

Impressions and Etiquette

To succeed in today's global economy; you can no longer rely on your business talent, education and years of experience alone. Nowadays, you must be able to have the ability to put other people at ease and to get along well with different kinds of people. In other words, you must be well-versed in the school of business etiquette. Here are a set of guidelines for treating business colleagues and customers that can change your career for the better. Learn how to build solid business relationships and avoid committing etiquette mishaps that can lead to awkward situations.



First, and Lasting, Impressions

First impressions matter. In fact, they matter a lot. Often, people make judgments on a certain person based on their very first meeting. Unfortunately, most people feel awkward about meeting people for the very first time.

Here are some tips you can use to help you make a better first impression:

1. **Be prepared when meeting people.** Find out who will attend the meeting and learn all their names and titles. Also, visit the company's website to find out more about the company.
2. **Be nice to the person's executive assistant.** Always exchange pleasantries and when offered something to drink, accept it graciously and try to strike up a good conversation. It might also be a good idea to include the executive assistant in your gift list for the holidays.
3. **Measure your client's or colleague's mood.** Before starting a meeting or discussion, find out whether the person you are meeting with wants to engage in small talk first before getting down to business. Follow the other person's lead.

4. **Build friendships.** It is important to establish rapport with your clients or business colleagues. When you do so, you build friendships. Friendships may help you get a sale, a better job, or a promotion.
5. **Define Goals and Expectations.** Summarize everything that has been discussed at the end of the meeting. Make sure that the other party's goals and expectations are specified. Ensure that you are able to meet all expectations. Only promise what you can deliver.

Small Touches Equal Big Business

Have you ever experienced being overly impressed with a salesperson and yet not being able to exactly pinpoint why? Probably, that person displayed numerous small traits that were hardly noticeable and yet extremely important. Believe it or not, the small things matter. Little things can make people feel important. Even a smile can make people feel appreciated. On the other hand, small things such as forgetting to return a phone call or not thanking someone can have adverse consequences. These small things can make or break your business.

Here are some small touches that can mean big business:

1. Be honest.
2. Keep your word.
3. Admit mistakes.
4. Be punctual.
5. Choose your words carefully.
6. Handle conflict with grace.
7. Don't burn bridges.

Suit Up for Success

In business, you have to keep a neat and attractive appearance. People who look at you will immediately make conclusions based on how you are dressed so it is important that you are always dressed appropriately. It is important that you look the part. If you are applying for a

position in a company with a strict dress code, do not show up for an interview wearing jeans. If you are applying in a bank, try to dress like a banker.

Here are other little touches you can use to make an even bigger impact:

- Carry a quality pen.
- Buy a couple of good suits.
- Buy quality over quantity.
- Beware of shabby or overstuffed handbags and briefcases.
- Buy good shoes.

Master Your Mingle-Ability

Networking is an important factor in business. You must be able to walk into a room full of prospects and be able to interact with strangers effectively. Although you may feel uncomfortable about this, it is a good way to grow your career or business. To be able to network effectively takes a lot of practice. You must keep interacting with others until you are more comfortable and at ease. Remember that the first rule of networking is visibility. You must join professional organisations and associations. Also serve on boards and committees. Networking requires good communication skills. If you feel you need help in that area, take a public speaking class.

The Handshake

More often than not, a handshake is your very first connection with a person. It is important, therefore, that you master the art of a good handshake. Shaking someone's hand is an act of goodwill and respect and it should be warm, friendly and sincere.

Here are five tips for the perfect handshake:

1. All introductions (regardless of gender) must be accompanied with a firm handshake.
 2. Stand up before shaking someone's hand.
 3. A handshake should be accompanied by a smile and good eye contact.
 4. In a business setting, either a man or a woman can initiate a handshake.
 5. To show sincerity, shake hands then pause briefly before releasing.
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Remembering Names

Remembering names is a skill you must work on because it is essential to business success.

Here are some strategies you can use to help you remember names:

- Whenever you are introduced to someone, repeat the name a few times during the conversation.
- Associate the person's name with a television or movie character.
- Use visual images.
- When you are given a business card, look at the name and say it silently to yourself.
- Do not hesitate to ask a person to repeat his name if you did not catch it clearly the first time around. It might even be advisable to ask him to spell it out.

