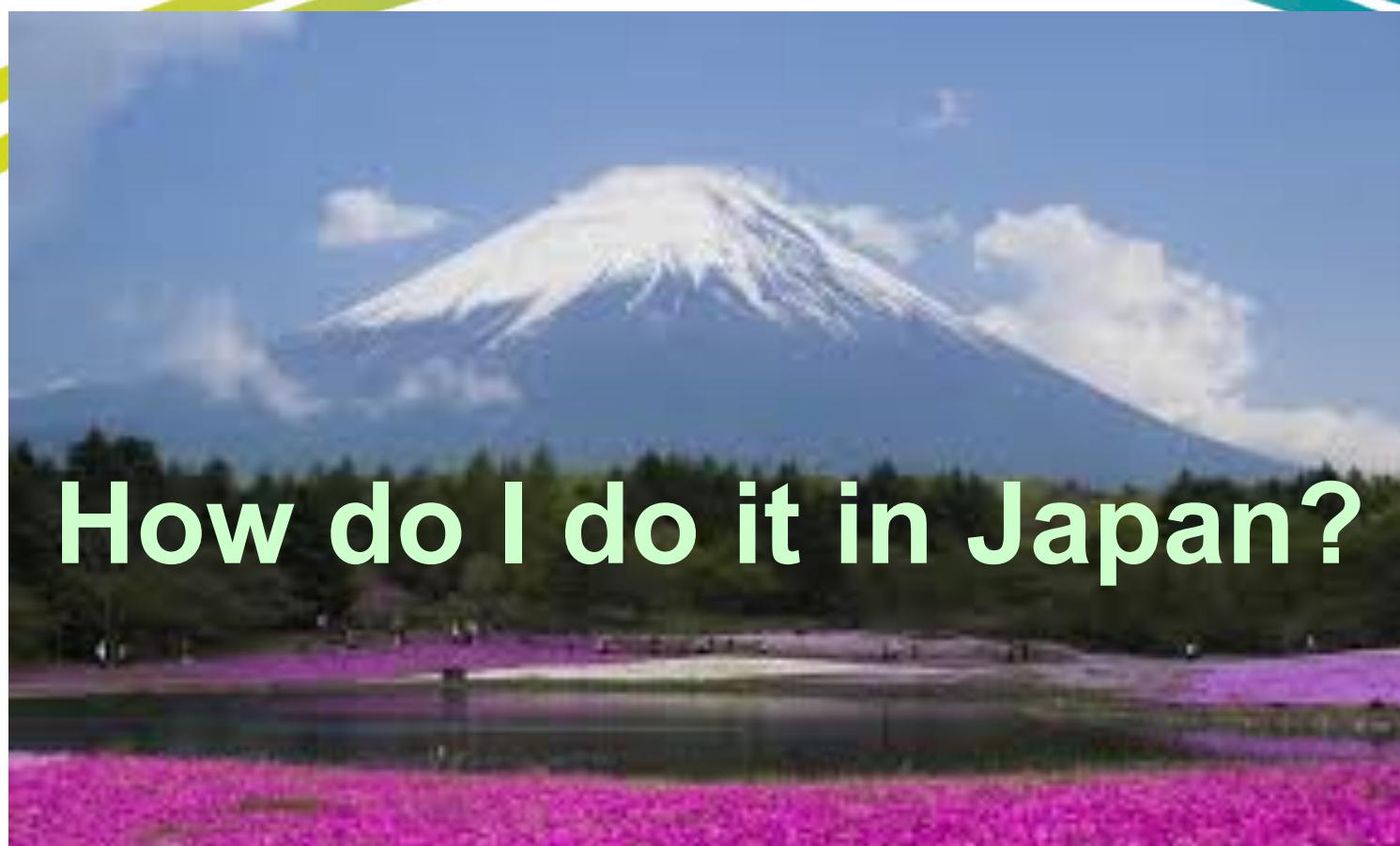


# World greetings





**How do I do it in Japan?**

# Bowing

**Men**



**Women**



# How to exchange business cards



**Hold on a second!**

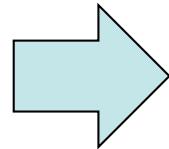
Does that add up to  
the understanding of  
Japan?

# From knowledge to practice

- To better understand Japan **from the Japanese point of view.**
- To better understand how Japan is different **in the global cultural context.**
- To know how **to communicate**, i.e. speak and listen, with the Japanese business partners.
- To discuss face to face with a senior Japanese expert to clarify your concerns.

In short ---

From



To



# Why do we talk about the culture in business?

## International Business

### HARD

Marketing, Production,  
R&D, Finance, Strategy,  
etc.

### SOFT

Communication,  
Culture, Human  
Resources, Training &  
learning, etc.

## Culture is critical

- 75% of an international alliance fails due to the cultural difference.  
(KPMG study)

