and meetings at Trade Fairs is one preferred method. Therefore, you are best advised to prepare yourself in order to make a favorable showing. Poor preparations can leave a negative impression about how your company conducts business.

### **Information Needed by Small to Medium Sized Businesses**

This eBook assumes your company to be a small or medium size importer with an established customer base in your home country or a company interested in starting their own importing business but is lacking the necessary experience to do so.

### **Trade Fairs can Boost Company Profits**

The biggest reason for starting an import business or increasing your import volume is to improve your company's overall profit margin. The goal of this book is to help you do just that. This eBook will help you to make the right preparations making your Trade Fair visit successful.



## **Chapter 2 - Spectacular Changes Have Taken Place with Trade Fairs Over the Years**

When you visit the Chinese exhibition halls in Hong Kong or Mainland China for the first time, you will be surprised with their spacious design, modern architecture, and their size.

Today, trade shows are easily accessible by taxi, bus, or subway and offer every service you can imagine.

### **The Early Years**

That was not always the case. I still remember the time when during lunch hours all activities at the Guangzhou Fair came to a stand still and the exhibitors booths were temporarily closed. It was often difficult to find English speaking staff on a complete floor let alone at every supplier's booth.

At the end of the fair's daily hours the main lights were immediately turned off and the exhibit booth staff would drop everything and leave.

The staff at the exhibit booths had little knowledge about their products and you would not hear back from them for weeks after visiting their booth.

The different halls were difficult to navigate and you had to climb many stairs if you wanted to visit different floors. Elevators or escalators were not available then.

### **Changes for the Better**

Fortunately, all of this has completely changed. Now, each of the exhibit booths usually has English speaking personnel and most have notebook computers connected to the internet.

Quite often, you receive the suppliers email reply in your mailbox when you return to your hotel for the evening.

They don't close the booths during lunchtime any more and they don't drop everything in the evening if customers are still at their booth.

Different floors are easily navigated by elevators or escalators and the halls now have well functioning air conditioning systems in place. In other words, it is a much more pleasant experience visiting trade fairs than it was 10-15 years ago.

### **China is Constantly Changing**

Some outdated brochures misadvise visitors how to attend Trade Fairs because the information is obsolete. China is changing rapidly and it is important that you have current information when planning your trade show visit.

## **Chapter 3 - Finding and Selecting Import Products**

A significant part of your preparation before attending Chinese Trade Fairs is finding and selecting products that you want to import from China and that you know will sell successfully in your home country.

### **China is a Big Shopping Mall**

If you consider China as a large shopping mall allowing you to randomly select from all kinds of products, you are only partially correct.

You still have to do your homework weeks and months before your scheduled trip to China. You need to spend substantial time evaluating your home market for suitable products that are in demand or will be in demand and the customers who want to buy them.

If you only duplicate what your competitors are pursuing, you will end up importing too many “Me Too” products, which will drive down your profit margin. By all means, avoid looking for products that are already being imported by large buying organizations such as retail chain stores, department stores, or specialized importers with their own distribution channels.

It will prove impossibly difficult for you to compete with their buying power and their own buying offices in China.

### **A Forward Thinking Strategy**

Since it takes months for your products to reach your warehouse after placing an order, a forward thinking strategy is essential to avoid piling up goods that nobody will want anymore, once they arrive.

Searching for new trends can be quite time consuming if you do not know where to start. Fortunately, there is a nice program available that can make your task much easier and it will save you a lot of time.

The program is called "Trend Cockpit" and you can download it from the internet at this link: [Trend Cockpit](#) . This program is amazing because it uses a cockpit approach to log on to major trend setters like Amazon, eBay, Google, YouTube etc. Altogether, there are 34 different web addresses of trendsetters. It is a very large program at 200MB but it's worth downloading because you also receive a 45 minute video explaining in detail how to use this program and where to find the latest trends.

### **Trends Change**

Trendy products enable you to greatly increase your profit when you are among the first importing them to your home country. The biggest challenge is moving fast enough. Otherwise, the selected products are already out of trend.

The market is frequently changing. A decade ago, you could sell some products for several years. Today, products are more likely to have a life cycle as short as only 8 months or so.

This also explains why you must go and visit Chinese Trade Fairs on a regular basis. Otherwise, you will miss the newest developments. You need to know in advance what is in the pipeline and who other than the manufactures can tell you?

## **Chapter 4 - Create Your Own Corporate Identity**

Since you know you need to move fast, you better begin preparation of your corporate identity by establishing your own brand name, logo, and sales packaging design.

### **The Importance of Branding**

Many importers underestimate the importance of this step and get into trouble later on. Having your own brand name and a convincing sales packaging design can be the main key to the success for your import business.

Why is it so important to have your own brand name and gift box design? It involves your corporate image towards both the Chinese manufacturers and your customers in your home country. It sets you apart from the rest of the crowd with a professional touch.

Creating your own sales packaging design may seem like a waste of time and money since most manufacturers can provide you with their own (very simple) designs at no additional charge. Unfortunately, they will provide this service to everyone who asks for it and identical look alike goods may even enter your home market via another importer without your knowledge.

The result is more competition and you will be unable to achieve your planned profit margin. In other words, you wasted a lot of time and money without reaping the full benefit.

### **Get Some Help**

Let's start with the brand name and logo first. You should seriously consider getting some outside help because the brand name that you choose for your products may already be registered somewhere else. It would be disastrous if you became entangled in legal battles with the

registered brand name owner after you have distributed your imported products in your home country.

Ask a lawyer to do this for you because they have the tools to conduct a thorough research and can register your brand name for either worldwide or local use.

### **Think Product Expansion**

Theoretically, your chosen brand name may only be appropriate for a certain type of product but I suggest choosing one which can be used for a wide range of products. You will certainly plan to expand into other products in the future and do not want to be hindered by not having a suitable brand name to do so.

Another reason is that the Chinese Government has implemented quite a few restrictions that help protect you. The restrictions prevent factories from producing and shipping branded products to other than the legal owners of the brand name.

If you have created a nice professional looking sales package design, there is always the risk that some factory or other importer may copy it and distribute it to other customers not necessarily in your home country. There is not much that you can do about this if you don't protect your brand now. You can easily see why your own brand name is so important.

### **The Concept Stage**

At this point, your sales packaging design should only be in the concept stage. You should have color combinations, graphics, any photos you will use, etc. The final design can be only created after you have finalized your product selection.

After you have finished preparations for your corporate identity, you will begin focusing on the cost calculations of the products you want to buy in

China. In the next step, you have to look at the Incoterms, Tariffs, and at the Landed Cost Calculation.

When you attend a Chinese Trade Fair for the first time, you could look quite foolish if you do not have a minimum knowledge about import trade terms and import calculations. To prevent this from happening, please study the following two chapters carefully and familiarize yourself with the details.



## Chapter 5 - Incoterms and Tariffs

Below is a link to a chart showing you the most common **Incoterms**, that are the standard definitions of trade terms by the **International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)**. Incoterms is the abbreviation for International Commercial Terms. They are internationally recognized as indispensable evidence of the buyer's and seller's responsibilities under a sales contract.

### Link to Incoterms Chart

<http://www.iccwbo.org/incoterms/wallchart/wallchart.pdf>

It is also a good idea to visit their online bookshop and find out which books you may need for staying on top of following subjects:

- Model Commercial eBooks
- Trade Reference eBooks
- International Banking eBooks
- Institute of World Business Law eBooks

### Link to ICC Business Bookstore

<http://www.iccbooks.com/>

### About Tariffs

Here is a link to the different import tariffs for most countries. It is essential you familiarize yourself with the details because it is needed for your cost calculation. You cannot expect that every factory knows the details for your import costs.

### Link to International Customs Tariffs Bureau

<http://www.bitd.org/Search.aspx>

## Chapter 6 -The Import Calculation

After you have familiarized yourself with the Incoterms and Customs Tariffs, you want to establish your import calculation scheme for the selected products.

### Other Costs

This may seem like too much bureaucracy to you but believe me, it is necessary if you want to become successful with your import business. Before you travel to China, you must do some homework and do your calculations for the different products you want to import, otherwise negotiations will be much more time consuming.

You already have a rough idea of the achievable buying price from recent communications with the suppliers but of course, rough does not mean final. You should do some reverse calculating because you need an idea about what price you can sell larger quantities in your home country at the highest possible profit margin for your company. Based on that price, you will do your reverse calculation by taking under consideration all the costs that apply and only then can you arrive at your ideal buying price.

If you want to negotiate better prices from your factories, you first need to decide which buying terms will apply.

The Incoterms most commonly chosen by importers are **FOB** and **CIF**.

