

Business Etiquette – Are you Making These Etiquette Mistakes?

By Lynda Goldman

Business etiquette is changing as quickly as the business world is evolving. The old etiquette rules no longer apply. Are you making these etiquette mistakes? If so, don't worry. Read on for the solutions.

1: Poor table manners: Not knowing which place setting is yours, talking with your mouth full, chomping into a roll or not passing the bread basket – there are many ways to make a “crummy” impression.

Solution: Brush up on your table manners, either by getting help from someone who knows, or buying a book or How-to Guide to help you. Don't risk losing a client, contract or job because of faux pas at the table.

2. Not treating business cards with respect: In North America business cards are treated quite casually. In other cultures, business cards are considered part of a business person's persona, and writing on their cards is considered bad etiquette.

Solution: Don't write on anyone's cards if you can help it. If you absolutely must write something important and have nowhere else to write it, ask them first if you can write on their card. Then write on the back, not the front of the card.

3. Sloppy emails: Email is a quick form of communication. But when emails become difficult to understand due to poor spelling and grammar, and unclear writing, you lost credibility.

Solution: Take a few extra seconds to read your message before you send it. Email is still a form of written communication that can be saved and passed around, and poor writing will reflect badly on you.

4. Inconsiderate cell phone use: Common faux pas include taking a call when you are with a client or your boss, and talking loudly in public about confidential matters.

Solution: Turn off your cell phone in meetings and focus your attention on the meeting or on your client. When taking a call in a public place, keep it brief and private as much as possible, and don't shout into the phone.

5. Putting people in Voice Mail Jail: Not responding to voice mail within an appropriate amount of time, and not leaving a clear message that moves the conversation ahead.

Solution: Try to respond to voice mail within 24 hours. If you are away from the office, leave a message telling callers who to contact, or when you will get back to them. When you call someone, leave a clear message that moves the conversation to the next step.

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