# The Japanese trap

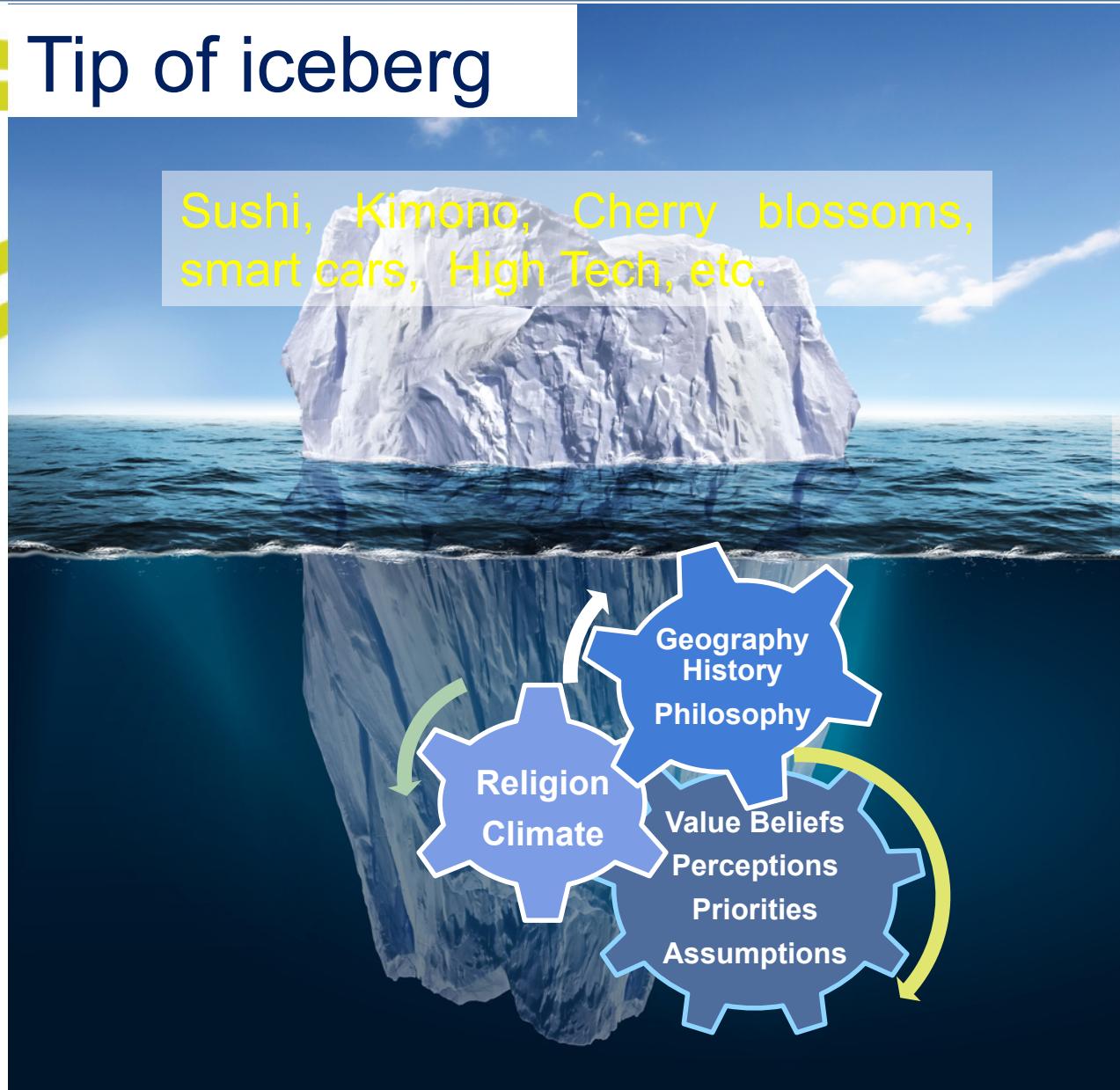
In appearance, Japan  
is like Europe



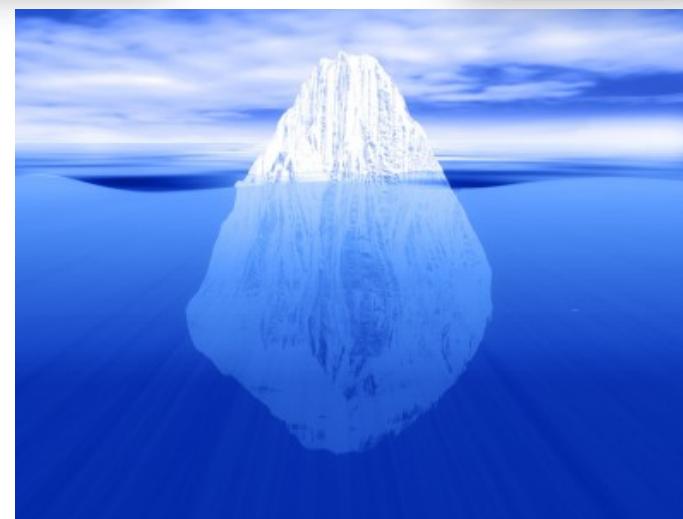
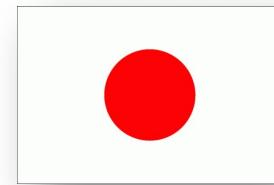
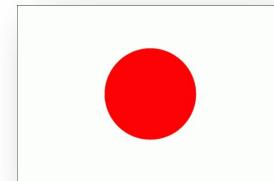
In reality, Japan is  
very different.

稟議No. 250418 -1						
議 決	可 否	社長	常務	工場長	課長	係長
	可	王	委	文		印
	否					
稟議 事項		CN500包アン様用ターンテーブル新規 標題の件 茅社で胡麻団子を作成				

## Tip of iceberg



# What do you think of others?



# The opposite ends of spectrum

## **High Context**

Japanese

Chinese

Arab

Greek

Mexican

Spanish

Italian

French

French Canadian

English

English Canadian

American

Scandinavian

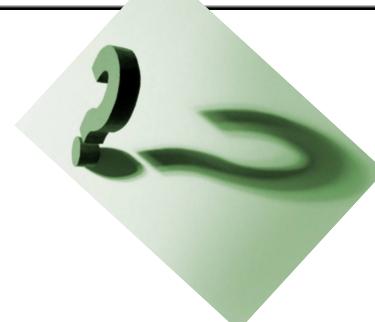
German

Swiss German

## **Low Context**

**FERRING**

PHARMACEUTICALS



Source: A. Funakawa, "Transcultural Management", (San Francisco, Jossey-Bans Publications, 1977), p88 13

