

Business etiquette essay

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Business etiquette is more important today than ever before. With the addition of technology, business etiquette has found a new level in the modern business world. Educating yourself with proper conduct can be a daunting task. In the paper below I have highlighted some of the most important areas of business etiquette. In business, you develop skills that help you excel, some of the most important skills you will develop in your professional career include that of business etiquette. Professional etiquette is significant in building up leadership, enhancing careers, and expanding business relationships. It refines and develops skills that are necessary for all aspects of a person's professional career. Whether you are a top executive at a fortune 500 company or freshly starting out, being well versed in professional etiquette is imperative. " Business etiquette is vitally important for creating a harmonious work environment and for representing your company in the best manner possible." (Fox, 2008).

Lacking in proper business etiquette limits your potential and compromises your professional image; all the while jeopardizing your professional relationships that are imperative to your business success. Etiquette, which was once perceived as a soft skill, has now been found to influence a person's success dynamically in a competitive market. Proper business etiquette allows the business professional to be confident in a variety of difficult professional situations; including but not limited to cross-cultural business situations. " Etiquette modifies distracting and unacceptable behavior and develops admired conduct." (Klinkenberg) Why is it that business etiquette has become so imperative within the last decade? The simplistic answer to the questions is; because our current business market

place is full of incredible diversity. Business professionals find themselves dealing with a plethora of diversity because of cultures, gender, experience, and age. These factors have created a clash of standards and drastically altered behavioral expectation.

Globalization has changed the way business is conducted and demands new levels of professional ethics. (Klinkenburg.) Improper business etiquette occurs on a daily basis, making it all too common. One of the most common, as well as one of the most bothersome, etiquette lapses occurs with telephones. Not returning telephone calls, taking calls in meetings, taking calls in the midst of another phone conversation, eating lunch while on the phone, the list could go on and on. The standard rule of professional etiquette is; return a call within 24 hours and to apologize if the call is later. Always identify yourself when calling, this is standard and expected professionalism. When receiving a phone call clearly identify yourself, so there is no confusion who they are speaking too. If an imperative call comes in during a meeting excuse yourself from the meeting 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 say first and then answer the phone. (The Parker Center, 02)

Interruptions are far too common among business professional. Interrupting a person is rude and frustrating. “ Interruptions are considered one of the most annoying distractions.” (Blanchard, 1992) Interruptions can be made in the form of talking over someone, answer your phone while in the midst of a conversation, or even allowing your ringer on your telephone to go off intermittently during a meeting or conversations. Always let people finish

their sentences and their thoughts and never assume you can finish their sentences for them. Develop the habit of being a listener and not rushing a person when they are expressing their viewpoint or concerns. You will get your turn to speak, however you will not ever get a chance to redeem yourself for talking over a colleague or potential customer. (Hilkenburg) If you find yourself in a situations where someone else interrupts someone politely say “ I would like to hear John Doe finish his thought before we move on”. Always remember your colleagues deserve respectful consideration. (Blanchard, 1992)

Although we all have heard the advice: “ Don’t judge a book by its cover” and “ The clothes don’t make the person” who are we fooling, appearance matters. The book “ Dress for Success” is a must read for all business professional. In our society we far too often neglect the importance of appearance. No matter how wrong it maybe, appearance does influence people’s perception of you. Hairstyles, make-up, loud jewelry, excessive perfume; all can detract from a person’s professional image. When you dress do not try to distract but instead try to accentuate your professionalism. People are visual and clothing acts as a visual backdrop, it ads in your professional package. “ If you walk into a room in rumpled, dirty clothes, hair barely pulled back, yawning, and mumble something unintelligible, does this say, 'I'm trustworthy?' Heck, no. Present yourself as you want to be seen - as a knowledgeable, competent professional." (Unknown, 2012)

It is imperative to know an office’s environment so that you are able to dress in a fashion that is appropriate. If you are entering into a professional setting in which ties are accustom, than it is imperative that you dress accordingly. “

The world sums you up by the clothes that you wear, and treats you accordingly." (Unknown, 2012) Clothing is powerful, it has the ability to make or break a person. " If you want to move up, dress like the person two levels ahead of you." (Sabath, 2010) You are going to command more respect if you dress professionally and are well groomed if you dress like a slouch, you will be treated like a slouch. Casual Fridays have become a tradition in many offices. " We believe that casual dress can have clear advantages, at virtually no cost, for most corporations and industries," said Michael R. Losey, SHRM's president and CEO. " Casual dress policies are quickly becoming the rule rather than exception." (Parus, 2000)

However casual dress in the work environment creates another layer of what is proper etiquette, for business professionals. For instance casual to one person is not necessary casual to the next person. The definition of casual is often a grey area that lacks definition. Casual Friday dress should be comfortable, but you are still in a professional environment, so leave your yoga pants at home. Dress in a way that brings honor the position you occupy and the company that employs you. Appreciation or lack thereof, is another example of etiquette that is often overlooked in business environments. It is vital that you take time to show appreciation towards your clients, colleagues, and supervisors. Appreciation can be shown in many forms but it is quintessential that you acknowledge actions worth acknowledging. For instance, a follow-up thank you email or note when a colleague picked up the tab at dinner is imperative. Acknowledging that you are appreciative of the action performed by another person is always proper business etiquette. (Fox, 2008)

Neglect of appreciation is always a form of business etiquette that should be avoided at all costs. Neglecting to send an email or note that acknowledges the act of a colleague or coworker is defying business etiquette in the utmost form. Forgetting or neglecting to respond to an RSVP, by the given date, is not only irresponsible but also displays disrespect towards the one who has invited you. In situations that warrant responses remember the Golden Rule, " Do unto others as they would have you do unto them." Time is a commodity and you are only allotted so much of it in a given day, so it must be used wisely. Honoring people and being respectful of their time is an important business etiquette rule and one that should seldom be broken. People are always willing to forgive the occasional lateness due to unforeseen circumstances; however people are not willing to forgive chronic lateness. " In the American culture, time is considered a commodity, if you are neglecting the clients' time, you are neglecting their finances." (Hilkenburg.)