### FOB

This stands for Free On Board and its terms are:

- Carriage to be arranged by the buyer
- Risks transfer from seller to buyer when goods pass the ship's rail
- Costs transfer from the seller to the buyer when the goods pass the ship's rail

## **CIF**

This stands for Cost, Insurance, and Freight and its terms are:

- Carriage and insurance to be arranged by the seller
- Risks transfer from seller to buyer when goods pass the ship's rail
- Costs transfer at port of destination with buyer paying such costs as are not for the seller's account under the contract of carriage

Most importers will choose buying at FOB prices because it allows them more flexibility in choosing their own freight forwarder, insurance company, and a greater transparency of total costs.

Factories always want to reduce their own risk by calculating higher freight rates for their CIF price quotations to be on the safe side. This has a negative impact on your landing cost and you have no way of really knowing the breakdown of costs. It is much better to negotiate FOB prices and control the freight rates by selecting the forwarder/shipping company of your choice.

Once you have built up a business relationship with your forwarder you can expect preferential treatment and receive early warnings. For instance, if there is an indication that the freight rates will go up in the near future.

The same applies to the insurance costs, which you can reduce by negotiating better terms with insurance companies in your home country.

Here is a comparison of buyer & seller responsibilities for FOB versus CIF:

<b>Services</b>	<b>FOB</b>	<b>CIF</b>
Warehouse Storage	Seller	Seller
Warehouse Labor	Seller	Seller
Export Packing	Seller	Seller
Loading Charges	Seller	Seller
Inland Freight	Seller	Seller
Terminal Charges	Seller	Seller
Forwarder's Fees	Buyer	Seller
Loading On Vessel	Seller	Seller
Ocean/Air Freight & Insurance	Buyer	Seller
Charges On Arrival At Destination	Buyer	Buyer
Duty, Taxes & Customs Clearance	Buyer	Buyer
Delivery To Destination	Buyer	Buyer

### **Simple Cost Calculation**

As an importer, you should always keep complete cost calculations in mind. This requires more than only calculating the landed costs.

Below is a simple calculation scheme, which can be applied for various kinds of products but for some specific products, such as consumer electronics, extra charges may apply that have to be taken into consideration.

I do not recommend buying products at ex-factory prices because you will become involved in organizing the local transport in China, which is sometimes very difficult, depending on the region your factory is located

in. The factory already has the connections and can handle that much more efficiently than you.

### Simple Calculation Scheme

<p><b>EXW</b> (ex-factory selling price) + FOB costs (outbound) = <b>FOB</b> + Ocean transport = <b>CFR</b> + Insurance + Finance + Provision for bad debts + Credit insurance = <b>CIF</b> (landed cost) + of equal importance for the exporter's consideration: + Import duties + Inland transport = <b>DDP</b> + Importer's margin + Wholesaler's margin + Retailer's margin + VAT (UK and EU Only) = <b>Consumer price</b></p>
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## **Chapter 7 - Decide What Specifications Your Company Needs**

Prices that are quoted to you during your meetings with suppliers at the Trade Fairs are for information only and will not reflect the cost for your specific requirements. Be sure you inform each supplier about your requirements early in a conversation. This enables them to calculate the cost more accurately.

### **What is a Specific Requirement?**

A specific requirement could be a more complex sales packaging. For example a window box that is more expensive.

Another specific requirement could be an instruction manual in several languages that are often needed for Europe. Importers from EC countries sometimes request up to 12 languages in their instruction manual, which is more expensive than only 1 or 2 languages.

Another requirement often requested by Hypermarkets and Supermarkets is an additional semi transparent PP strip. This prevents customers from opening the sales packaging during shopping and removing part of the contents. Depending on the size of the sales packaging, two or more of these PP strips maybe needed.

For electrical products, the plug is a substantial cost factor. The British BS plug is more expensive than the US plug.

The length of the electric cable is another cost factor. If your toaster must have a cable length of 1.50 meters, it will cost you more than one that is only 0.75 meters long.

## Quality Requirements

Your quality requirements are a very important cost factor. The requested quality standard is defined by your requested **Acceptable Quality Level** (AQL) that sets the limits for the satisfactory process average.

Usually you have 3 defect categories

1. Critical defect
2. Major defect
3. Minor defect

Here I provide only a short overview because this subject is thoroughly covered in my other eBook [How to Assure Quality of Imports From China](#).

If a critical defect is discovered during a **Final Random Inspection**, the whole lot will be automatically rejected and must be re-worked or re-produced.

Allowed Major defects range mostly from Major 1.0 - Major 2.5 but that depends on the products. Hi-tech products such as consumer electronics or small/large electrical home appliances range between Major 1.0 - Major 1.5.

Allowed Minor defects range mostly from Minor 2.5 - Minor 4.0 but that also depends on the products. Hi-tech products such as consumer electronics or small/large electrical home appliances range between Minor 2.5 - Minor 4.0.

## License and Royalty Fees

Other important cost factors are license and royalty fees that have to be negotiated with certain suppliers. DVD players/recorders, MP3 Players etc. are some examples.



If you or the factory do not pay these fees and you get caught after importing the goods, it will be very expensive and could even ruin your company.

You should realize by now that you need to know all the details before discussing or negotiating prices with any supplier during your visit at the Trade Fair.

## Chapter 8 - Which Chinese Trade Fairs Should You Visit?

Please refer to the following links for all Chinese Trade Fairs in Hong Kong and in Mainland China.

### Trade Fair Calendars

Hong Kong: <http://tradeshowcalendar.globalsources.com/TRADE-SHOW/Country/HK/Hong-Kong.HTM>

Mainland China: <http://tradeshowcalendar.globalsources.com/TRADE-SHOW/Country/CN/China.HTM>

Since I do not know which kind of products you want to import, you need to select the appropriate Trade Fair yourself using the above links to the Trade Show Calendar provided by Global Sources.

### Must Attend Trade Fairs

However, I do advise you attend a few specific Trade Fairs. These are an absolute must attend for importing professionals regardless which other Trade Fairs you want to visit.

Canton (Guangzhou) Spring Fair Phase I **April 15 -20** Every year

Canton (Guangzhou) Spring Fair Phase II **April 25 - 30**. Every year

Canton (Guangzhou) Autumn Fair Phase I **October 15 -20** Every year

Canton (Guangzhou) Autumn Fair Phase II **October 25 -30** Every year

Please be aware that there are two different Exhibition Centers in Guangzhou:

1. The Linhua Complex right in the center of the city

2. The Pazhou Complex is a fantastic new building outside of the city center

### **Canton Trade Fairs**

Please refer to the following link to Canton Fair Online:

<http://www.cantonfair.org.cn/en/index.asp>

By checking this link you can verify the Phase and complex you need to attend for your specific product categories.

### **Hong Kong Trade Fairs**

The other important Trade Fairs are the Hong Kong Trade Fairs. Depending on your product categories, it might even be possible to combine several Hong Kong Trade Fair visits along with a visit to the Canton Fair afterwards.

The most important Trade Fairs in Hong Kong are:

- Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair in **January of each year**
- Hong Kong Fashion Week for Fall/Winter in **January of each year**
- Asia's Fashion Jewelry & Accessories Fair **in March of each year**
- HK Watch, Clock, Optical Parts and Accessories Fair **in March of each year**
- China Sourcing Fair Electronics & Components **April 12 - 15 of each year**
- Hong Kong Electronics Fair Spring Edition **April 14 -17 of each year**
- Hong Kong House Ware Fair **April of each year**
- China Sourcing Fair Gifts & Home Products **April of each year**
- Hong Kong Gifts & Premium Fair **April of each year**
- Hong Kong Fashion Week for Spring/Summer **in July of each year**

- China Sourcing Fair Electronics & Components **October 12 -15 of each year**
- China Sourcing Fair Electronics & Components **October 12 -15 of each year**
- Hong Kong Electronics Fair Autumn Edition **October 13 -16 of each year**
- China Sourcing Fair Gifts & Home Products **October of each year**

There are also two exhibition centers in Hong Kong:

1. Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre located in Wan Chai
2. Asia World-Expo located close to the Hong Kong airport facilities

Both venues have easy access by public transport and since Asia World-Expo is outside the city, it can be conveniently reached by the superfast Airport Express Train.

If you want to know about the location and details for each Trade Fair in Hong Kong, please refer to the following link:

Hong Kong: <http://tradeshowcalendar.globalsources.com/TRADE-SHOW/Country/HK/Hong-Kong.HTM>

### **Attending Several Fairs in One Trip**

It should be obvious that you can only combine visits to different Trade Fairs in Hong Kong and Mainland China if they happen to take place in April or October.

Many buyers take advantage of combining their specific Hong Kong based Trade Fair in April with the corresponding Trade Fair in Canton. That way you get the most information and need only one intercontinental flight to achieve it.

## **Other Regional Trade Fairs**

As I mentioned before, there are additional Trade Fairs in other parts of China, which may be well worth your visit.

For instance, the **China International Consumer Goods Fair in Ningbo** is south of Shanghai. This Trade Fair will be arranged in June every year.

