

# **10 BASICS OF BUSINESS ETIQUETTE**

## **OVERVIEW**

An acquired knowledge of business etiquette is not something you list on your resume. However, it may give you a competitive edge during an interview. It will allow you to interact graciously and comfortably because you are aware of correct behavior. You will be able to turn your attention to business at hand instead of feeling self-conscious and ill-at-ease.

Etiquette is not only important in the initial hiring phase of employment. It is also important in establishing and maintaining good business relations with customers, clients and coworkers.

Since every situation is unique, some personal discretion may be necessary in determining the appropriate behavior. However, some guidelines can point you in the right direction.

## **OBJECTIVE**

- To increase awareness of proper business etiquette which is important to client and public relations, and interacting with coworkers.
- To provide the basic skills necessary for an employee to project professionalism and confidence.

## **TO THE INSTRUCTOR**

You may want to use some or all of the activities provided in our User's Guide to challenge your students, or you may adapt them to fit the needs and capabilities of your particular group.



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## CASE STUDIES

1. You notice your boss has sat in something and has a stain on his or her back side. You are about to go in to an important meeting where he or she will be standing to give a presentation. What should you do?

2. You are making an introduction and forget a person's name. What should you do?

3. You are dining with your boss and a client. You take a bite of fish that is full of bones. What should you do?

4. You have been asked to attend the weekly board meeting of the top management officials. When you arrive you're not sure where to sit. What should you do?

5. You are being criticized by your boss and feel it is unfair. You are angry. What should you do?

## PRE-VIEWING ETIQUETTE QUIZ

*Answer True or False*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Always mention your boss' name first when making an introduction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If someone forgets to introduce you, introduce yourself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. A weak handshake is most appropriate when shaking a female's hand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A two-handed "sandwich" shake is inappropriate in a business exchange.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A man should not initiate a handshake with a woman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Chivalry is not dead. Gentlemen should still make a point of opening the door for women in a professional setting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The rule of thumb in a business exchange is; don't do anything for a person of the opposite sex that you wouldn't do for someone of the same sex.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. If you are the junior executive at a meeting, you should wait for others to be seated first and then choose your seat from those remaining.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. It's old-fashioned and unnecessary to stand when anyone enters the room.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. As long as everyone has finished eating, it's okay to have a cigarette after a business dinner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. You should try to stand closer than 18" from someone when you want their business.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. How you treat people on the telephone can ultimately affect the company's bottom line.

## PRE-VIEWING ETIQUETTE QUIZ

(Continued)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. You should have your secretary get the party you are calling on the line prior to picking up your line.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. It's important to return calls from business associates you know. Others will probably call back if it is important.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Put your napkin on your lap when you are first seated at a restaurant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. If you leave the table before you are finished with dinner, take your napkin with you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Place your napkin on the table when you are through eating.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. If you need to remove something from your mouth, cover your whole face with the napkin.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Your drink is the one to the right of your plate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. The silverware above your plate is for your bread.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. It is okay to rest your elbows on the table if you are not eating.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Pass food to your right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. Butter your whole piece of bread, then break off bite-sized pieces to eat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. The most important thing to remember about tipping is to do it unobtrusively.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. A typed thank you note on colorful stationery is the most appropriate way to say thanks to a business person.

## POST VIEWING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

### *Introductions*

1. What is the proper way to make an introduction?  
*Answer:* The most important person is mentioned first. Give a bit more information about each party other than their name.
2. Describe a good handshake.  
*Answer:* A web to web grip, initiated by either party, vertically administered with one or two pumps.
3. What are some ways you can make a good first impression when you are introduced to someone?  
*Answers:* Smile, give a good handshake, establish eye contact, say hello, start a conversation.

### *Making an Entrance*

1. When should you get the door and hold it open for someone?  
*Answer:* The one who gets to the door first should hold it open for others. It's a good idea to hold the door for superiors. It's courteous to hold the door for anyone who needs assistance.  
  
*\*Remember the new business rule stated in the videotape: Don't do anything for a person of the opposite sex that you wouldn't do for a person of the same sex.*
2. When should you stand to greet someone?  
*Answer:* If you are entering someone else's office, remain standing unless you are asked to sit down. If you are greeting someone in your office, always stand and offer a handshake. If a senior official or an older person enters the room, it is courteous to stand up.