# Space in Japanese and European eyes



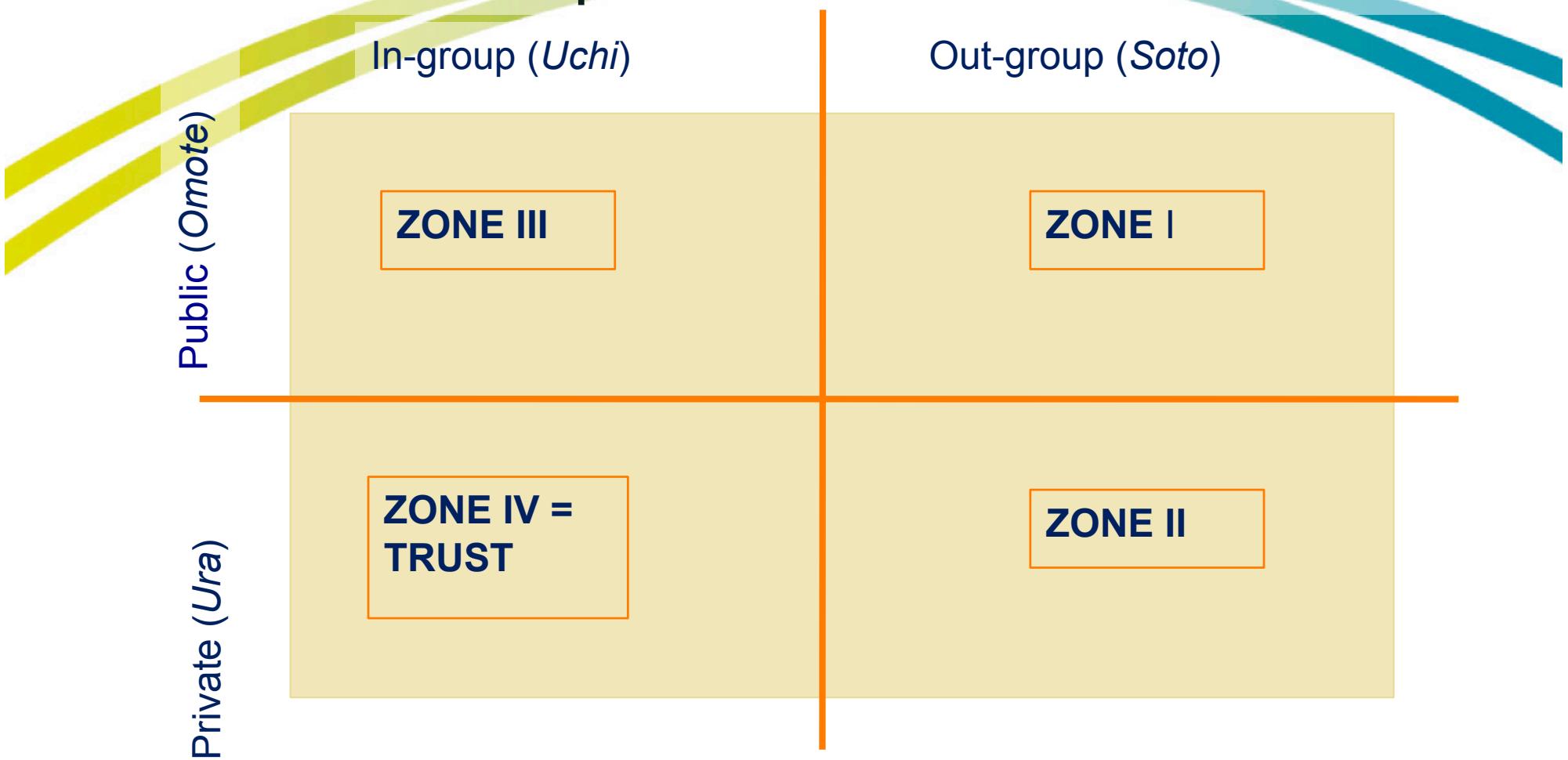
# Factors of the Japanese cultural programming