Besides that, there are other Trade Fairs in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Beijing. Since there are so many, you can contact the Trade Fair Organizers for further details. Please refer to the following link:  
Mainland China: <http://tradeshowcalendar.globalsources.com/TRADE-SHOW/Country/CN/China.HTM>

I have visited many of them and found the Trade Fairs in Ningbo and Shanghai quite interesting but it very much depends on the kind of products you are looking for.

It is also helpful to ask your suppliers or the companies that you want to meet in China whether any of them will be attending one or more of these fairs or what they know about different trade fairs.

Being a local, if they don't attend why waste your hard earned money by going there?

Another way is to get a list of current Trade Fair exhibitors or one from last year's participants and find out whether they are manufacturing the products you are looking for.

## **Don't Waste Time and Money**

Your primary task is to find out which vendors you will be able to meet when you get there. This is the most important question because if you

end up at the wrong Trade Fair, it doesn't matter how well prepared you are. Going to the wrong Trade Fair in China can cost you thousands of dollars and many days of wasted time. Best to do your homework thoroughly to avoid having your trip turn into a disaster. Or ask somebody who is already in China to investigate and advise you.

### **Register Online**

You can register online for most of the Trade Fairs by using the links I have provided. You should definitely go for it because it saves you time and money in the long run by getting you in direct contact with as many suppliers as possible.

After your company registers for the first time, you will automatically receive your visitor's pass for the Hong Kong Trade Fairs by mail. The Canton Fairs send an e-invitation which entitles you to free entrance. However, you need to register either at your hotel or at the entrance of the Guangzhou exhibition centers by presenting your e-invitation, a name card, and a photo to receive your entrance badge.

## **Chapter 9 - Booking a Hotel**

You have already learned that the hotels are quite busy during the major Trade Fair seasons of April and October. Before you plan anything else, select and book your hotel first.

### **Hotel Location and Rate Hikes**

There are two rules to be observed:

1. The closer your hotel is located to the exhibition centre the more expensive your accommodation will be.
2. During the peak season, (Major Trade Fair season) hotels substantially raise room rates. Especially, if you are not a frequent guest. In China, some hotel room rates may increase as much as 100%, but in Hong Kong it is usually about 20-30%.

Be advised to book your hotel as early as possible because without a confirmed hotel booking it would not make any sense to book your flight or make appointments with your suppliers.

### **Getting Around Hong Kong**

You also should consider what is more important to you, staying in a first class hotel or being very near the exhibition center to avoid public transportation. You can save substantial money by staying further away in a comfortable hotel but at a much lower room rate.

The public transportation system in Hong Kong is excellent and inexpensive. You can save quite a lot of money but have the inconvenience of spending some extra time traveling.

For instance, the Airport Express Train shuttles you to the main hotel districts in only about 20-30 minutes. It is much cheaper than taking a



taxi if you are travelling alone. They have airline check-in counters at Hong Kong and Kowloon Stations where you can drop off your luggage and pickup your boarding pass for the trip back home.

If you are with a group of people, it may be cheaper to use a taxi which costs approximately HK\$ 400 into downtown. However, the group may have too much luggage and may need two taxis for the transfer.

You still need a taxi getting from the Airport Express Kowloon and Hong Kong stations to your hotel. It is only a short distance and will not cost much.

### **Hong Kong Hotel Considerations**

The hotels closest or directly next to the Exhibition Centre are located in Wan Chai. This is a well-known entertainment nightspot if you want to explore Hong Kong's nightlife on foot.

The other major business hotel area is located in Tsim Sha Tsui in Kowloon. The hotels there are all very expensive but you will be near the main tourist shopping centers and it is a convenient place to stay.

If you want to save on costs and (the subject of another of my eBooks), you could choose a hotel further away from the exhibition centre in Wan Chai. The following link helps you find area street maps with hotel locations. You should find one that best suits your financial situation.

<http://www.hong-kong-hotels-network.com/hong-kong-maps/map-tsim-sha-tsui.htm>

### **The Executive Floor**

If you want to splurge, consider the relatively expensive executive floor in of your hotel. It offers many conveniences such as:

- Welcome fruit basket
- Daily newspaper

- Free 24/7 internet connection
- Free local calls and fax
- Discounts on international calls
- Free use of their business lounge with free snacks and drinks
- Free use of conference room up to a total of 2 hours per booked hotel room
- Discount on room service food and in their restaurants (10% on average)
- Separate check-in counter
- Free breakfast buffet
- Discount for laundry and dry cleaning services (10-20% on average)
- Later than usual check-out (depending on the season, as late as 6:00PM)
- Larger room size

Take it all into consideration when comparing how much you have to pay for a standard room versus a room on the executive floor. Even considering all of the conveniences and discounts, the room rates of executive floor rooms are much higher.

Hong Kong is a major business city. There are a limited number of executive floor rooms and they fill up very quickly. With a high occupancy rate, the rooms are seldom discounted. Why would the hotel be tempted to reduce their room rate if they are confident of renting them at a higher rate?

### **Lowering Hotel Costs**

Also, keep in mind that there is always a coffee shop outside the hotel that offers a complete breakfast at a fraction of the cost the hotel would charge you.

When I stayed in Las Vegas, I also used a diner across from my hotel for breakfast and got a free coffee refill and plenty of food at bargain prices. The same applies to Hong Kong and Guanzhou, although Guangzhou might be a little bit more difficult because not everybody understands English, as is the case in Hong Kong.

Make a few cost calculations and then use the provided links to book a hotel room.

I suggest that you do a little bargaining with the hotel for a better room rate. Of course that is only possible if you book your room directly and not through an agent.

You have to convince the hotel that you intend to become a long-term customer. Give them a forecast of how many room nights you will book with them each year. That and the long-term prospect is the only thing that counts with them.

The negotiations may not be easy but it's an opportunity to sharpen your negotiation skills before negotiating prices with your suppliers.

### **Getting Around Guangzhou**

In Guangzhou, the situation is a little bit different from Hong Kong. The traffic during the morning and evening rush hours is extremely heavy. It can take you an hour or so to reach the new exhibition centre. However, there is the new **Shangri-La Hotel** that is right next to the exhibition centre. It is a five-star hotel and therefore more expensive.

The **White Swan Hotel**, another five star hotel and is also an excellent choice because it is located on the historical Shamian Island in the Pearl River. It has an outside grill restaurant where you can wine and dine in the evening. They, like most of the other large hotels, provide a free

shuttle bus service to the exhibition centre. Be sure to book it if you want to save the cost of taxis.

If you visit the older exhibition centre, which is right in the city centre, you can try the China Hotel or the Dong Fang Hotel that are right across from it. They are older hotels but provide good service.

For other hotels, use the following link and check their locations, services, and room rates. As mentioned before, the rates will increase considerably during the Trade Fairs period but unfortunately, there is not much that you can do about it except choose a hotel with a less convenient location and a lower service.

<http://www.hotelscombined.com/Place/Guangzhou.htm>

### **From Hong Kong to Guangzhou**

Since many Trade Fair visitors arrive by train from Hong Kong, it is important that you know that most of the larger hotels provide a shuttle bus service to and from the main railway station for the convenience of guests. I strongly suggest using their service because they help you with your luggage and you can relax during the travel time.

You will also want to consider how far your hotel is located from the railway station and how far it is from the exhibition centre. Guangzhou has an excellent subway system with a station in front of the exhibition centre.

## **Chapter 10 - The Visa Application**

### **Hong Kong SAR**

To travel to Hong Kong SAR you must have a passport from your home country valid for at least six months past the period of your intended visit. Visitors are required to have adequate funds to cover the duration of their stay without working. Unless you are in transit to the Mainland of China or the region of Macau, you must hold onward or return tickets.

If you want to stay longer than the visa free period allows, you have to apply for a visa or entry permission before travelling to the Hong Kong SAR.

You may apply for the appropriate visa or entry permit from the nearest Chinese diplomatic and consular mission.

To determine if you need a visitor visa for Hong please check the following link from the Hong Kong Immigration Department. Look up the requirements for your home country.

[http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/hkvisas\\_4.htm](http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/hkvisas_4.htm)

### **Mainland China**

To travel to Mainland China you must have a passport from your home country valid for at least six months past the period of your intended visit and it must have at least one blank page in it.

For your business trip, you need an (F) category visa, which is not a tourist visa.

### **Applying for Your China Visa in Hong Kong**

If you are travelling to Hong Kong before proceeding to Mainland China, you can apply for your China visa in Hong Kong.

This is rather convenient and quick if you are willing to pay for a faster service.

Please refer to the following link to the China Travel Service in Hong Kong for more details about your visa application.

<http://www.ctshk.com/english/useful/chinesevisa.htm>

### **Applying From Overseas**

If you are travelling directly to China without a stopover in Hong Kong, you must apply for your China visa at the Visa Office of the Chinese Embassy or Consulate General. This is done either in person or you may entrust someone else, such as a travel/visa agent, to come to the visa office of the Embassy or Consulate General in the consular jurisdiction in which you live for the application process. Mailed applications are not accepted and will be refused. Mail back service is however available.

