

## Business Etiquette

As your career progresses, you develop skills which are respected and expected, professional etiquette. Professional etiquette builds leadership, quality, business, and careers. It refines skills needed for exceptional service. Whether you are an executive or just starting out, a seminar in Professional business etiquette, nationally and internationally will definitely be beneficial to you.

Without proper business etiquette, you limit your potential, risk your image, jeopardize relationships that are fundamental to business success. Etiquette, formerly perceived as soft skills, business professionals have found that etiquette influences their success because it differentiates them in a competitive market. Honors commitments to quality and excellence. Etiquette enables them to be confident in a variety of people from many cultures. Etiquette also modifies distracting and unacceptable behavior and develops admired conduct (Klinkenburg.)

Why should we be concerned about etiquette issues in the business arenas of the 90s? Basically because diversity, based on gender, cultural background, age, and degree of experience in today's business, creates a clash of standards and behavioral expectation. Not only is these differences internationally a concern, but also a concern among the relationships of Americans. Finally globalization has changed the way we do business, demanding new levels of expertise in dealing with people (Klinkenburg.)

Rude business etiquette goes on daily in our country. Sometimes it is so common, people start to perceive it as normal behavior of our society. As stated before, proper business etiquette will get you farther, just that extra step will lead you to better business and better relationships. One of the most observed behaviors in United States is telephone rudeness. For instance, not returning telephone calls, taking calls in meetings, and not identifying yourself on the phone. The standard rule in business is to return routine phone calls within 24 hours and to apologize if the call is later. Return phone calls, fax, write a note or have your staff call, but do get back to people. It is an expected professional gesture to identify yourself when you place a call. Say your name, the company or business you represent to take people off the spot. Then state the nature of your call. If you do not identify yourself, expect to be asked and do not take offense. When answering telephone calls, you are expected to make a connection promptly when a call comes in. This is more than a form of courtesy; prompt telephone service suggests to callers an efficient company. The appropriate telephone greeting conforms with the time of day and then the policy of the company - for example, "Good afternoon, The Smith Company," or , "Good afternoon, Procter and Gamble." Knowing that he/she has the right number, the caller merely has to ask for the individual he/she is calling.

Anyone who has a visitor in his office should avoid making calls, unless they are pertinent to the business being discussed.

As for incoming calls, when the individual who is your guest is very important, or the subject of your discussion is involved, tell your secretary not to put through any but the utmost urgent calls that come in for him/her even when he/she has a guest, because the alternative is a long list of calls to be made afterwards. If calls do come in, excuse yourself to your guest and make the telephone conversation as brief as possible. Do not continue your conversation with your guest as you pick up the receiver; finish what you are saying first and then pick it up (Parker .)

Interruptions are another complaint that is commonly observed as rude business etiquette. These rude interruptions are of conversations, of work, and by

telephone. Let people finish their sentences and their thoughts. Never presume to know what they will say or how they should say it. Develop the judgment to determine whether to rush a person in expressing themselves or allow them time to talk (Hilkenburg )

you can interrupt people if they begin to ramble, discuss unrelated work incidents, or keep you from performing your necessary work. If someone else interrupts another in your presents, interrupt them to say, "Now, wait a minute, I want John to finish his thought." Always remember people and their opinions deserve respectful consideration (Hilkenburg.)

Inappropriate business appearance is also neglected in our society often people disregard the importance of appearance, but it does influence people's perceptions of you. Excessive hairstyles, makeup, jewelry, and fragrance detract from the professional image, as do worn, spotted, or ill-fitting clothing. Dress not to distract, but to accomplish your professional goals. Yet clothing and visual image is a backdrop, not a feature, for your professionalism. Your professional appearance matters. To some, this may be the most obvious thing in the world. But you would be surprised how many people arrive for job interviews or client meetings dressed like a bike messenger ( Richardson 190.)

Certain dress is accepted in different organizations and in different parts of the United States. There are 3 rules about your professional appearance that remain consistent:

1. If you want the job, you have to look the part
2. If you want the promotion, you have to look promotable
3. If you want to be respected, you have ?????

you may have heard the saying, "If you want to move up, dress like the person two levels ahead of you. You are going to command more respect if you dress professionally and are well groomed. If you dreamlike a slouch, you will be treated that way (Richardson 191.)

many offices are moving toward casual Fridays. Casual dress generally means "nice" casual. Be comfortable, but remember you are still at work and are representing yourself and the organization. Appearance and norms vary among industries and around the country. It is the work that shows how creative you are, not how you dress. Dress to honor the position you occupy, if not yourself (Richardson 191.)