Time is money and wasting it is not acceptable. People value their time as they would value gold. If you have a meeting across town leave with ample time to accommodate appropriate traffic for the given hour. Do not schedule your meetings so close together that you do not allow for the occasional meeting going longer than expected. Be overly cautious of people's times as this is something no one likes wasted. Introductions are important and imperative in every business setting. Knowing how to introduce a person in the proper form is a business skill that all professionals must know. Most business introductions involve people meeting for a distinct reason and/or business connection. When facilitating introductions make sure to include

these connections so that a connection may be made. Always include the person's name along with a brief back round or detail on the persons' you are introducing. It is of the utmost importance to be accurate when making introduction. Always make sure names, titles, place of business, are correct during your introduction.

Who is to be introduced to whom? In introducing a man to a women, the basic rule is that a man is presented to a women, 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 make 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. (Blanchard, 1992) Introductions have multiple forms that are acceptable, the basic form of an introductions would be: “ Ms. Smith, may a I present/introduce Mr. Smith” or “ Jane Smith I would like you to meet Stan Smith.” If you have reason to believe that the two people you are introducing have already met you would conduct the introduction in the following way: “ Stan Smith have you met Jane Smith?” In this situation it would be considered improper business etiquette to ask the

female if she has met the male. It would be improper to ask “ Ms. Smith have you met Mr. Smith?” It is also improper to use phrases like “ meet up with”, “ shake hands with” and “ I would like to make you acquainted with” (Fox, 2008) Proper responses to introductions are equally as important as the introduction themselves. Acceptable forms of responses to business introductions would be; How do you do?

It is nice to meet you, I am so glad to meet you, I am glad to make you acquaintance, or pleased to meet you. A man should stand to be introduced to a women or a man, a women is only expected to stand for introductions to men or women considerably older than herself, or meeting people of important stature. When conducting an introduction a man is always to shake hands with another man to whom he is being introduced; however women are not required to shake hands. A male is not expected to offer is hand to a women unless she offers hers first, however is business etiquette it is not unlikely that a male with offer his hand first. (Fox, 2008) Gifting and proper business etiquette can be a complex situation. Companies set policies and standards when it comes to business gifts being given and received by employees. There are numerous occasions when business man/women may feel obligated to send a gift, however it is imperative that this person educated themselves to the gifting policies at the recipient’s company before engaging in the gifting process.

Gift giving in some situations can also be viewed as buying business or trying to gain unfair advantages. Sending flowers to a business associate during a time of sorrow or happiness is generally not considered gift giving, but instead is showing compassion or excitement for the person. Alcohol is something

that is often consumed at business events and business dinners. Although it should go without saying never consume alcohol on an empty stomach; this increases your risk of losing control and conducting yourself in less than professional manor. If you choose to drink, pace yourself, and do not allow yourself to become drunk. People who are in states altered by alcohol lose control over their actions and put not only themselves but their employer at potential risk. (Chaney, 2007) Dinner and parties play a major role in business and it is imperative that a business professional know how to conduct themselves in these situations, as well.

Basic table manners and party etiquette are essential when making impressions on clients, employers and others. Stuffing your face and speaking with your mouth full have no place in business situations. “ Most dinner meetings are not to feast however a meal with an important agenda. Although there may be food, it is never wise to order a large meal, as most people never touch more than few bites of the food.” (Blanchard, 1992) A business dinner is not the time to order the largest most expensive item on the menu. It is not the time to order the most expensive wine on the menu just because you are not picking up the tab. When it does come time to settle the check there is proper business etiquette for that as well. Traditionally the person who invited or called the business meal is the person who picks up the check. However in some instances the colleagues or customers you are entertaining may work for a company that does not allow them to have a free meal.

In situations like this make sure to educate yourself on their corporate policy before dinner so that no one is put in uncomfortable and

compromising positions. If there are multiple people at the dinner from the inviting company then the most senior or most executive person from that company should settle the check. Knowing these business rules of etiquette can help eliminate not only awkward but also unethical situations. Always be sensitive to rules and policies of a person's employer, no one would want to see a colleague fired because of a meal. (Fox, 2008)

Business etiquette and etiquette in general, contain so many rules that it can be overwhelming. Many young business professionals graduate college with a degree in hand and an education that has cost them well into the six figures, yet they lack the knowledge of business etiquette. There will be times in your career that you find yourself not knowing how to handle the situation at present; do not despair. Always remember to use your pleases' and thank you', be courteous, don't interrupt, treat other like you want to be treated; and you will be able to make it through most business situations without offending your colleagues.

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