Please follow this link to the **Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States** with detailed information about the visa application procedure:

<http://www.mychinavisa.com/>

Here is another link providing information about the Embassy and Consulates General of the People's Republic of China in the United States that are closest to your home state:

<http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zmzlljs/t84229.htm>

There are also private visa services that allow you to send them your passport together with your application form (downloadable) and they guarantee fast service. The advantage is that you don't need to travel at all and can apply conveniently from your home. Here is a link one company in the United States: <http://www.mychinavisa.com/>

In other countries, there are comparable companies providing the same service.

The visa application procedure for other countries is the same. It is however, a good idea to check one more time with the China Embassy or Consulate General in your country in case changes have occurred since this eBook was written.

After you have received your entry visa for China, you can proceed with the next step and book your flights to Hong Kong or Mainland China.



## **Chapter 11 - Booking a Flight**

Be aware that flights to Hong Kong and China during the peak seasons of April and October are very full and sometimes overbooked. Everybody in the import business is headed there at those times and you need to book your flights as early as possible.

### **A Different Time Zone**

After booking your accommodations and your Trade Fair attendance, ask your travel agent to book your flights to Hong Kong or China accordingly.

Keep in mind that coming from western countries you will cross the international date line and may arrive more than a full day after you left home.

It is a good idea to arrive one day earlier to adjust to the different time zone and climate, take a stroll around your hotel neighborhood, confirm your appointments, and then rest.

After a long flight, a little walking exercise helps invigorate your body and keeps you fit for the exhausting days ahead.

It is definitely not a good idea to copy the behavior of some visitors. Those that arrive from a long distance flight early in the morning (the majority of flights from Europe arrive between 6:30 and 8:30 AM) with their first appointment scheduled at 10:00 AM or they attend the Trade Fair on the same day as a long flight.

The Far East is a fast-paced place and you must be alert not to miss out on anything. Without enough sleep, you will be concentrating on not falling asleep instead of listening to what is discussed during your meetings.

### **Don't Plan to Change Your Flight Schedule**

I mentioned before that the flights are quite full during the peak seasons. The same applies to your outbound return flight.

If you want to postpone or leave early, you will face problems. It is nearly impossible to change flights during this time. Plan your schedule carefully to avoid any changes in your return flight schedule unless there is an emergency. It makes no difference whether you booked business class or economy, the result will be the same.

### **Business Class Flights**

Since I mentioned business class and economy class, I would like to draw your attention to the substantially higher cost of business class flights. It is similar to the situation with the higher cost for executive floor hotel rooms. You have to decide if the following advantages are worth the higher cost of flying business class:

- Complementary visit of the business class lounge
- Separate business class check-in counter
- Larger luggage weight allowance
- More comfortable seats
- Choice of different meals
- Faster service after take off
- More in-flight entertainment choices
- Less crowded toilets
- Complementary high quality amenities bag

Some people say that if you can afford it, business class is totally worth the cost. Is it really? Considering the high cost, make a few calculations before making your decision.

### **Economy Class Flights**

If you book an economy class flight with one of the airlines famous for good in-flight service, you will also end up with a decent meal, better than average leg space, reasonably comfortable seats, and can still save a lot of money.

I do not know whether you are aware that there are at least three different kinds of economy classes. Of course, nobody talks about it but if you sit in the very rear of the plane together with the tourist groups, you have been booked in the cheapest and least comfortable location on the plane.

If you sit in the first few rows immediately behind the business class area, you have been rewarded with the best seats available in economy class but your ticket price will be higher. However, still much cheaper than business class.

## Chapter 12 - Train Bookings

Why do I have to book a train when I travel to China you will probably ask? Simply because it is the most convenient way to travel from Hong Kong to Guangzhou (Canton) to attend the Trade Fair there.

### Ten Daily Round Trips

There are currently ten pairs of nonstop trains running between Hung Hom and Guangzhou East daily. There are 10 northbound trains and 10 southbound trains calling at Dongguan (Changping). The total journey time is about **1 hour and 40 minutes**.

This is actually the fastest possible way to get to Guangzhou. Going by car or bus takes at least 3 hours because you have to stop at the border and pass through immigration services on both sides, which is time consuming. Even by plane (much more expensive) you will not arrive earlier because you have to get from the airport to your hotel.

Here is a link to the Hong Kong MTR Corporation Limited with the complete schedule and the fare chart. It is possible to book tickets online up to 60 days ahead, however the tickets must be picked up later in Hong Kong:

<http://www.it3.mtr.com.hk/B2C/frmIndex.asp?strLang=Eng>

Passengers are advised to arrive at Hung Hom Station 45 minutes before the scheduled departure time for exit formalities. The boarding gate closes 10 minutes before the train departs. The same applies for the return trip from Guangzhou to Hong Kong.

## **Chapter 13 - Book Appointments With Key Suppliers at the Trade Fair**

Before you go on the long journey to China, you had better check with your key suppliers or possible new suppliers you want to meet for their booth number and location at the Trade Fair. You can then coordinate your Trade Fair schedule better by organizing your appointments according to their booth locations.

I can tell you from my experience, it will be very difficult to fix a specific time for your appointments because the exhibitor booths are always too crowded.

There may be some online information from the Trade Fair organizers but either it is available too late for advanced planning or it is too confusing because there are so many exhibitors and their names do not mean anything to you when you are new to importing.

## **Chapter 14 - Book Some Supplier Appointments at Their Factory or at Your Hotel**

I suggest that you arrange with your key suppliers to have additional meetings outside the busy and noisy Trade Fair environment. If you have enough time, it would be perfect to go to the supplier's factory to have the meeting there or meet them at your hotel after fair hours.

### **Extra Meeting Time**

Chinese suppliers are very service orientated and usually do not mind if the meeting lasts well into the evening as long as there is a possibility of additional business opportunities for them. They keep in mind that you have come a long way to meet them.

The extra meeting outside the Trade Fair grounds will also give the suppliers a better opportunity to provide you with details about their latest developments. Since copyright infringements are so common in China, manufacturers often do not want to display their latest models at Trade Fair booths. This is good insider information because many if not most Trade Fair visitors are not aware of this. They think they are seeing the latest developments on display, which frequently is not the case.

Remember that I told you to find out what's new in the pipeline and meeting your suppliers outside the Trade Fair is the perfect way to accomplish this.

### **Reasonable Accommodations**

Now you can also understand that there are limits to how much you can save on your accommodations. Theoretically, you could stay in one of the very cheap guest houses in Hong Kong (in China no way!!) but imagine if your supplier meets you there and the impression he will have about your financial situation.

That is out of question and if you make an appointment with any of your suppliers, make sure not to lose face by staying in a substandard hotel. If you are forced into this situation, try booking extra meetings at their factory.

## Chapter 15 - Essential Tools for Your Trade Fair Visit

This is a very important chapter. By studying it carefully and implementing my suggestions for your Trade Fair visit, it will help you to achieve better results, save time and money, and most importantly it will keep your body in better physical shape.

I call it essential tools because without them you will have much more work to do either during the Trade Fair or afterwards.

What to bring on your Trade Fair visit:

### **Business Cards**

The importance of business cards in the Chinese business culture cannot be over stated. They are not heavy and since you can also use them afterwards, there is no excuse not having a sufficient amount with you. Everybody expects you to give them at least one business card and if you have a meeting with several people, you may need half a dozen or more at one time.

Sometimes manufacturers are reluctant to provide detailed information to somebody who “is naked” meaning “being without business cards”.

If you really run out of them, you can use the print shops at the exhibition centers to print them for you in only a couple of hours.

Make sure to hand over and receive business cards in the typical Chinese manner, which is with both hands. If you are sitting around the table, it is a good idea **not** to put them in one of your suit pockets after they are handed to you. This is extremely impolite and indicates that you don't care for the person who gave you his/her business card. It is much better



to study them first (pretending to do so is OK) and place them in hierarchical order on the table in front of you.

How will you know who is the highest ranking person during a meeting? It is usually the first person introduced to you and this person is not necessarily capable of speaking English.

Exchange your business card with that person first, which gives him the face he deserves and only after that with the other people. This applies even if a sales manager is the person you will be in contact with most of the time.

It is a good idea to write the persons title on the business card if it is not already on the card because it will be impossible to remember later.

A person's title printed on the business card is sometimes a little vague, so you better ask to get it right. Also, you will not be able to distinguish whether it is a male or female name simply because you cannot read the Chinese characters. You may be surprised to learn that even Chinese people will not immediately know, whether the name on the business card was from a woman or a man. There are too many different areas in China with special local names, which Chinese from other provinces may not be able to differentiate between. Therefore, add Mr. or Mrs. to the name on the card to make sure that it won't be forgotten.

You should also know that a person with the name **YUEN** Kai Shun is not Mr. Shun but **Mr. Yuen** because the family name is always the first of the traditional three Chinese names shown on any business card. In Hong Kong, people adjusted during the 150 years of colonial rule by England and mostly mention their Christian name first and then their Chinese family names, for instance **Peter Kwok**.