Staying in Touch

Now that you have mingled, you must now stay in touch with the people you have connected with. To foster relationships, you must follow-up.

Here are some tips for staying in touch:

- Call or send an e-mail.
- Send magazine or newspaper clippings.
- Send a congratulatory note.
- Send an electronic newsletter.

Small-Talk Savvy and Effective Listening

Small talk is an important part of business etiquette. Without small talk, most people would never be able to start a conversation in the first place. Small talk is an ice breaker and with it comes the opportunity to form relationships

Here are some good tips you can use when engaging in small talk:

- Ask good questions and listen.
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- Identify a common ground (hobbies, interests, etc.).
- Give sincere compliments.
- Know a little about a lot of things.
- Don't exclude spouses or partners.

Effective Listening

It is only when you listen that you become truly attuned to the needs of your customers and co-workers. If you do not take time to listen, you will lose customers and employees.

Here are ten ways to become a better listener:

1. Ask pertinent questions.
2. Practice empathic listening.
3. Listen with your entire body.
4. Share personal stories.
5. Paint a visual picture.
6. Don't interrupt.
7. Pause before you reply.
8. Eliminate distractions.
9. Speak with a purpose.
10. Don't give unsolicited advice.

Dining for Dollars: The Art of the Meal

Some of the most successful business meetings have taken place inside a restaurant. More and more companies are hiring young executives over lunch and a lot of contracts are signed over coffee. Unfortunately, the dining table is a breeding ground for bad manners. From teeth picking to finger licking, a lot of business opportunities are hopelessly lost in a sea of poor etiquette.

Here are some of the most common dining mistakes that must be avoided:

- Don't pick your teeth at the table even with a toothpick.
 - Don't apply lipstick at the table.
 - Do not put your bag or cell phone on the table.
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- Always fold used sugar packets and place them underneath your saucer.
- Don't start eating until everyone at your table has been served.
- Don't tuck your napkin into your collar. Place it on your lap.

Here are eight strategies you can use to create a good impression during a meeting over lunch or dinner:

1. Select an appropriate venue.
2. Know the menu.
3. Choose comfort and quiet over cost.
4. Pay in advance.
5. Choose the perfect table.
6. Give the guest the best.
7. Eat first, talk business later.
8. Avoid chewable challenges such as ribs or crabs.

Techno-Etiquette: Minding Your Manners in the Electronic Age

Thanks to technology, you are now able to communicate with your clients and colleagues easily and more efficiently. Still, it is important that you maintain a personal touch when communicating with others.

Telephone Courtesies

Here are some telephone courtesies you must remember:

- Always begin a telephone call by identifying yourself and your company.
 - Consider time zones when calling someone. Try not to call people after office hours.
 - Ask permission before putting people on hold.
 - Refrain from answering another call when talking to your boss or customer.
 - Always return phone calls.
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E-mail Etiquette

Here are some points to remember when composing e-mail:

- Use the subject line.
- Don't use Uppercase letters. That is considered shouting.
- Don't use vivid letters and fancy graphics.
- Remember that e-mail is not private communication.
- Proofread e-mail before sending.
- Use the "Reply All" function cautiously.
- Do not send attachments without permission.
- Do not send spam.
- Do not send chain letters, virus hoaxes, etc.

Going Global: How to Avoid an International Incident

You must have a global mind-set. Remember that business culture differs all over the world and you must be prepared for these differences. You must be able to adapt to a client's culture and be able to do business no matter what.

Here are some tips you can use to increase your skills in building international relationships:

- Be observant and ask questions.
 - Think before you speak.
 - Keep an open mind.
 - Be available to assist.
 - Appreciate the differences.
 - Be knowledgeable of world events.
 - Notice nonverbal cues.
 - Acquaint yourself with different eating habits.
 - Learn a few foreign phrases.
 - Use surnames and professional titles.
 - Give appropriate gifts.
 - Try local delicacies before saying no.
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- Learn the appropriate greetings.
- Be patient.
- Avoid making gestures as they might be deemed offensive.
- Expect the unexpected.

The Power of Positive Thanking

A simple thank you or a handwritten thank you note means a lot. For most people, showing appreciation is considered the highest form of respect. It makes connections, builds ties, and forges friendships.

Here are some tips you can use when writing thank you notes:

- Make sure it's handwritten.
- Use good quality stationery.
- Keep it short.
- Send it promptly.

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