Lack of appreciation is also overlooked in professional etiquette. Take time to show your appreciation towards clients, colleagues and supervisors. It could be in the form of a thank-you note for a nice evening, conduct above and beyond, favors, or support. Included in neglected appreciation is ignoring RSVP's. Other surrounding RSVP's are lackluster acceptance, "I am not sure if I can come or not," or "I will if I can." Always remember to show your appreciation to others, no matter how small.

Remember the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as they would have you do unto them."

Being consistently late and not honoring people's time is also considered unprofessional etiquette. Most everyone forgives occasional lateness with a reasonable explanation, but everyone tires of the person who is consistently late for appointments, who starts meetings 15 minutes late, who exceeds deadlines for reports or deliveries, and who gives short notice for work to be done or meeting to attend. In the American culture, time is considered a commodity, if you are neglecting the client's time, you are neglecting their finances (Hilkenburg.)

Time really is money and organizations spend it in different ways. Some expect you to account for every moment. Advertising agencies, law firms, and some other types of business bill clients at an hourly rate for your time. Others may allow you to come and go as you please, as long as the job is completed.

Introductions are a common and important event in every business setting. Knowing a few basic facts about introductions will help you master the art of introducing people correctly.

Many introductions usually involve people who are meeting for a reason, or whose meeting has some business connection. Sometimes it is helpful, if not essential, to add a few words of explanation to your introductions, so each person

is made aware of the business connection with the other. It is more important to be cordial in making introductions, and to get names and titles correct, than it is to absolutely correct in the introduction procedure. A natural and simple introduction that may slightly violate the rules is better than a awkward effort to be proper.

Who is to be introduced to whom? In introducing a man to a woman, the basic rule is that a man is presented to a woman, even if she is younger than he is. In business, other exceptions are sometimes made when other elements of rank or status are a strong factor. For example, when a male executive is meeting his new female assistant, his authority is so direct, and basic that it is logical to introduce her to him. But it would also be correct to follow the basic rules and present him to her.

Present younger persons to older ones. If other factors are equal, including sex, you would most likely present a younger person to his or her senior in age. However, where two women are concerned, it is more tactful not to draw attention to the fact that one is older, unless the age is a considerable one.

Present a person of lower rank to his/her superior. If two people are of the same sex, and not widely rated by age, introduce the person of lower rank to his supervisor.

The basic forms of introductions: here are acceptable ways of introducing one person to another:

(most formal) Mrs. Smith, may I present Mr. Crane?

(less formal) Mrs. Smith, may I introduce Mr. Crane?

(informal) Ann Smith, I would like you to meet Bill Crane.

The first two examples often are pronounced as statements, not as questions. If you would like to make less distinction in who is being presented to who use forms as "this is" or just the pronouncing of names.

If it should happen that you mention first the name of the person of lesser importance do not become flustered, simply alter the wording: "Mr. Crane I would like to introduce you to Ms. Smith."

If you have reason to believe that two men (or two women) might already have met, you may choose to use this introduction: "Jack Smith, have you met Jim Brown?"

However, it is considered improper to ask a woman whether she has met a man; you would not say "Miss Smith have you met Mr. Jones?"

Introductions by first name only are not acceptable. It is considered poor form to use these phrases of introduction:

1. "meet" (used alone as, "Mr. A meet Mr. B.")
2. "meet up with"
3. "shake hands with"
4. I would like to make you acquainted with."

If you have to introduce someone to a fairly large group, handle the introduction in the simplest and most comfortable way you can. If the person you are introducing will have a close connection with the people in the group, you should go through a complete introduction. In introducing someone to the entire group, avoid running through all the names without a break. It is better to introduce two or three people at a time, so the names can register and acknowledgments can be made. It is not necessary in a large group to introduce all the women before the men.

It may even be advisable to simply present the person, by name to the group, with explanation that they will have a chance to meet properly later. This method would not be polite unless there were a reason why making introductions would be impractical at the time.

There are numerous occasions in business when you will have to introduce yourself. For example, should you come out of your office to meet someone who has been waiting to see you, you might say, "Mr. Smith, I am Mr. Jones. Please come in."

In most business situations men frequently introduce themselves to other men by using their last name with not title, (Smith, instead of Mr. Smith) but to a woman in business a man would always use his title, even on the phone: "Miss

Brown, this is Mr. Smith of XYZ company."

When you are being introduced to someone, give him/her your full attention. When the introduction is completed, you should acknowledge it verbally, and perhaps also by shaking hands. Proper response to introductions that are acceptable; How do you do?, It is nice to meet you, I am so glad to meet you, I am glad to make your acquaintance, or pleased to meet you.

A man stands to be introduced to a woman or a man, a woman is expected to stand for introductions to men or women considerably older than herself, or meeting people of important status. It is generally accepted that an executive level would not have to stand to greet a male or female applicant (although he could.)