### *Space Invaders*

Ask the group to respond to the following statements as true or false:

1. In a business setting, you should only smoke if someone else does so first. (False)
2. Wait until everyone has finished eating and then smoke. (False)
3. It's fine to smoke during business if you sit at the end of the table or near a window. (False)
4. At a business dinner, it's best to excuse yourself and explain that you need to step outside for a few minutes to have a smoke. (False)



5. It's best not to smoke while conducting business. (True)
6. When conducting business, the closer you can get to a person physically, the better the chances of closing the deal. (False)

### *Zip The Lips*

Does telling someone off show that you are a leader who is in control?

*Answer:* No. Communication is important. Having the ability to express yourself constructively can be an acquired skill. Losing your temper and lashing out verbally can be fatal to your career. Not only does it show poor judgment, it causes others to question if you are trustworthy and able to maintain control.

### *Telephone Tips*

1. What three things should you identify immediately when you place a call?

*Answer:* Yourself, your company and your reason for calling.

2. How can telephone skills affect the bottom line?

*Answer:* Most business is lost due to poor service and poor treatment as opposed to poor product, according to Nancy Friedman, the Telephone Doctor.

3. What should you ask someone before you put them on hold?

*Answer:* Ask them if they have time to hold or if they would prefer to leave their number and have someone call them back.

*Activity:* List as many telephone courtesy tips as the group can come up with. This list might include:

- speak clearly and in a pleasant tone
- ask if the person has time to talk right now
- take clear, detailed, accurate messages for coworkers
- don't engage in side conversations while on the phone
- don't eat, drink or chew gum while on the phone
- tell the caller to whom you are transferring them and why
- return all calls the same day
- return calls personally whenever possible
- do not leave people on hold for extended periods of time

### *Dining Etiquette*

1. When you are seated at a round table, is the glass to your right or left the one you should drink from? Where would your salad be located?

*Answer:* Your glass is on your right and your salad is on your left.

2. If there is flatware placed horizontally above your plate, what is it to be used for?  
*Answer:* This is for your dessert.
3. Which fork should you use for your salad?  
*Answer:* The large fork furthest away from your plate is your salad fork.
4. If you arrive before the party you are to meet, is it okay to order your drink and an appetizer while you wait?  
*Answer:* No. Always wait for the other party to arrive before ordering.
5. Who should pay at a business luncheon?  
*Answer:* The person who made the invitation should pay.
6. If you have a problem with the food you are served, how should you handle it?  
*Answer:* You should discreetly tell the waiter what the problem is and let him or her take care of it.
7. If someone has food between their teeth after dining, should you say anything?  
*Answer:* Yes, subtly.
8. You are seated at the table and need to blow your nose. What should you do?  
*Answer:* Excuse yourself and go to the restroom to blow your nose.
9. Where should you put your purse or briefcase while you dine?  
*Answer:* At the side of your chair, never on the table.
10. Should you complain to management if you receive poor service at a business dinner?  
*Answer:* Absolutely! You should expect good service, however it is rude to carry on in front of your business guests and may embarrass them. Take care of it subtly with a follow-up visit or phone call to the manager of the establishment.

## PRE-VIEWING ETIQUETTE QUIZ ANSWER KEY

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. False | 10. False | 19. True  |
| 2. True  | 11. False | 20. False |
| 3. False | 12. True  | 21. False |
| 4. True  | 13. False | 22. True  |
| 5. False | 14. False | 23. False |
| 6. False | 15. True  | 24. True  |
| 7. True  | 16. False | 25. False |
| 8. True  | 17. True  |           |
| 9. False | 18. False |           |

## CASE STUDIES ANSWER KEY

1. Discreetly inform your boss.
2. Apologize and ask to be reminded.
3. Discreetly remove the bones from your mouth with your fork and place them on your plate.
4. Wait until the senior officers have arrived and chosen their seats, then choose yours from those that remain.
5. Maintain your calm and poise. In private, discuss the matter with your supervisor. (Don't forget to consider whether the criticisms are valid!)

## RESOURCES

Bixler, Susan, *The Professional Image*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984.

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Seitz, Victoria A., *Your Professional Image*, Bob Adams, Inc., 1992.