### **Bring Your Own Stapler**

Take your own small stapler with you to staple the supplier's business card to any notes you take. Usually the suppliers have one at their booth but sometimes they run out of staples, or are broken.

### **Don't Use Your Golden Dupont Pen for Writing\_**

I don't want to point my finger at anybody but it would be a good idea not to use your most expensive writing tool during your Trade Fair visit.

Although it may be a status symbol for some and could impress your suppliers, but how can it be a status symbol if you lose it?

### **Cell Phones**

Please check with your provider at home to see if your cell phone will work in Hong Kong and China. Give your cell phone number to any business partner that attends the fair with you and get theirs in return. Do the same with any suppliers that you prearrange to meet. It may be very difficult to locate somebody during the fair or at the factory without going through their operator, but using their cell phone number will usually do the trick.

The call charges to Mainland China are very high and many visitors buy a SIM card from a China Mobile retail outlet upon arrival in order to reduce phone costs.

The call charges in Hong Kong are cheaper but you can also buy a SIM card from one of the many local service providers.

The obvious disadvantage is that your business partners don't have the new number yet and cannot reach you after you have changed to a SIM card.

Depending on how many calls you have to make, it might be better to keep the SIM card from your home country, or do what many local people

do, use a second cell phone with your Hong Kong or China SIM card. In that way you can be reached by the staff at your office and suppliers at any time.

### **Digital Camera**

A digital camera is one of the most important tools you will need during your meetings at the Trade Fair or at any outside meetings.

You will have many opportunities to shoot photos including close-up photos of details that cannot be seen in a catalogue.

You can and should take photos of the unique new products that some of the suppliers will present to you in secret. It may only be a mock-up but in just a few weeks the tooling will be complete and plastic injection can start. As always, remember that you want to sell products to customers back home and feeding them this important information might make a big sale.

Another way a digital camera comes in handy: Chinese people love to take photos and love if photos are taken of them alone or with their customers. Also, if you have photos from the people you have met during the Trade Fair it will help you remember who they are and what they were selling.

Believe me, after four days at the Exhibition Centre you cannot possibly remember the faces of all people you've met, along with their names. However, they will easily remember that you are Mr. Smith from Arkansas because for some reason the Chinese seem to have a better memory than Westerners do.

Don't forget to bring a spare battery with you because you won't have a chance to recharge your battery at the exhibition centre. You may also

need another memory card if you do not already have one of those 2-5 GB cards in your digital camera. Another way is to upload your photos to your notebook computer on daily basis. In that case one memory card will probably be sufficient.

### **Notebook Computer**

Nowadays, many exhibitors have at least one notebook computer at their booth with an online internet connection. This is essential for them because if they are attending one of the Hong Kong Trade Fairs and move on to the Guangzhou Trade Fair afterwards, they will be out of their office for at least 10 days.

In China being out of the office for 10 days is like an eternity and that's why they need to communicate regularly with their factory or head office through their notebook computer.

You will have to do the same because your work back home has to be done somehow and it is a good idea to communicate with your home office on a daily basis.

I do not suggest using your notebook computer for all meetings. The main reason is that there is simply not enough space on the small booth tables to operate it conveniently.

You should always bring it along with you because it contains vital information which you may need and it is much easier to carry than 2 or 3 file boxes.

For any meeting at the factory or at your hotel, a notebook computer is an absolute must have. It is also so much more convenient and time saving compared to past methods.

- a) People wrote everything on paper, which was then passed to their secretary for typing after returning from their business trip. Only then could the information be distributed to all the people needing it. You can imagine that it took at least 4 precious weeks from the start of your business trip until everything was completed.
- b) People wrote everything on paper and in the evening dictated the content into a small micro cassette recorder. Their secretary at home would then type it and distribute it to the people that needed it. You can imagine that it took 2-3 precious weeks from the start of your business trip until everything was completed. Alternatively, the micro cassettes could be sent by courier service which saves some time.
- c) Nowadays, people type their vital information in their notebook computer and send it together with the matching photos at the end of each day to the head office. In that way, colleagues at home can interact and ask for additional information if something important was missing. Upon returning home from your business trip, everything should be ready for further processing and decision making.

I suggest a large capacity battery for your notebook computer. One that lasts up to 6 hours. If this battery type is not available for your model, bring another fully charged battery along with you. When you have outside meetings, you will find that there is not always an electric socket nearby to connect your AC adaptor to.

Sometimes suppliers will also pass you data on a memory stick (photos, line drawings, product descriptions etc.) that you can immediately download into your computer.

That is especially important if it is a new development and no samples or catalogues will be available for some time.

Remember, the most up to date information is what you want to obtain during your Trade Fair visits.

### **Briefcase on Wheels**

If you are not into weight lifting exercises, you had better bring a large briefcase on wheels.

It is torture trying to carry your heavy briefcase all day long (with your notebook computer, catalogues, notebook etc.). You will see at the Trade Fair that many buyers have already learned their lesson and save their energy by using a briefcase on wheels.

Catalogues collected during your visits to many booths can weigh a lot and you will be exhausted half way through the day from carrying them.

### **Comfortable walking shoes**

They are not exactly a tool but comfortable walking shoes will make your life much easier when you walk several kilometers during the Trade Fair days.

### **Trade Fair Catalog**

One of your first actions at the Trade Fair should be to buy a Exhibition Catalog. It is important for planning your other Trade Fair visits and for keeping track of suppliers' addresses and contact details after you return home. Since you don't have to carry it, the weight won't bother you.

### **Your Company's Catalog**

If you have your own company catalog, bring a few sets along with you for the meetings with key suppliers. You don't have to carry them all with you but have at least one set to show to your suppliers during your meetings.

From my experience, it makes a good impression and helps to cement the relationship with your supplier if you hand over one set during the most important meetings during or after the fair.

Remember you are your company's ambassador and want to show your company in the best possible light. I always load them up in the morning before I leave for another day at the fair.

### **Your Corporate Identity Artwork Concept**

As mentioned before, creating your own corporate identity concept is very important. After spending a lot of effort on it at home, it would be a very good idea to bring it along with you and show it to the suppliers during your meetings. It enhances the impression you make and helps suppliers better understand your needs.

### **Sketches, Drawings, Photos are Perfect Tools for Informing Suppliers**

You should also bring along any sketches, drawings, or photos clarifying what you are looking for from your suppliers. Do not forget that you are at the Trade Fair to see something new and collect a lot of information. Sometimes suppliers will tell you where you can find products and help save you a lot of time.

Also, bring ads from newspapers and magazines showing a product that is already being distributed by somebody else.

Hand over color chips of a specially selected color to suppliers. You can ask them to prepare samples for you, saving the time and cost of sending it after you return home. A supplier may also have a question about the color and you can discuss the details face to face.

### **Your Specifications**

In Chapter 7, I suggested you prepare your specifications for the trip.

During your meetings at the Trade Fair and elsewhere is the right time to provide all relevant suppliers with your company's specifications.

Since you expect them to quote you realistic prices, they need to be informed about your requirements in order to avoid lengthy communications by e-mail later.



## Chapter 16 - Preparing Your Shopping List

Hopefully, you have your essential tools together now but one other important list needs your attention. Chinese Trade Fairs are such busy places that they can easily distract you from your original target of finding suitable products at competitive prices that you can sell with as much profit as possible.

### Supplier Discussions

To avoid being distracted, you have to prepare your shopping list of the products you want to source. This list should at least include the following details:

- Product description
- Target FOB price in US\$
- Quantity of the first shipment
- If possible an estimate of your yearly quantities
- Requested earliest delivery date
- Destination port
- Packaging information if other than standard
- Number of samples needed

It is not wise to inform all suppliers about your target prices right away. You could end up with prices matching your target prices but you may have actually been able to negotiate a lower price.

On the other hand, inform your supplier of your target price if they quote a price that is not even close to what you want to pay.

You should however always bear in mind that even with the abundance of cheap labor there are still limitations to your factory's production and pricing capabilities.

You will find that out sooner or later when the 10<sup>th</sup> supplier informs you that a specifically requested target price is unrealistic.

## **Chapter 17 - Currency Exchange**

Upon arrival at the Hong Kong International Airport, you may want to change some money to pay for transportation to your hotel and for tips. However, refrain from changing all your money at the airport because you can get a much better exchange rate at one of the local banks. Most likely, there will be one near your hotel and close to the exhibition centers.

Most daily expenses can be paid by credit card, which is exchanged at very close to the bank's exchange rate.

Before you continue with your trip to China, you should also exchange your foreign money into China's RMB in Hong Kong because it is more difficult to find a bank outside your hotel inside mainland China. Hunting one down will cost valuable time. Keep in mind that hotel charges in China can be paid by credit card. In other words, you may not need a large quantity of RMB to pay for your expenses.

