

Work - Where it Happens

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By Jean Cumming

Wondering how to make small talk with a CEO? Or if it's okay to wear jeans to the office? You're not alone. Consultants teaching etiquette skills say their business is booming. Montreal's Lynda Goldman, who co-authored [*How to Make a Million dollar First Impression*](#) with her business partner, Sandra Smythe, says business-casual style is "a huge problem" for companies, at all levels of management. At least one CEO retained Goldman Smythe to talk some sense into company vice-presidents who weren't looking their part.

Etiquette courses teach more than just table manners. Montreal's Diane Bussandri advises executives who've been laid off. "These people haven't faced a job interview in years," she says. "Etiquette offers all kinds of hints: how to introduce someone, make eye contact and small talk. With these, individuals will make a good first impression."

Etiquette is now even taught in business programs. The Queens' University MBA for Science and Technology includes career advantage programs to teach students business and etiquette skills. Some of the topics covered are interview preparation, personal grooming, dining for success and even how to play squash and golf. Class of 2000 graduate Anne Goldsmith says she found the etiquette lessons "a good review." Currently a management consultant at A.T. Kearney, Goldsmith is learning that, "It's important for young professionals to blend in, and part of that is not being judged on using the wrong fork." In the early stage of a corporate career, says Goldsmith, one fast way to lose credibility with a client is to make a gaffe.