



Business Etiquette

A short white paper on the importance of proper behavior in today's business world

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Why is etiquette important in business? People do business with those they like and trust. In order to build trust and be liked you must act in accordance with socially acceptable norms. A recent study at Harvard University revealed the lack of ability to deal with people as the primary reason employees get fired.

You have only one chance to make a good first impression. Like it or not, studies show that within 30 seconds of meeting, people they will judge your level of success, level of sophistication and education level. Within the first four minutes they will decide your trustworthiness, intelligence, humility, and compassion. Many times you don't get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Business etiquette is not about creating a false impression, but rather developing a set of social skills that creates and builds trust in relationships. Etiquette is 80% common sense and 20% kindness. Most people are not taught proper etiquette as part of their business training. If etiquette is learned it has come from the family or through observations over time. We want you to make etiquette something that is well planned and thought out.

We are going to cover this topic briefly and hope this paper encourages you to study this in greater detail. Here are the basics of business etiquette:

- The introduction
- The business lunch
- Tipping
- Working a room
- Correspondence

THE INTRODUCTION

What can be more important than that first meeting? How do you make the proper introduction? In business, gender and age are not deciding factors. In general, introduce the person of greatest importance or authority first, or the person you most want to give respect or honor. When a client is involved, mention him / her first. Proper business introductions should include first and last names. If you forget someone's name, you might "cover" by introducing the person you do know first. "Do you know Joan Smith, one of our account reps?" This sometimes gets the unknown person to introduce herself. If not, admit you can't remember. "Your face is familiar. Please help me with your name."

When shaking hands offer the entire hand. Business etiquette has become gender neutral. Women don't have to hesitate to offer their hands first. After the handshake, what is next?

Here are a few pointers about business cards:

- Always have a supply of cards
- Ask for someone's card before offering your own
- Present card face up
- Take time to look at received card
- NEVER turn down an offered card
- Never write on the card
- Be aware of international card etiquette

THE BUSINESS LUNCH

A great deal of business is completed over lunch, dinner and coffee. How and what you order can have an effect on people's opinion of you. For a first meeting always select a restaurant where you have had a good experience. Select a place that is not too loud, has good service and a variety of food. You can't impress a prospect if he/she can't hear the conversation. Of course, if the client recommends a place, go with that. Here are a few more basics about the business lunch:



- Put your napkin in your lap (if you leave the table, napkin goes on the chair)
- Order medium priced foods
- Wait for all people to be served before beginning to eat
- Know which silverware to use with which food
- Don't order messy food
- Break off small bites of bread and butter only one bite at a time
- Hold wine glass by the stem for whites and by the bowl for reds
- Don't share food, unless you are friends
- When done, place knife & fork side by side at 10:20 on the plate

How not to impress a prospect or client:

- Elbows on table
- Talking with mouth full
- Gesturing with silverware
- Answering or placing cell phone calls at table
- Dunking anything into coffee or water
- Making a fuss over incorrect orders
- Arranging hair or applying makeup at table
- Picking your teeth at the table

If you are paying the bill handle it with the waitperson discreetly. As you leave, refold your napkin and leave it to the left of the place setting.

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TIPPING

Your guests will be watching you, don't be cheap! Here are a few simple guidelines about tipping:

- Bartender (when drinking in the bar) , \$1 or 15% or round up bill to next dollar when paying by the round of drinks
- Bellman , \$1 per bag
- Cloakroom attendant, If there is no charge tip \$1
- Doorman (for getting you a taxi), \$1
- Parking Valet , \$1 - \$2
- Taxi, 15% of fare
- Waitperson, 15%-20% of bill
- Skycap, 1-2 depending on size of size of bag
- Washroom attendant, 50 cents or \$1.00 in fancy hotel
- Wine steward (handed directly to steward), \$3-\$5 per bottle or 15% of bill when billed separately from food

WORKING A ROOM

Working a room or attending a social event can be a great way to meet people. These activities build your center of influence, and that increases sales. Before an event, use your address book or "people database" to refresh your memory. When meeting people ask questions, don't come across as being only interested in yourself and use the circumstances of the event as an ice breaker. After introducing yourself, ask how they know the host or group. Give people personal space; a good distance to stand is 3 feet.

Learn how to hold a napkin, plate and glass in one hand so you can shake hands. Don't drink too much. The art of small talk will help you break the ice. Safe topics are; sports, books, movies, art and travel. **No religion or politics discussions.**

Good open ended questions:

- "How did you get started in your business?"
- "What do you enjoy most about what you do?"
- "What significant changes have you seen in your industry?"
- "What do you see as upcoming trends?"

CORRESPONDENCE

In a recent survey of CEO's 86% said people they work with often check and respond to email during meetings. 39% also said this practice is "hugely disrespectful" and never acceptable. The reality is most of the messages are not critical and can wait.

Email

- E-mail only those people to whom your messages actually pertain to—don't send mass or chain letters .
- Always respond to emails, even if it is to say you are working on an answer.
- Business E-mail should be used for business rather than personal use—don't send anything you wouldn't want the public to see.
- Don't use the email to offer complaints about your job, customers or others. You never know who may get a copy.

Written

- Respond to every letter or invitation, unless they are asking for money. (excluding mass mailings)
- Get into the habit of sending thank you notes. Try to send three a week to colleagues, clients and centers of influence.
- Always include a cover letter with any documents.



THE BEST OF THE REST

In today's ever changing and fast paced business world, people tend to use technology as a tool for all occasions. That can cause a big problem. Did you ever hear of the manager who fired people over the email? Not a good practice. Here are a few more tips that will improve your business etiquette:

- Always be on time— it is disrespectful of others to be late.
- Always solve big issues face to face—don't use technology as a crutch to avoid tough conversations.
- Don't send "War and Peace" over a fax or email.
- Treat others the way you wish to be treated.

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