## Chapter 18 - Appropriate Dress

Attending a Trade Fair is not exactly the same as attending a high fashion business meeting but there are dress code standards that should be observed.

### **Jacket But No Tie**

It is not appropriate to wear your favorite T-shirt from your last holiday in Thailand when you visit the Trade Fair.

Chinese people are not particularly picky when it comes to clothing but keep in mind the impression you will make of yourself and your company. Appropriate dress is a business suit or a light jacket with a collared business shirt.

Years ago, air-conditioners at the Canton Fair were not very efficient. Wearing a suit felt like you were in a public sauna. Fortunately, that has changed and today you will find the exhibition halls in both Hong Kong as well as Guangzhou comfortable.

### **Jacket and Tie**

It is not necessary to wear a necktie when attending the Trade Fair but if you are invited to a business lunch or more likely to a business dinner, a necktie is appropriate.

Most of the Trade Fairs take place during the warm season. You will want to wear light clothes, especially when you are outside of the air-conditioned hotel rooms and exhibition centers.

The next chapter goes into detail about the weather conditions to help you make the right decision about the clothes you want to bring with you on the trip.

## **Chapter 19 - Southern China Weather Conditions and Climate Considerations**

The South China region is partly within the tropics and is the warmest and wettest part of the country during the summer.

Rainfall is very heavy between May and September, along both the coast and adjacent inland. Winters are mild and mostly frost free. However, summer heat and humidity can be rather uncomfortable.

Typhoons are frequent here. They can be violent, bringing very heavy rains and strong winds for several days at a time along the coastal regions. The Typhoon season is from July to October.

Since the most important Trade Fairs run during April and October, the weather conditions may not affect you too much. Here is a link to the **Hong Kong Observatory** where you will find current and forecast weather and climate information for Hong Kong.

### **Hong Kong Weather and Climate**

<http://www.hko.gov.hk/contente.htm>

Here are links to the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** and **World Climate Index**. These provide updated weather and climate information for the following Chinese cities:

### **Guangzhou Weather**

<http://www.worldweather.org/001/c00241.htm>

### **Guangzhou Climate**

<http://www.climate-charts.com/Locations/p/PC59287.html>

### **Shanghai Weather**

<http://www.worldweather.org/001/c00240.htm>

### **Shanghai Climate**

<http://www.climate-charts.com/Locations/p/PC58367.html>

### **Ningbo Weather**

<http://www.worldweather.org/001/c00564.htm>

### **Other cities in China**

<http://www.worldweather.org/001/m001.htm>

## **Chapter 20 - Southern Chinese Food is Delicious**

Here is a very brief introduction of types of food you will find in Southern China. Many books have been written on the subject that you can find in any bookshop if you want to broaden your knowledge about Chinese food.

### **Cantonese Cuisine**

The Chinese food most commonly known to Westerners is the Cantonese variety from the Southern Guangdong province. It is also the primary food served in the local restaurants of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, although you can also find everything from the other Chinese regions.

Cantonese food is typically steamed, boiled, or stir-fried. It is a very healthy food because it uses a minimum of oil. The main ingredients of Cantonese food are seafood, pork, chicken, and vegetables. Dim Sum and Fried Rice are also characteristic.

There is no limit to what you may find in your bowl. As a Chinese proverb goes: "Cantonese eat every thing that flies except planes, every thing on the ground except cars, and every thing that is in the water except boats." Of course this is a vast exaggeration but symbolizes how much the Southern Chinese love their food.

There are also several restaurants, coffee shops and canteens at the exhibition centers in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. They become very crowded during lunch hours but if you choose your time well they are an inexpensive way to satisfy your hunger. Food in the canteens is actually quite good. They serve Western style food along with Chinese in case you don't want to eat the local food for lunch.

### **Western Cuisine**

If you are in the mood for something from home, you will also find everything from western style steakhouses to fast food chains like McDonald's, KFC, Burger King, etc.



## **Chapter 21 - Have a Realistic Plan for Your Daily Meetings**

After all your preparations and travel, you finally arrive in China.

### **First Trade Fair Day**

If you took my advice, you should be sufficiently energized after a good night's sleep and ready for your first day at the Trade Fair.

If you start in Hong Kong you should already have your visitor pass and do not need to queue up at the registration area.

If you are in China, you will first need to register either at your hotel or near the entrance area of the exhibition center to receive your visitor entry badge. I discussed this procedure in Chapter 8.

### **Buy a Trade Fair Catalog**

The first thing you want to do is to buy a Trade Fair Catalog and retreat to a place where you can sit down and make your day's plan for meetings. Several coffee shops at the exhibition center are perfect for this.

### **Your Meeting Plan**

You should already know the booth numbers and locations of the suppliers you have been in contact with. It is easy to make a plan to organize your meetings based on their locations around the fair grounds.

If you downloaded the floor plan from the Trade Fair Organizer earlier, you can save time by doing this planning in the comfort of your hotel room.

Spending some time on the Internet locating the floor plan is worth the effort because it makes your work more efficient at the Trade Fair.

I mentioned before that it can be difficult arranging meetings at specific times during the exhibition. If you attempt this, you will find your schedule is out of control after only one or two meetings.

Be realistic in your planning. The following example should give you an idea of what is realistic and what is not.

### **Trade Fair Hours**

Here are the typical opening hours for major Hong Kong Trade Fairs and the Canton Trade Fair:

**Hong Kong** - 9:30 AM-6:30 PM = 9 hours per day; the last day is only from 9:30 AM-5:00 PM

**Canton** - 9:30 AM-6:00 PM = 8 ½ hours per day for all 5 exhibition days

Assuming you want to visit each Trade Fair for three full days, you will have a total of only 27 hours for Hong Kong and 25 ½ hours for Guangzhou to find what you need. Most visitors do not attend Trade Fairs every day because they need travel time between Hong Kong and Guangzhou or to other destinations.

If you have meetings scheduled with 10 key suppliers for an hour each, you end up having only 17 hours for any other meetings in Hong Kong and 15 ½ hours in Guangzhou.

Other meetings might last approximately a ½ hour each. At these you will only collect catalogs and leave your business card. For a very busy visit this works out to you meeting with 34 additional suppliers in Hong Kong and 31 in Guangzhou.

But let's be realistic, you need to go to the washroom, wait until your contact person is free, eat something, and walk from one booth to another. Deduct that time from the remaining hours and you will be surprised how little time is available for additional supplier meetings.

Don't call me a pencil pusher for giving too detailed information but that is what a realistic plan is all about.

## **Chapter 22 - Map Out a Specific Walking Pattern for the Fair**

On your first day of the Trade Fair, take some time to get an overview of the fair. You will probably find some things of interest that you had not considered before.

### **Avoid Early Appointments the First Day**

My advise to you is that you don't make early appointments with suppliers the first day. Instead, stroll the aisles early, before the crowds arrive. This is a good opportunity to view products up close without being crushed by the crowds that will soon show up. The lacking crowd also lets you easily and quickly navigate from booth to booth so that you can view a lot of products in a short time.

### **Divide and Conquer**

If you have a company group visiting the Trade Fair, divide the show into sections and share the effort among the participants. Schedule a meeting in the evening when each person can report what they saw.

## **Chapter 23 - Collect as Many Catalogs as Possible**

Collect as many catalogs as you can during your morning walk through the exhibition halls. You do not need to pick up every single catalog but certainly there will be many that interest you.

Thanks to your brief case on wheels, you do not need to strain yourself hauling the catalogs around the rest of the day.

### **Why so Many Catalogs?**

Why do you need to collect so many catalogs? As I previously mentioned, you need an overview first and will probably find new products other products that you did not consider in the first place.

By being flexible you might find the perfect product to add to your shopping list. Maybe something that will become very profitable for your company.

Try to avoid being drawn into long discussions when you are collecting catalogs. Simply take a quick glance at the products, but be sure you write down the hall and booth number on the business cards stapled to the catalogs, otherwise you may have problems finding that supplier again.

### **Study the Catalogs**

In the evening or early the next morning before heading out to the exhibition center, you should study the catalogs and sort out what is important and worth another look. Adding these suppliers to your appointment list completes your overview of the Trade Fair.

## Chapter 24 - Talk to the Right People

That is an extremely important chapter because if you talk to the wrong people you will not get the best results, even if the rest of your Trade Fair preparations are close to perfect.

### **Making First Contact**

It should be a straight forward task making contact with the companies you previously contacted from your home country. You should have the name of your contact person and will know whether he or she is attending the Fair.

Unfortunately, not every person at a supplier's booth is the person you will be communicating with in future. Just grabbing some of the business cards laid out on the tables does not help much either if you do not know who they are from.

Recall in Chapter 15, I discussed exchanging business cards and the hierarchical customs of the Chinese. The same applies to meetings during the Trade Fair but it is somewhat less formal because time is money and the next visitors are waiting to be seated. Therefore, make your visits efficient and professional. Small talk is something you probably do not have time for, nor do the suppliers.

