

***Doing Business with the Japanese; a one-stop guide to Japanese business practice***

**Geoffrey Bownas, David Powers, Christopher P Hood**

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Professor Geoffrey Bownas knows a fair bit about Japan. So he should – he’s very much involved with the country for over 50 years, and has contributed so much to Japanese studies and Anglo-Japanese relations that he has been recognised on both sides of the globe; in 1999 he was awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure with Sun’s Rays, and in 2003 he received the CBE.

Do a search on Amazon for him, and you’ll find a whole library of publications under Professor Bownas’ name. His latest book, *Doing Business with the Japanese*, is part of a project called the Japan Business Language and Practice Project, an idea he came up with in 1997 while interviewing applicants for the JET Programme. He says, “I thought, we’re sending almost 600 people to Japan. Most of them will be coming back in the next couple of years – what will we do for these returnees? What support will they receive to help them keep up their ties with Japan, and how will they develop the language skills they have acquired in Japan?” In response to these questions, he decided to put out a series of publications: “a package to end all packages on Japanese business – an area that is sadly neglected.”

The book, edited by Professor Bownas along with David Powers, Chief Executive of Japan Interface, and Christopher P Hood, Director of the Japanese Studies Centre in Cardiff University, is dedicated to, and perhaps in some way inspired by Sir Peter Parker, after whom the Sir Peter Parker Awards for Spoken Business Japanese are named. As Professor Bownas puts it, “Without him, Japanese studies in general would not be considered as important as they are. He was one of the first to acknowledge the importance of learning Japanese, and he ceaselessly encouraged British students and business people to develop their language skills so that they could use them professionally.”

This is not the first book on Japanese business that Professor Bownas has had a hand in. Way back in 1974, he helped JAL publish a volume of a series of brochures, the second edition of which was published in 1980 under the title *Business in Japan*. When he was thinking of this new business book, he decided that it should be less restricted: *Business in Japan* seemed confined to foreigners going to Japan to do business, whereas a title such as *Doing Business with the Japanese* allowed the business to be done practically anywhere.

As Professor Bownas points out, “The book isn’t just a do this, do that, don’t do the other. It’s putting it into social and economic context, and the context of change.” This is true: not only are there chapters on the here and now of the Japanese business world, there are also sections on how that world is changing. It also provides analysis of Japan’s problems and prospects, taking into consideration the emergence of recent trends, such as women being promoted to much more senior positions, entrepreneurs breaking away from their traditional institutions, and the decline of the “jobs for life” mentality.

*Doing Business with the Japanese* is immensely readable, not least because it has been written by twenty different people, from different fields, different age groups and different experiences; all of whom have spent a significant amount of time in Japan. The advice is sound, comes from experience, and covers just about everything anyone could need when contemplating doing business with a Japanese organisation, even for those who have spent time working with the Japanese.

There’s something for everyone in *Doing Business with the Japanese*. For further information, please e-mail Wiesia Cook at [w.cook@japanbusinessproject.org](mailto:w.cook@japanbusinessproject.org)