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Top 10 Business Etiquette Tips

By Shawn E. Gilleylen

“How do you want others to perceive you?”

1. Make a Proper Introduction.

Clearly state your full name and say something brief and memorable about yourself. It demonstrates professionalism and gives you credibility. Stand and extend a firm handshake. A good, firm handshake is a gesture of respect, trust, and acceptance.

- Introduce people in business based on rank, not gender or age.
- Women and men should always stand when introduced.
- Shake a woman and man’s hand the same, straight up and down.
- Never call a person by his or her first name.

2. Display Pleasant Personality, Politeness, and Positive Attitude.

Smile and be approachable, warm, and friendly. Always say “Thank you” and “Please.” Speak with enthusiasm, project energy, and show genuine interest. Stand tall and sit straight up. Slouching makes you appear lazy. Closed body language and blank facial expressions display a negative attitude. Exude confidence through your appearance, attitude, and demeanor.

- Maintain eye contact.
- Listen actively.
- Treat everyone with equal dignity, regardless of title.

3. Dress Professionally & Stay Well Groomed.

Wear appropriate professional business attire to create a professional image. Dress a level above your current position to achieve advancement. Business professional attire should be clean, neat, pressed, fitted and in good repair. Dressing professionally will boost your confidence and help you earn the respect of employers.

- Tattoos should be concealed during business hours, meetings or events.
- Recognize the difference between office attire and club attire.
- Demonstrate professionalism to differentiate yourself from the competition.

4. Use Appropriate Language.

Use proper grammar, spelling, and Standard English. Enunciate, project voice, and use a cheerful tone. Eliminate “Yeah,” “Huh,” or “What.” Avoid slang and never use profanity. Say “Sir” or “Ma’am.” Do not use unprofessional terms of endearment such as “Honey,” “Dear,” or “Sweetheart.” Think before you speak and never communicate when angry. Be concise and clear. Keep correspondence formal and business professional.

- Practice using new words to improve your vocabulary.
- Practice your presentation and questions and answers.
- **READ** with a dictionary and thesaurus.

“Business Etiquette is one of your most valuable assets!”

5. **Email Netiquette.**

Keep emails formal and business professional just as you would a letter. Use standard English. Avoid slang or jargon.

- Use a relevant 'Subject' line.
- Proofread. Check for typos and misspellings.
- Never use a person's first name until given permission.
- Respond to emails and request for information promptly.
- Be polite as email can be misinterpreted.
- Do not use ALL CAPS, which denotes shouting. It's rude and harder to read.
- Personal emails sent from the office may be monitored or screened. There is no privacy protection. Email is permanent.

6. **Demonstrate Competency.**

Be knowledgeable about your product, industry or profession. Be reliable and follow through on promises you make to people. Take initiative and go above and beyond what is required. Pay attention to details and take pride in your work. Operate with ethics & integrity.

- Devise a solution to the problem. Offer a unique perspective and contribution.
- Speak with poise and confidence. Do not lie or embellish.
- **READ** trade magazines or newspapers to gain knowledge and be effective.

7. **Learn to Build Relationships.**

Earn trust by operating with ethics and integrity. People do business with people they trust. Be respectful and never criticize. Be accountable for your actions and don't blame others for your mistakes.

- Schmooze and network – be sociable and friendly.
- Be a resource and share information.
- Be kind and helpful to everyone you encounter.

8. **Create Office Harmony.**

- Arrive to work on time. Manage your time and respect a person's time.
- Knock before entering someone's office space or cubicle.
- Monitor the volume of your conversations.
- Keep a clean and neat workspace.

9. **Gender Neutral Etiquette.**

- Avoid unprofessional terms of endearment like "Honey," "Dear," or "Baby."
- The person who extends the invitation chooses the restaurant and pays the bill.
- Address mixed groups as "Colleagues," or "Ladies and gentlemen."

10. **Say "Thank You!"**

After an interview, meeting, or kind gesture, follow up with a handwritten thank-you note within two days. Spell names correctly and proofread. Always say "Thank you," "Please," "Excuse me," and "I'm sorry."

- Make people feel valued, comfortable, and appreciated.

Shawn E. Gilleylen, an etiquette expert and author of "Success with Etiquette: Book of Etiquette," is the owner of Administrative Support Associates and creator of the Success with Etiquette™ Training Program. Shawn works with corporations, universities, professional associations, and individuals to help them gain a competitive edge by strengthening their professionalism, corporate image, and productivity. She facilitates seminars, workshops, keynotes, and one-on-one etiquette consultations. She is a syndicated columnist on business etiquette, customer service, and job training. Shawn can be reached at (202) 352-3166 or shawng@successwithetiquette.com. Visit www.successwithetiquette.com for more information and to subscribe to a free Success with Etiquette Tips Newsletter.