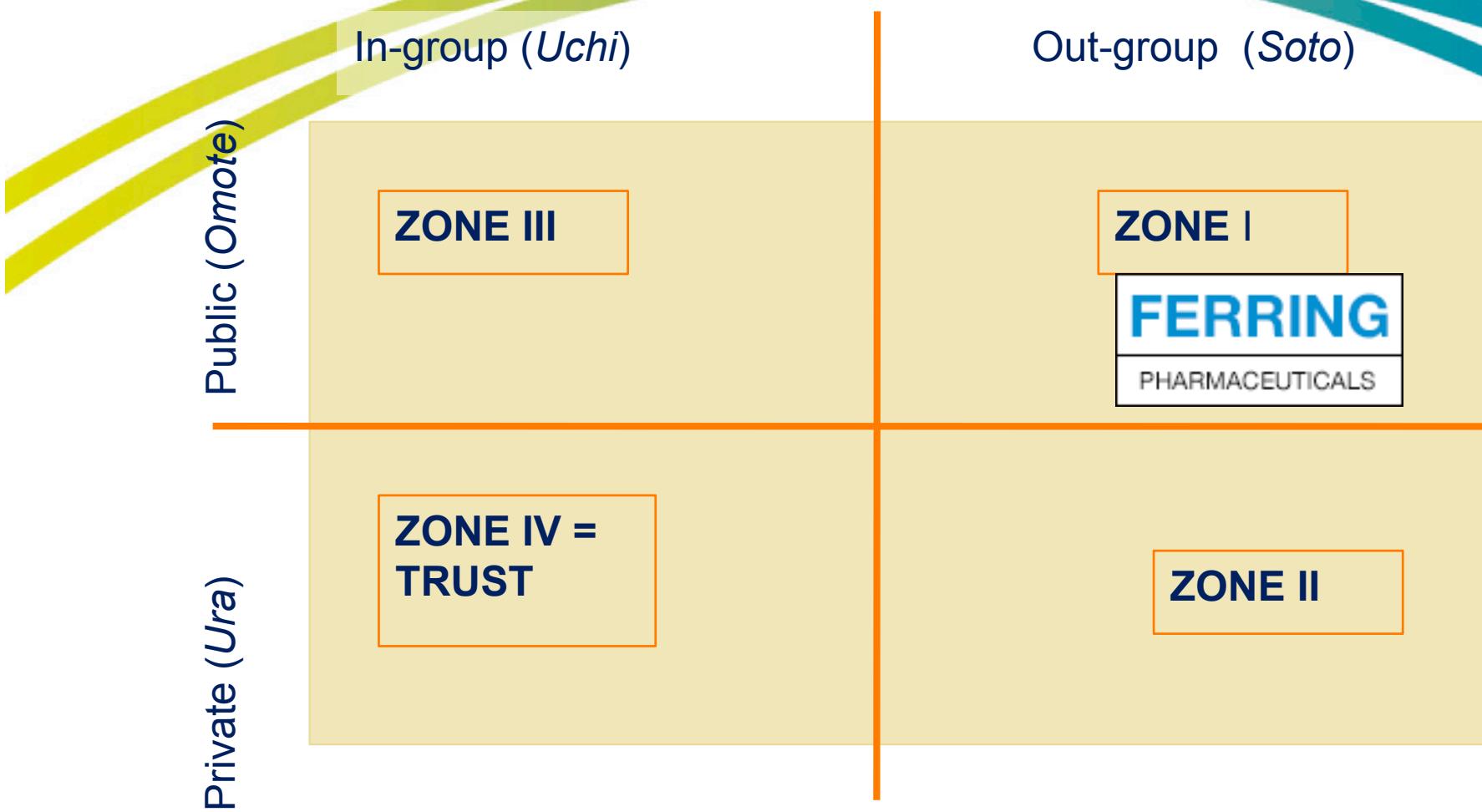
# Relationship is the key



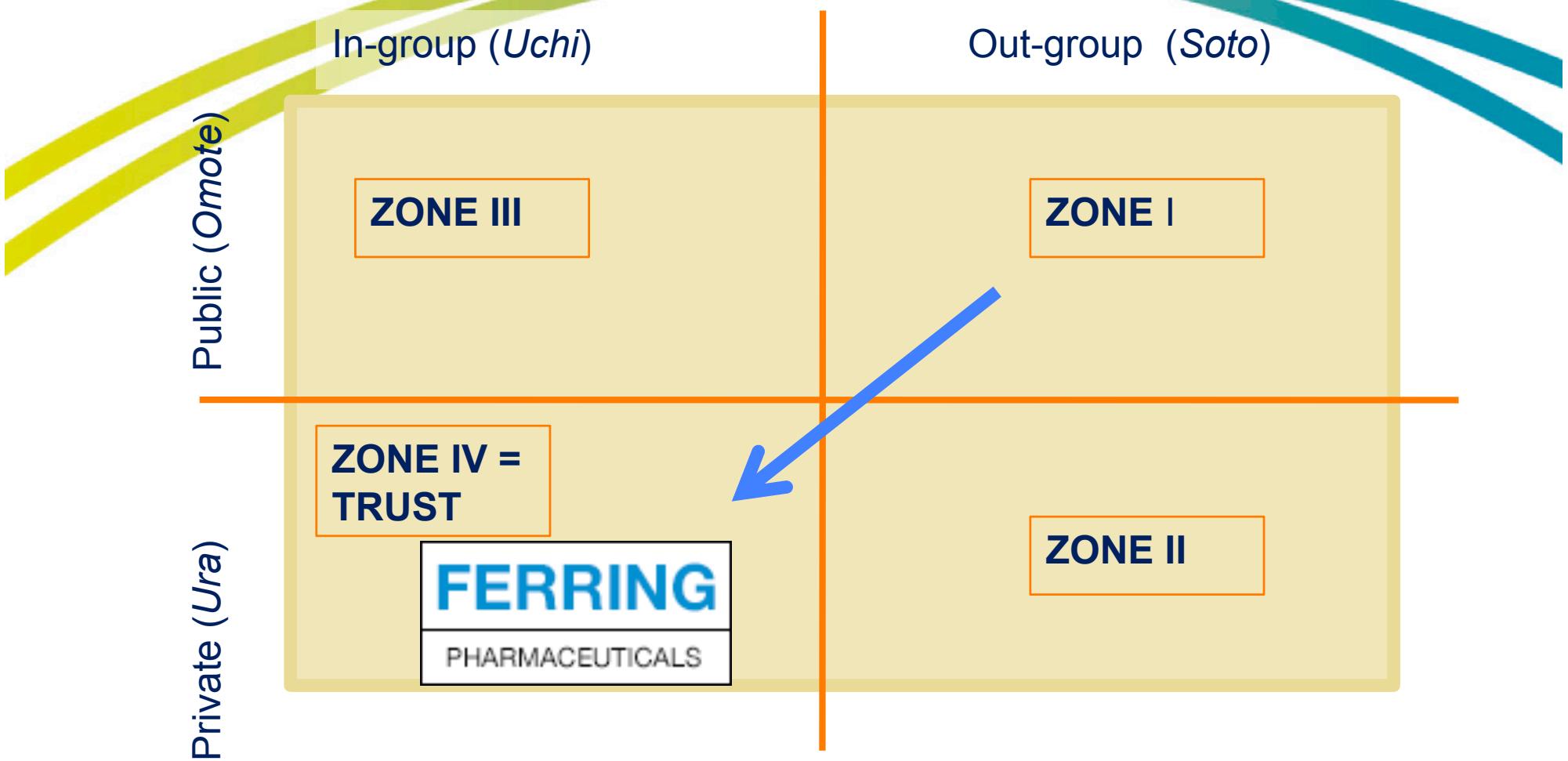
# How do the Japanese perceive others?