### **About Trading Companies**

In my eBook [How to Import Products from China More Successfully](#) I explain the pros and cons for working with trading companies.

There will be a lot of trading companies at the Fair and you cannot easily distinguish trading companies from manufacturers right away. Familiarize yourself with the pros and cons of doing business with trading companies before deciding if you want to do business with them.

Both sides have their merits and you have to ask yourself what is more important to you.

### **Pros**

- Easier communication for you with a single contact for several factories
- They usually have a better showroom for product selection
- They are experienced in dealing with customers from different countries
- They sometimes invest in their own tooling and therefore have their own products
- Their staff is more proficient in English which makes discussions and negotiations easier

### **Cons**

- Their prices are less competitive because you have to pay for their service
- They may not be able to present you with the latest products because they do not want to take the risk of being first
- They will try directing you to certain factories that they have trade agreements with
- Solving claims with their help may prove more difficult due to their relationship with their factories. Since they have projects for other customers, the factories may be more important to them than your business.

### **Getting to the Manufacturer**

In some cases, you are forced to work with an export agent simply because the factory does not have an export license or does invest in extra marketing personnel.

It is not a surprise that you will find many suppliers offering the same products because the products are part of their general trading business.

If you want to buy your products directly from the manufacturer, you will have to find him first and it could be that he does not have his own booth at the Trade Fair.

Several times, I have found the manufacturer present at the booth but shielded from contacting potential customers by a smart trading company staff member. These are usually the professional sales people, fluent in English and trying to attract your attention. The small guy in the background that does not speak English is the real show-master, controlling the business and most importantly he has the money.

Talking to him is actually more important than listening to the “smart guys” that know exactly what you want to hear from them. Unfortunately, you cannot talk to the business owner at this moment but you can collect his business card and can come back with one of the interpreters that are available for hire through the Trade Fair operators.

Interpreters sometimes can do wonders if something of importance has to be negotiated and the language barrier stands between you and your supplier.

### **Wrong Exhibitor Names**

Quite often, you will find the names on the exhibitors’ booths confusing. For instance, a booth showing the name “Guandong Footwear & Animal Products Company” may not have any shoes on display but shows vacuum cleaners instead. That happens because some companies sell their booth allocation to other companies.

In the next chapter, I go further into how to find out who is a manufacturer and who is a trading company or an agent.



## **Chapter 25 - Take Notes and Which Questions to Ask**

In Chapter 15, you were given you an overview of essential tools and materials to use during your Trade Fair visit. One of these was a large notebook with fixed pages. Loose leaflets or notebooks with perforated pages for easier detachment are not good because single pages can easily get lost.

### **Taking Notes**

Can you imagine what will happen if one or two pages with vital information goes missing? Pure disaster!

During your meetings with your suppliers, you will notice that most of them are also using notebooks. You should make a habit of it.

I mentioned previously that it is not very convenient to use a notebook computer at Trade Fairs because there is not enough space at the tables. It is also too time consuming to take out your notebook computer for every meeting. Remember you don't have unlimited time.

Write down all vital information and the suppliers' answers to your questions. At the top, note the date and staple one or more business cards to the notes. A second business card should be affixed to the catalogs that you collect. Usually the booth staff has already done this but it is best make sure.

Some companies have very similar looking catalogs and sometimes without the company name on it. Often the catalogs are printed at the last minute and are full of mistakes because there was no time for corrections.

### **Collecting Business Cards**

Be careful when collecting business cards from booth tables. Sometimes other companies intentionally leave their cards or the card might be from a manager that is not actually attending the fair. Future communication with the person you spoke with will be impossible. Therefore, ask your meeting representative to give you the right name card. Also, ask if he or she will be your future contact person. This would be very helpful since personal contact has already been established.

If the representative is not your future contact, ask him/her whom you should be contacting instead. Knowing the name is vital because large companies often have dozens of marketing people working for them, divided in several divisions for different areas.

Write down the hall and booth number in case you want to come back for another meeting. This saves you time searching the crowded fair grounds.

### **No Representative**

Sometimes products are displayed but nobody is there to sell them. If you ask around someone will probably tell you that the products belong to a friend and they are just doing him a favor by displaying them. In many cases, they cannot give you any additional information and you are wasting your time. If it was an exciting new product, you can bet nobody would allow another company to display the products for them.

### **The Questions**

What questions should you be asking during meetings with suppliers? You want to at least ask the following questions:

- What is your FOB price in US\$?
- What is your usual port of loading? They can sometimes offer you a choice of several ports.

- Do you have your own factory, what is the name, and where is it located?
- When was your company established?
- Who are the owner(s)?
- How many production lines do you have?
- How many workers does the factory have?
- What are your main export markets?
- If the answer is Europe your next question should be: Which countries there?
- Who are your main customers? Of course you are mainly interested in customers from your country but it would be interesting to know if large companies like Wal\*Mart or Carrefour are buying from them
- What is your delivery time during normal season and peak season?
- Are you subcontracting part of your production and if so which parts?
- Does your factory have its own injection machines?
- Is metal punching done in house?
- Is your factory ISO 9000 or ISO 9001 approved?
- In case the quantity from your shopping list is not sufficient: What is your minimum order quantity per product?
- What approvals does your company have?
- Which certificates have been obtained?
- Which laboratory are you using for your approvals?
- What new products do you have that are not shown at your booth?
- When can I see sketches, drawings, or photos of these new products?
- Can you please e-mail me your bank details? You will need this to pay for the sample charges.

If the staff at the supplier's booth can answer most of these questions, you can be sure that it is not a trading company. Even if they pretend, they will not know all of these details.

I should point out that you should inform them what is on your shopping list before you ask all of these questions.

### **Give the Supplier Your Specifications**

It is essential to provide your company's specifications before asking for a price quote. You could try playing the hide and seek game by not informing the supplier of your requirements. I find that to be a great disadvantage because you will be drawn into lengthy negotiations later on. The supplier will tell you that his price was based on his own standard and anything additional has to be paid on top of the quoted price.

I consider the supplier correct about this. I believe it is part of fair play and you should consider that you may force the factory to lower the product quality by using cheaper materials.

Think about the lead paint tainted toys that were imported to the United States and had to be recalled in very large numbers. I do not know the real reason why cheaper but dangerous paint was used in the first place. It could have been greediness but it also could have been that the supplier was pushed too hard for a lower price that he could not achieve and was looking for a way out.

### **Economic Reality**

Although China is a land of nearly unlimited opportunities, their factories cannot escape worldwide developments. Factories will feel the crunch and have to adjust to survive.

Under such circumstances, it will be difficult for you to negotiate much lower prices because there is no more room for the factory to maneuver. However, the good thing is that this will not be a disadvantage only you face because everybody will face the same problem.

Don't forget to take product photos with your digital camera. Sometimes you may have to shoot photos from different angles to get it right. Digital photos are free and more is better.

You don't have the opportunity to meet your suppliers in person very often. Take full advantage of it by collecting all the information available. It could become vital evidence if there is some kind of misunderstanding later.

## Chapter 26 - Ordering Samples

When you become confident the supplier you are talking to is one you want to consider for your purchase order, don't hesitate to order your samples at the Trade Fair.

### Order Multiple Samples

Do not make the mistake of ordering only one sample per product/color because you need reference samples for several purposes.

- Samples for your showroom
- Samples for lab approvals
- Samples for photo shooting and gift box preparation
- Samples for your inspection company
- Samples for sales managers to show customers

Samples are usually not free of charge, which is understandable because they are handmade and very labor intensive. Even if they are simple plastic products, the factory has to follow your instructions and inject them with a specific color that is very time consuming. The plastic injection machines are usually running at full capacity and only one color at a time can be injected.

If you ask the factory for several different color samples, they can only make them when they have a production run in your requested color.

Since factories are reluctant to provide samples free of charge to new customers, you have to negotiate for a refund of the sample charges after you reach a certain order volume.

In addition to the sample charges, you will be asked to pay the freight charges for the sample delivery. This could be an even higher cost because samples are usually sent by special courier in order to meet your

lead time requirement. Factories don't want to pay these charges and it is often difficult to convince them to do so. If they do so, it is usually only after establishing a long and successful business relationship. That is not much help to you at this point because you are just starting to do business with them.

If you need the samples urgently and that is often the case, you are better advised to look for a compromise, otherwise you may lose the competitive edge in your home market.

### **Samples in Your Own Packaging**

When asking for samples you must also ask the factory for the packing details based on your packaging concept. Packing details means how many pieces can fit into one 20' or 40' container. How many sales packagings fit into one export carton and if needed, how many inner cartons fit into one export carton.

You will need this information to calculate the freight cost. It may be necessary to change the sales packing size in order to fit more pieces into one container and save substantial freight charges.

For instance, it makes a big difference if you can pack 1,400 pieces of coffeemakers in a 40' container instead of only 1,200 pieces. The difference will certainly affect the selling price in your home country.

