Two Westerners and a Chinese man meet in a bar. After discussions about their respective companies and a few drinks, they shake hands and agree to do business together. So, how does the story end?

How the story ends is entirely dependent on whether each party really understands what the other is saying and what they want. In order to provide Western senior executives with the knowledge and networks they will need for partnerships in China to flourish, Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business (CKGSB), China’s most successful independent business school, offers innovative Executive Education programmes that bring together senior Western executives and Chinese CEOs to learn about each other’s environment, opportunities and cultures.

With an alumni base accounting for 12.7 per cent of China’s GDP – and the most up-to-date case study research detailing joint ventures in China and Europe – CKGSB is uniquely qualified to guide Western CEOs to successful partnerships with Chinese companies. According to CKGSB’s most recent research, Western senior executives need to know five key characteristics about their Chinese counterparts to make the handshake last.

**CHINESE CEOs OWN THE POWER**

Chinese CEOs have absolute power within their organisations. They are very hands-on, constantly scanning the market and guiding the organisation as much from the bottom as the top. This management philosophy contrasts with a Western preference for strategy, transparency and hands-off empowerment.

**CHINESE CEOs SEE PAST THE CONTRACT**

Chinese CEOs see a contract as an engagement, not a marriage. While the logic of any business relationship may be clear, Chinese CEOs generally wish to test the relationship in the market. This approach contrasts with a Western reliance on transactional specificity and legal recourse if contractual conditions are not met.

**CHINESE CEOs WANT AN EQUAL MATCH**

Chinese CEOs expect levels of seniority and experience to be matched at the beginning of a business partnership and continued throughout the entire relationship, with appropriate signals of continued mutual respect. To act in any other way results in loss of ‘face’. This expectation contrasts with a Western tendency to begin a relationship at the CEO level, subsequently empowering senior managers to progress the opportunity and build their careers.

CKGSB understands how these five characteristics will materially affect Western business prospects in China – which is why its China Strategy Challenge programme, developed in collaboration with top-ranked business school IMD – uniquely brings together senior Western executives and Chinese CEOs. So for those who would like their handshakes in China to last and develop into meaningful business relationships, it may be that the CKGSB/IMD China Strategy Challenge Programme is the best long-term investment.

**CHINESE CEOs ARE MOSTLY SELF-MADE**

Chinese CEOs are defined by their underlying cultural background. Having triumphed over the last few decades of political and economic volatility to build strong businesses, Chinese CEOs have emerged to accumulate wealth and status previously unimaginable to them. This background contrasts with the more secure university-educated career ethos of most Western salaried CEOs.

**CHINESE CEOs GENERALLY THINK BIGGER**

Chinese CEOs believe that their role, in addition to building a powerful business, is one of supporting the extended family, providing for local communities and promoting a stronger China. This outlook contrasts with a largely Western focus on market penetration, share and profit.