# Your positioning?



# Your ideal positioning



# What other people are saying about Japan?

Experience of  
Swiss business people  
with Japan



# I like Japan because ..

- The Japanese are reliable, polite, engaged, punctual, and respectful to others.
- A long-term approach.
- Though some drawbacks
  - Reserved, too much service, the air is strict, obedient, unclear communication, etc.

## TWO major challenges

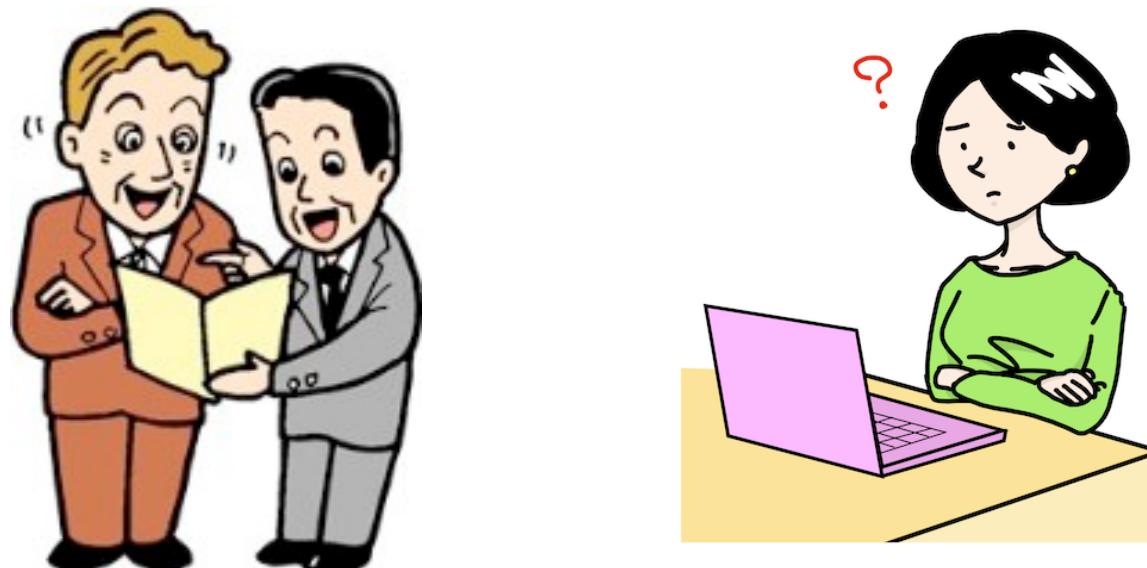
- Communication
- Long time in decision-making

# Challenges (1)

- **Communication**
  - Both ways
    - From the Swiss to Japanese
    - From the Japanese to Swiss
      - “I was often not sure if my Japanese business partners understood me.”
      - The Japanese “Yes” and European “Yes”. Not in the dictionary!



# Is it “Yes” or “No”?



# Challenges (2)

- **Decision-making**
  - Takes a long time
  - Difficult to find who the leader is
  - But there is a good point, too.
    - “The strength of Japan is that once agreed, all the people do the same thing.”



**“You walk with Japan, not work.”**

*- The Japanese are diligent but this does not mean efficient all the time.*



# Leadership

**Western**



**Japanese**



# Approaches tried & worked

- To ensure mutual understanding, asked questions many times and followed up on important matters.
- Soft and informal communication
  - Go out for a drink after work, go to a fitness club, playing golf together in weekends
  - Speak gently. Never say, “Say Yes or No!”
- To show interests in and respect to the culture
  - Visit museums, weekend trips
  - Speak Japanese

# Common success factors

- To respect and accept different values
  - “Japan has its own way of doing things.”
- To be extremely patient
- To build **the mutual trust** before pushing business
- To speak Japanese, or, at least, work with a Japanese person who knows business
  - “It was my **weapon** to be able to do business in Japanese language. I can talk to people directly.”

# Build the trust first

- Do not apply the Western expectation
  - *Harmony and trust are much more important than “pure” business.*
- Aim at building the long-lasting relationship



