

13 Tips on Business Etiquette: Setting a Professional Tone with Co-workers, Clients and Customers

Business Etiquette Tip No. 1

Cubicle Etiquette: 4 Close-quarters Rules

Even if there aren't four walls and a door marking the area, you need to respect everyone else's work space.

- 1) **Don't "prairie dog."** Walk around the partition to see a neighbor, instead of popping your head over the top. And as you walk down the passageways, don't peek into each workstation.
- 2) **Grant your neighbors private time.** Stagger lunch breaks to provide everyone a few minutes alone at their desks.
- 3) **Don't chime in to conversations you hear over the wall.** Whether it's a work question you can answer or a private conversation you'd rather not hear, ignore comments that aren't directed at you.
- 4) **Keep lunch in the kitchen.** Or, when you absolutely can't leave your desk for a meal, choose foods without strong odors, and dispose of your trash in the kitchen, not in your own wastebasket.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 2

'Casual Dress' Etiquette: Demystify Your Event's Dress Code

Casual; *corporate* casual; *business* casual; *smart* casual; *resort* casual – don't leave meeting attendees baffled about your event's dress code. Explain what you mean by "business casual" or "corporate casual," etc., with examples of appropriate attire for men and women. One event's "resort casual" encouraged wearing jeans, while another explained that shorts were acceptable, but not denim or cutoffs.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 3

How to Finesse Awkward, Embarrassing Situations

Knowing whether or not to tell your CEO he has spinach stuck in his teeth is one sure test of your business etiquette skills. (*Answer:* Tell him, but discreetly.)

Another situation: You find a personal – and potentially embarrassing – document left behind on the photocopier. *Solution:* Normally, you'd put forgotten pages in a tray beside the copier for people to claim later. In this case, though, deliver the document in person, advises Peter Post, author of *The Etiquette Advantage in Business*.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 4

Handshake Etiquette: Setting the Stage for Instant Rapport

A good, well-timed handshake to pair with your smile is a sure way to stand out, whether you're at the company picnic or an industry conference. *Here's how important it is:* A prospective employee with the best handshake is more likely to get the job, research shows.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 5

Job Etiquette: When a Co-worker Gets a Pink Slip

Your friend at work gets handed a pink slip, and now you feel awkward. So awkward in fact that you're tempted to do nothing. But that's the last thing you should do.

Here's how to deal with the situation:

- 1) **React quickly or risk appearing insensitive.** Even if you can say only, "I'm sorry. And I don't know what to say."
- 2) **Steer clear of downplaying or saying anything that isn't authentic.** Avoid saying things like, "This place is going down the tubes," or "I know how you feel."
- 3) **Set up a gathering, once the initial shock has faded.** Make it just the two of you or invite others, so you have time to say goodbye outside the office.

Keep it focused on the person, and "understand that some things are out of our control," advises psychologist Kenneth E. Reinhard.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 6

Guest Etiquette: Roll Out the Red Carpet for Visitors

When a VIP comes to your office, how do you dole out extra-special treatment? Being friendly and responsive is the key to treating VIPs well, says Peter Post.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 7

Business Phone Etiquette: Soothe Angry Callers

Turn a growling caller into a purring, pleased customer with these telephone etiquette techniques:

- 1) **Bite your tongue.** When someone screams on the phone, your first thought may be, "What a jerk!" But that attitude will only poison an already-tenuous relationship with the caller. Instead, stay calm and listen.
- 2) **Let them vent.** Like a whistling kettle, angry callers need to release some steam. Don't interrupt – even with a solution – before they tell their story.
- 3) **Take it down a notch.** Instead of raising your voice to match the caller's volume, speak softly. That will soothe the speaker and show him or her that you're interested in handling the complaint in a calm, rational way.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 8

Kitchen Faux Pas: Who Ate My Yogurt?

Some employees can tolerate co-workers' swearing and rude behavior, but don't even dream of touching their yogurt or ham sandwiches. The most offensive thing an office worker can do is steal colleagues' food from the office fridge, says a TheLadders.com survey of 2,500 U.S. employees.