A man always shakes hands with another man to whom he is introduced. A very young man meeting a much older man might wait for the older man to extend his hand first, as a sign of deference. Women in business may or may not shake hands with each other; if one offers her hand, the other should respond in kind and without hesitation. In social situations a man is not expected to offer his hand to a woman unless she first offers hers, but in business it is not unlikely for a man to offer his hand to a woman he is meeting. Naturally, she would return the handshake. If the man does not initiate the handshake she may offer her hand or not as she wishes. Always remember that proper introduction and responses to introductions are very important, since they are a factor in establishing good first impressions.

Sending gifts to clients and customers, particularly at Christmas time - is a traditional practice with a large number of business people. Most do it because they enjoy giving gifts and look on the custom as a form of public relations.

There are numerous occasions when a business man/woman feels the obligation to send a gift. He/She may want to express his or her thanks, wish an associate good luck, or the celebration of a business anniversary. Flowers, plants, candy, and books are all ways of saying "thank you" or "good luck." They are all gifts that do not make people feel obligated and that can be accepted without embarrassment.

Business cards are carried by all business people who call on other companies, clients, or customers. Never order business cards unless you are given permission to do so.

The proper size of a business card is usually 3 1/2 x 2 inches. However, many companies use cards of a different size or shape, so their card will be distinctive.

In the executive level, a business card usually has the person's name in the middle of the card and his/her title and the firm name in the lower right hand corner. Some very prominent men and women omit their title from the card and simply their name and name of company are present.

Initials and abbreviations, while not correct on social calling cards, may be used on business cards, the title "Mr." does not precede the name. The business cards used by salesmen, or to advertise a company, frequently carry a trademark or emblem. The printing or engraving may be partly in color. The telephone number is always on a card of this type.

Business cards should not be used for enclosure with a gift, even though the gift is going to a client or customer. The giving of a gift is a social gesture, and therefore a social card should be enclosed. However, presidents or board of chairmen of a large company often have a special card printed for enclosures of gifts. It mentions the company name and the name of the executive sending the gift, but does not resemble a business card.

Our generation in the United States, is becoming to be known as the "McManners Generation." Eating in fast food establishments has led to sloppy table manner and dining skills that can offend and cost clients.

Ten Table Matters that Matter:

1. Spoons and knives are on the right, forks are on the left. Use them from the outside in. Solids like a bread plate or a salad are on the left, liquids like water, wine, or soda are on the right.

2. Napkins belong unfolded on your lap. Use the napkin to blot your mouth. Napkins stay off the table until the meal has ended. If you must excuse yourself, leave the napkin on you chair.
3. Pass serving dishes to the right to avoid table traffic jams. Make sure handles and serving utensils are facing the receiver.
4. Spoon soup away from you, and do not crumble crackers into it.
5. Keep your knife and fork on the plate if you are taking a break.
6. Keep your mouth closed when chewing.
7. Do not be the first person to take your jacket off during a meal.
8. Keep your elbows at your sides and off the table.
9. Push your chair in when leaving the table.
10. Make the effort to introduce yourself to everybody with talking distance of you at the table, and to direct questions to them to help get them involved with any conversation.

Cocktail parties are a whole different affair than the seated meal. By learning a few simple rules and by practicing some easy maneuvering, you too, can handle canapés and cocktails with grace and make impressive first impressions.

Never ever drink on a empty stomach; stop on the way to the event to grab a snack if necessary. The risks of losing control or being indiscreet are too great. In fact, be sure to pace your alcoholic intake throughout the course of the evening so you will not reveal your company's secrets, or tell a client's spouse what you really think of her or him.

At the bar or food station get what you want and move away. Do not hold court directly in front of the bar; let others have access to the bar as well. But how can you move away from the bar and be able to juggle your food and drink? First of all, the right hand should always be kept free to shake hands with any man or women. Food, drink, napkin, - everything goes in the left hand. If you practice this technique you will never look like amateur juggler. Here is the most simplest way to juggle hor d'oeuvres and drinks: Take the cocktail napkin and put it between the ring and small finger of the left hand. Then, spread the ring and middle fingers to act as a base for the plate of hors d'oeuvres. Use the thumb and index finger to hold stem or base of the glass and to stabilize the top of the plate at the same time. As you need something reach for it with your right hand, use it and return in to the left hand..

A cold drink should never be held longer than the time it takes to have a sip.

Do not fill your plate to overflowing. People seldom notice you going back for seconds at large parties, they will notice the mountain size heap on your plate.

Dinner and parties are a major part of the business world, knowing the basic table manners and party etiquette will assist you in making wonderful impressions on clients, employers and others. First impressions are made, for the most part, within 5 seconds of meeting someone, so remember do not speak when you have a mouth full of broiled shrimp and cocktail sauce, and do not act like you are a football player at pre-game meal and load your plate!