# QUIZ on Japan

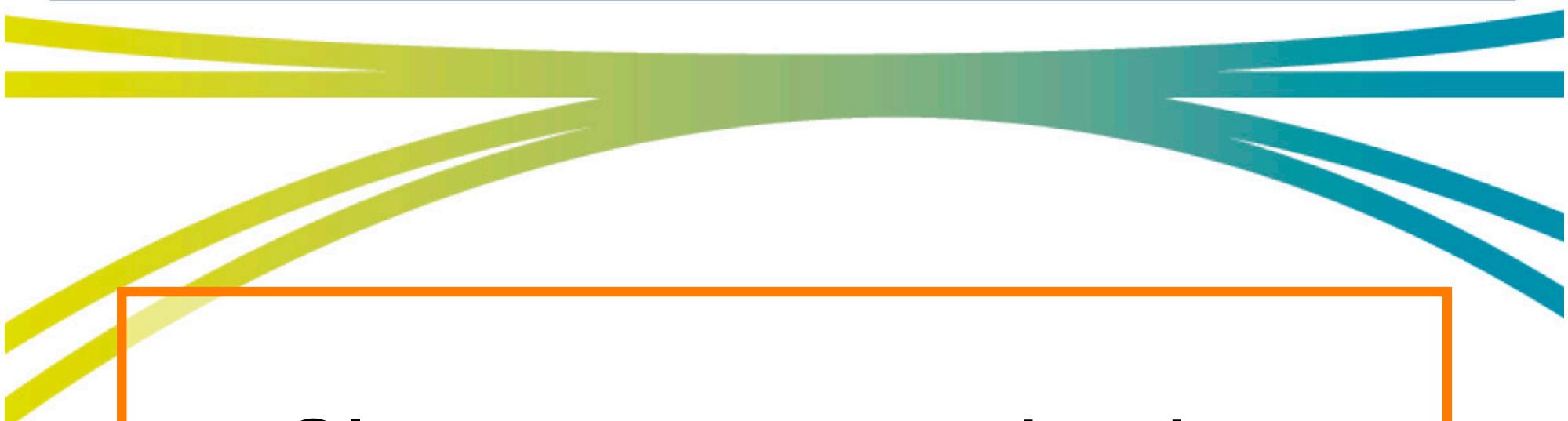


# QUIZ

- **Height of Mt. Fuji in Meter**
  - a. 3'067 b. 3'776 c. 4'810
- **Population of Japan in Million**
  - a. 35 b. 128 c. 5
- **GDP per capita in US\$**
  - a. 38 b. 58 c. 81
- **The number of islands in Japanese territory**
  - a. 400 b. 4'000 c. 40
- **Life expectancy**
  - a. 80 b. 84 c. 88 d. 83

# QUIZ - Answers

- Height of Mt. Fuji in Meter
  - a. 3'067 b. **3'776** c. 4'810
- Population of Japan in Million
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## Clues to communication