## **Chapter 27 - Do Not Take Quoted Prices for Granted**

This may shock you but it comes from my experience working more than 25 years with Chinese companies and I want to share it with you. I promised to help you to avoid trouble and prices are part of it.

### **Change Happens**

How can this happen? You have prepared your shopping list. You gave your supplier all the requested information and now a big change comes along.

There are several reasons for changes.

- It can and will happen that the product that you found at the suppliers both, will be dropped by them for lack of customer interest. If you are the only one who showed interest, it may not be sufficient for the factory to invest in expensive tooling.
- Another reason could be if the price quoted to you was based on old material costs. In this case the factory has no choice but to increase their price even if they had previously quoted you a lower price. The profit margins for the factories have become slimmer and slimmer and they can no longer afford to make compromises on their cost.

The price they quoted to you was from an incompetent person and

- the price was later revised by their supervisor. Yes, there are at times incompetent people at supplier booths who don't want to lose face by telling customers that they cannot quote a binding price.
- Another reason could be that the product you showed interest for infringed on copyrights and the factory was forced to drop the product.



### **Confirm the Price**

The best way to avoid pricing problems is by sending the supplier a confirmation e-mail (even from your hotel) with a request and the quoted price so they may reconfirm it in writing. If there was a misunderstanding, your supplier can still reach you by cell phone before you return home.

If there is not enough time, you must reconfirm the price immediately after you return home. Your business depends on valid quotations or you could be in danger of losing money.

## Chapter 28 - Legal Issues at Trade Fairs

Without going into too much detail, I want to share with you some information about legal issues at Trade Fairs.

### **Patent and Copyright Infringements**

You may have found booths that had been closed down and sealed and you thought it strange. At all international Trade Fairs it is a common practice on the first day for lawyers or other legal representatives from manufacturers of famous brand names to swarm the exhibition hall and check for the following details:

- Copyright infringements
- Patent infringements
- Has the factory obtained the required licenses; for instance for DVD players
- Has the factory paid the necessary licenses; for instance for MP3 players

This is especially the case in Europe and the United States, any copyright or patent infringement will be dealt with. Even if the supplier showed a product at their booth (trading company) that was not manufactured by them, they will be held responsible.

Usually the products will be confiscated and the exhibitor will receive a court order and has to pay a fine. In severe cases like a DVD player w/o a valid license, the booth will immediately be closed and the manufacturer could even face arrest if there is a risk that he will try to escape.

I just want to draw your attention to this to make you sensitive to copyright or patent infringements. Chinese companies sometimes have a different understanding of copyright or patent laws.

They will buy an attractive branded product from overseas and copy it by adding several minor modifications. Now they believe it is their own design. They will even register these products at the Beijing Patent Registry as their own design.

If you ask them during your meetings whether it is their own creation, they will tell you it is and they have even registered it.

### **Don't Make This Mistake**

However, their registration means nothing if you import these products to your home country. In all probability you will be caught and have to pay severe penalties or compensation payments to the brand name owner.

We are not talking about small change here. Sometimes this can run into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

It can even happen long after you have imported the products and forgotten about them. It is common practice that the brand name owners wait some time before pursuing their legal cases because in the case of patent infringements more compensation money can be retrieved that way.

Do yourself a favor and avoid manufacturers that practice this kind of business for your own protection.

## **Chapter 29 - Accept Lunch or Dinner Invitations**

If your supplier invites you for lunch or more likely to dinner: accept. Because it will give you a rare opportunity to meet your supplier and his staff in a more relaxed environment.

### **Learn Chinese Culture**

You will learn more about Chinese culture by dining with Chinese people than reading many books about Chinese food.

If they ask you where you want to eat and whether Chinese food would be OK with you, (that's what they usually ask), you just tell them to choose the restaurant for you and that you will be delighted to eat Chinese food.

Don't worry, they will not force you to eat snakes or deep fried bees as I had to eat once. They respect you as a foreigner and will offer you several kinds of delicious food.

Especially the Cantonese food in Hong Kong is very good and tasty and you just relax and enjoy it.

### **Beware of Drinking Competitions**

However, beware of drinking competitions with your Chinese counterparts. Since there are usually several people from their company, you will most likely lose because everybody will toast to you and ask you to drink bottoms up.

The good thing is that Chinese dining is very predictable and does not last too long. The food is usually served very fast and 6-8 dishes will not take longer than an hour or so.

Therefore all dinners, even large banquets, will finish no later than 11:00 PM. This allows you to get a good night's sleep.

If you don't like some particular food, just let it go because the next course is already on its way. If you do not eat or taste anything at all, you will lose face and your host will lose face as well because obviously he did not choose the right food for you.

### **Dim Sum**

By the way, eating Dim Sum during lunchtime is very enjoyable and relatively cheap. You can choose from trolleys driven around by waitresses.

The local food in general is not too expensive but do not make the mistake of letting the waiter choose the fish for you. Of course, he will always choose the most expensive one. This can only happen if you go out dining by yourself.

### **Small Talk**

When dining with your supplier use the time for some small talk with your host. Ask them about their family how many children they have and vice versa, give them information about yourself. Chinese people love to know more about their customer's background. If you have photos of your kids and your wife, show them and they will reciprocate.

Avoid discussions about political issues. You never know what political background your business partner has and frankly speaking, it does not matter.

It is a very good opportunity to learn something about other companies. If another company has financial problems, your host may know it from his raw material vendors or component suppliers that often request cash

payment upon delivery. It is obvious that a factory has financial problems if they cannot make these payments.

It could also happen that you are not the only customer at your supplier's table. If there is no direct competition between the companies, suppliers sometimes purposely invite them, in the hope that it will help convince you to buy from them.

It is always a good idea to talk to other importers and find out about good and bad experiences they have had with their suppliers. It could help you avoid trouble. Their advice is free of charge, based on their own experience, and not just hearsay.

## **Chapter 30 - Input Vital Meeting Information Into Your Notebook Computer Daily**

It is an absolute must to input all vital information from your day's meetings into your notebook computer in the evening.

If you wait one or two days you may forget important details and the amount of information will continue to pile up. As I mentioned before, the most efficient way is to send your daily reports by e-mail to your head office back home.

### **Daily Reports Home**

Somebody back home can begin working with your information. Your company will not lose too much time processing new projects. Remember timing is crucial for your success.

On the other hand, your business at home will not come to a stand still while you are away from your office. E-mails have to be read and answered.

In the past, every business trip to the Far East interrupted communications with customers at home in one way or another. Today, you do not need to seek out an Internet Shop anymore and can complete your work from the convenience of your hotel room. It maybe a little bit stressful but at least you will not have to answer 2,800 e-mails after returning from your trip and most importantly, your business at home is not negatively affected.

## **Chapter 31 - Should I Place My Orders During Trade Fairs?**

If you already have an existing business relationship with your supplier, you can of course hand over your Purchase Order to your supplier at the Trade Fair. It is a convenient way to do it and you could even discuss certain details from your P/O with the supplier in case they don't understand something.

### **New Suppliers**

In general, I strongly advise against placing your orders with new suppliers during Trade Fairs. It is much too risky, especially since you have not received any proper samples yet.

Orders should only be placed with new suppliers after you have received their samples and checked for compliance to your company's specifications. Also, only after passing quality control tests by your QC department or an appointed laboratory.



## **Chapter 32 - Take Time to Get Out for Sightseeing**

Although you may have a tight schedule you should plan some time to get out for sight-seeing. There is always a Sunday or Saturday afternoon when you will not have any meetings.

### **Chinese Temples, a Tram Ride, and the Star Ferry**

Of course you could stay at your hotel room and watch CNN but how much more interesting would it be to see something new in the city that your Trade Fair is located in.

In Hong Kong, you may want to visit some of the old Chinese temples, take a ride on the peak tram, and the famous Star Ferry. A ride on the old tram on Hong Kong Island is an interesting experience because it is one of the cheapest transportations available and offers so much to see during your ride. There are always the interesting museums like the Museum of Science, the Museum of Space, and the Museum of Art and History.

You may also want to do some shopping for your loved ones at home or for yourself. If you like Chinese art you may want to visit some of the Chinese Arts & Crafts department stores where you can find beautiful things at affordable prices.

A good shopping experience can be quite relaxing and broaden your knowledge about Chinese culture.

## Chapter 33 - Epilog

I sincerely hope that my eBook helps **Attending Chinese Trade Fairs More Effectively** for you. Now, you should have a much better understanding about preparations you need to make before you start your journey.

You will also know what to say to your suppliers when meeting them at their booth and how to make the most of your precious time.

You also have learned how to avoid certain risks when dealing with Chinese manufacturers that could cost you substantial money.

As an importer, it is essential to learn how everything is interconnected and how to get the best results at each step of the process.

I would like to express my gratitude for buying this eBook from me and hope that you will consider some or all of my other eBooks as well.

Klaus-Dieter Hanke