A full 98% agreed that fridge raiding was unacceptable workplace etiquette. Respondents also cited, in order: bad hygiene, bad habits, drinking on the job, swearing, wasting paper, cooking smelly food in the microwave and using a cell phone in meetings.

Help Everyone Keep the Fridge Clean

The greatest mystery in many workplaces is what's lurking in the office refrigerator. Go beyond scheduling regular "use it or lose it" deadlines. Follow these tips:

- 1) **Post a copy of the clean-fridge policy** on the refrigerator door, so no one will have any excuses.
- 2) **Make it easy for people to label containers** with their names and expiration dates by keeping a marking pen and tape in the kitchen.
- 3) **Promote safe food storage** by posting the USDA's cold storage chart.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 9

Office Donations: Keep it Low-key When Passing the Hat

Not only is there no such thing as a free lunch, but those birthday cakes for co-workers can cost you, too. It's not unusual to be asked to help pay for celebrations at the office, such as birthdays and baby showers. In a survey by Office Team, more than 75% of respondents said employees chip in at least once a year; 15% said employees receive donation requests monthly.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 10

Business Letter Etiquette: The Art of the Personal Note

Angela Ensminger, co-author of *On a Personal Note: A Guide to Writing Notes with Style* (Hallmark), told attendees at an International Association of Administrative Professionals convention that great personal notes come from taking these three steps:

- 1) **State why you're writing** in a straightforward manner. *Example:* "Thank you for taking the time to visit our offices."
- 2) **Elaborate on Step 1.** *Example:* "It was so valuable for our entire executive team to meet with you face-to-face. And your meeting sparked several creative ideas that we're excited to pursue."
- 3) **Build the relationship.** "This is the most important step," says Ensminger. "What you're saying here is: 'Your relationship matters, and I'm proving it by taking the time to write this note.' In business relationships, time taken is worth everything. If there's a bell curve of emotion to a personal note, this is the top of it."

Business Etiquette Tip No. 11

Business Dining Etiquette: 5 Rules

Whether you're lunching with peers at a convention or meeting with a vendor, business dining etiquette can keep you from marring your image with a faux pas.

Here are five etiquette rules for business meals, according to Robin Jay, author of *The Art of the Business Lunch: Building Relationships Between 12 and 2*.

- 1) **Never, ever talk with your mouth full.** Instead, take small bites so you can quickly swallow if somebody asks you a question, Jay says.
- 2) **Come prepared with a few casual, non-business topics in mind.** It helps you avoid awkward silences. People enjoy giving their thoughts on subjects like travel, sports and movies.
- 3) **Always be kind to the wait staff, no matter what happens.** Anyone who is nice to you but nasty to the server is not a nice person.
- 4) **Know your lunch partner's business.** It's especially key when your tablemate is someone you'd like to impress, but the rule holds true regardless. The fewer times you have to say (or think), "I didn't know that!" the more impressed the other party will be.

How to steal this idea: Take a few minutes to do a Google search before you leave for lunch.

- 5) **Put some thought into choosing the right restaurant.** Too casual or inexpensive and the person may not feel valued. Too expensive and they may perceive you as wasteful. When in doubt, suggest that the other person pick the place.

Business Etiquette Tip No. 12

Office Decorations: Balance Personal and Professional Image

Personalizing our office space is tempting because we spend more awake hours there than anywhere else. But strike a balance by answering these questions about your cubicle décor:

- 1) **Who will see it?**
- 2) **What does it say about you?**
- 3) **Is it distracting?**
- 4) **Does it go overboard?**

Business Etiquette Tip No. 13

Party Etiquette: Special Occasions with Co-workers

Office party etiquette is simple: Don't do anything that you don't want the entire company to be talking about for several years to come. Contrary to popular myth, an office party is not the place to wear a lampshade on your head. Keep your dignity, and respect the dignity of others.

* <http://www.businessmanagementdaily.com/glp/28411/14-Tips-on-Business-Etiquette.html>