# TWO key words

Harmony



Silence

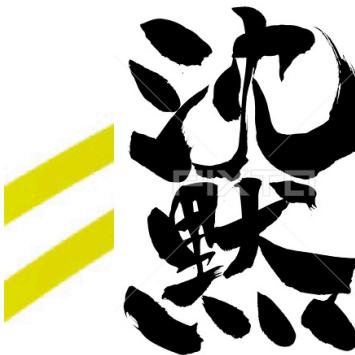


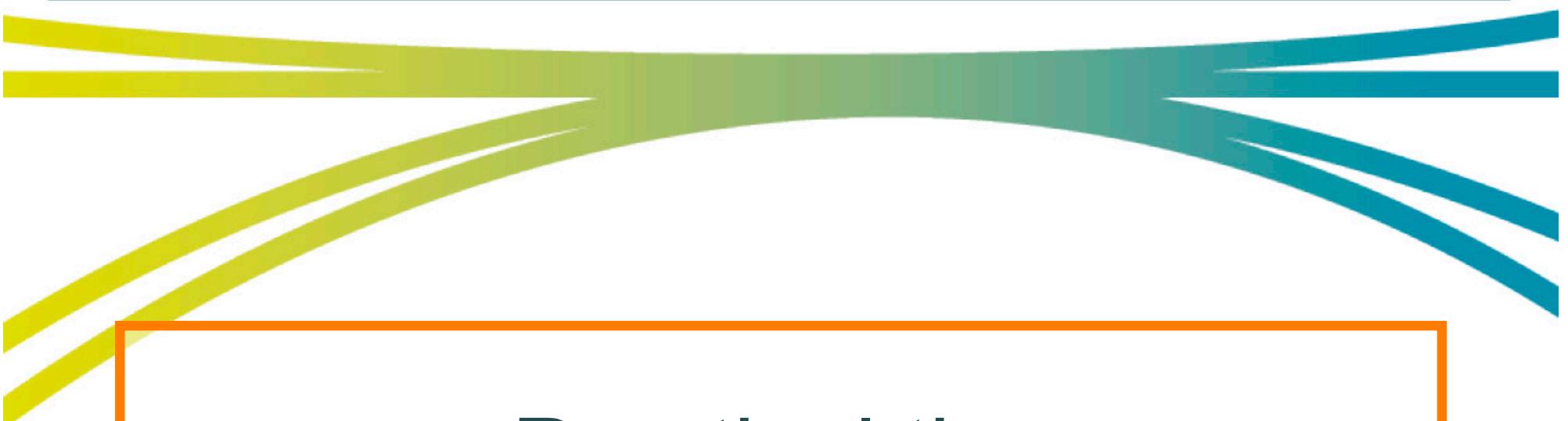
# Harmony

和



# Silence is rich

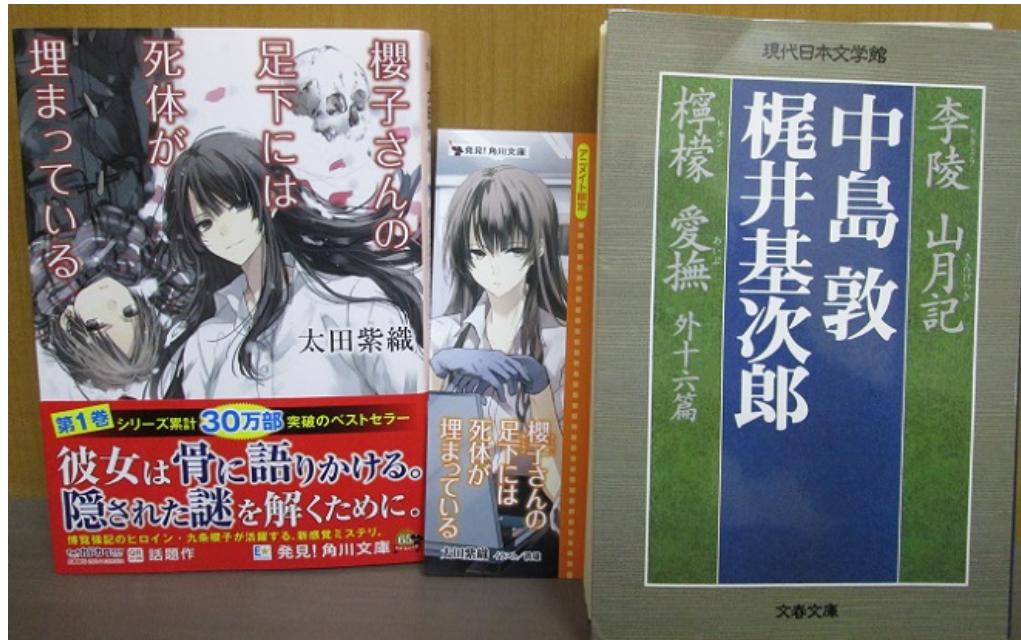




## Practical tips

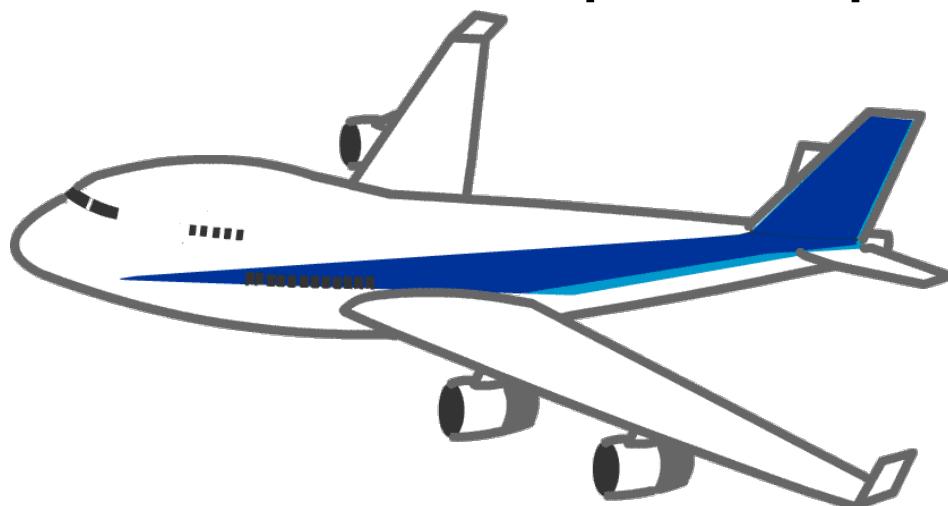
## Books and films

- Start with a Japanese novel, or a film.



# Fly by Japanese airlines

- Learn Japanese sense of perfection during the next business trip to Japan



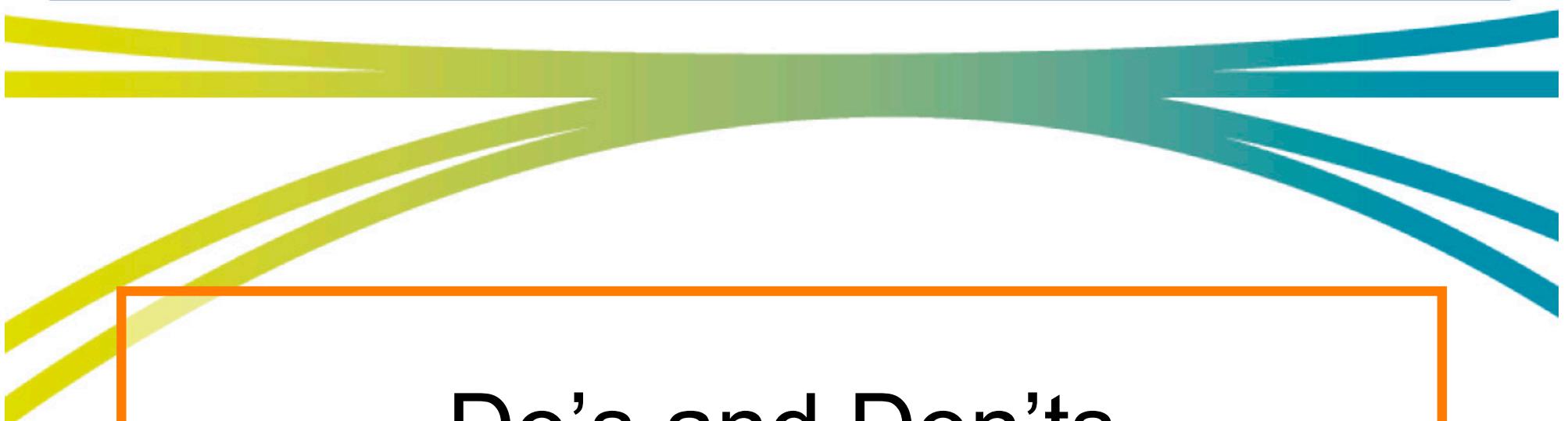
# Gift

It's a part of **business protocol**.



Drink after work  
It's an important part of business.





**Do's and Don'ts  
adjusted to Japanese values**

# Group culture, group decision-making

- Keep the individual satisfied.
- Involve everyone who may be concerned.
- Do NOT hurry. Be ready to take time.

# High context culture

- Don't present the conclusion first in your presentation.
- Be a story teller. Process is important.
- Don't say "No" up front.
- Don't say, "Please say 'Yes' or 'No'!".

# Japanese silence is rich

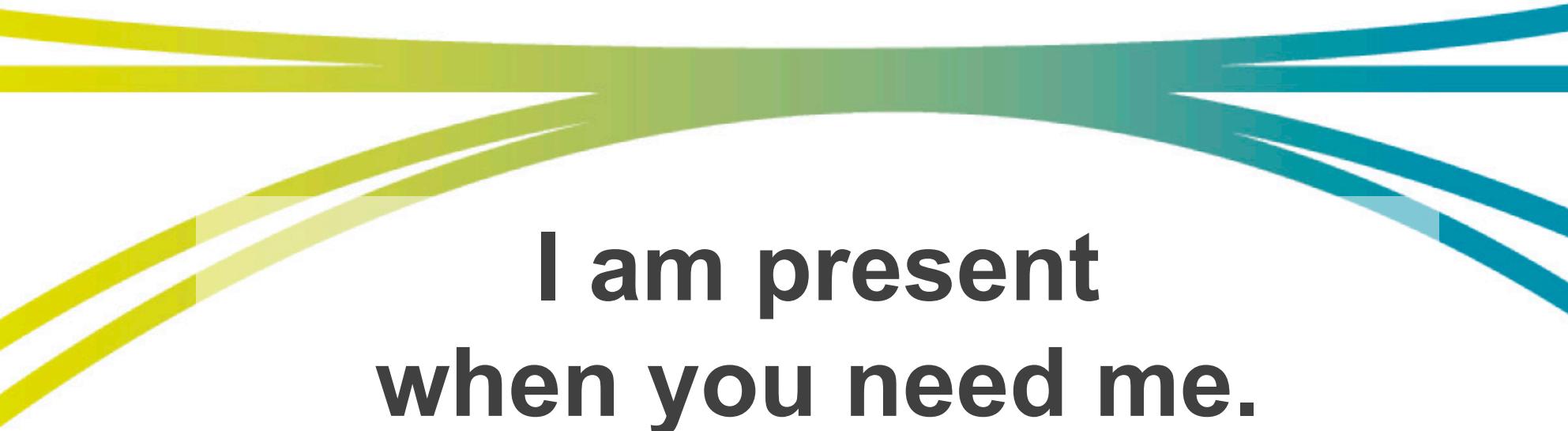
- Don't assume that the Japanese don't understand the discussion just because they are silent.

# Respect, humbleness and harmony

- “Customer is the God”
- “Perfect” is good enough for the Japanese.
- Be careful with the Japanese **“discount”**.
  - “I’m not good at it ,,”
  - “It’s a shabby office ,,”

Enjoy knowing Japan!

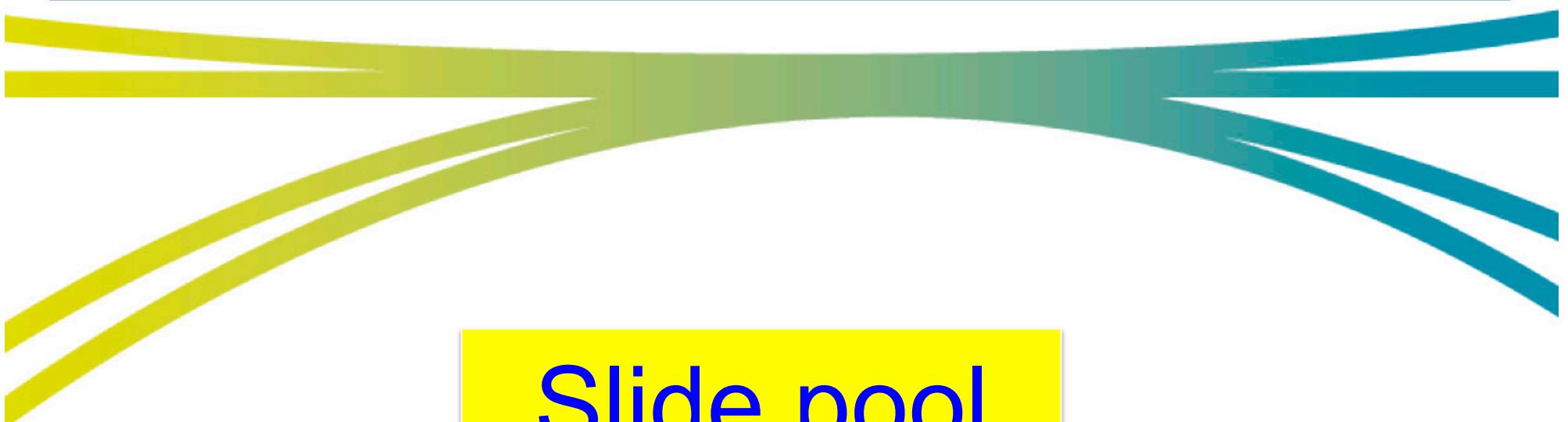




I am present  
when you need me.



Europe-Japan Dynamics  
Founder and Executive Consultant  
Yoshiko KURISAKI  
[Yoshiko.kurisaki@gmail.com](mailto:Yoshiko.kurisaki@gmail.com)  
Tel. 076 411 6076  
<http://en.geneva-kurisaki.net>



**Slide pool**

# Approaches tried & worked

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- **Soft and informal** communication
  - Go out for a drink after work, go to a fitness club, playing golf together in weekends
  - Speak gently. Never say, “Say Yes or No!”
- To show **interests** in and **respect** to the culture
  - Visit museums, weekend trips
  - Speak Japanese

# Common success factors

- To **respect and accept** different values
  - “Japan has its own way of doing things.”
- Patience, patience and patience
- To **focus on the mutual trust first**, a contract after.
- To speak Japanese, or, at least, work with a Japanese person **who knows business**
  - “It was my **weapon** to be able to do business in Japanese language. I can talk to people directly.”

# Good news!

Japan is changing --



Though slowly.



# Good news!

- Many Swiss companies are successful in Japan
  - Nestlé, Feintool ...
  - More in SCCIJ

150  
Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations  
between Switzerland and Japan  
日本・スイス国交樹立記念

