

Business Etiquette – Deal Maker or Deal Breaker?

Etiquette is one of the most often overlooked facets of successful business. A new generation of business owners and employees, from large corporations to small companies, seem to regard manners in the workplace as passé. Presenting themselves with polish and professionalism is not a concern. Treating customers, clients and colleagues with respect and courtesy have no value. These people are blind to the fact that they are losing business everyday by ignoring the details that build relationships and drive customers to their door.

In the best of times, etiquette can give you the edge over your competition. In difficult times, manners will set you apart. There are any number of companies that can offer the same services and products as you. The critical difference is ultimately how you make people feel when they do business with you. Manners are the missing link. Excellence in etiquette will send you over the top.

So how do you create a culture of courtesy in business?

You make etiquette a value at every level of your organization. Everyone plays a role. Executives and business owners model good manners. They treat their employees with kindness and respect. They provide them with training in business etiquette. They recognize and reward those employees who present themselves and the organization with polish and professionalism. Here are some of the areas where successful business people focus to achieve excellence in etiquette.

Beginning with first impressions, no facet of workplace manners is ignored. It all starts with appearance and good grooming. It includes eye contact, a smile, using the customer's name, a genuine desire to please and a great attitude.

Professional attire sends a stronger message about you as a business person than you may realize. One size does not fit all in the workplace. Your business wardrobe should be governed by the industry in which you work, the job you have within industry, the geographical area in which you live, but most importantly by what your client expects to see. Ask yourself how your attire affects your credibility on the job.

E-mail etiquette requires as much skill as your telephone manners. In this digital age, e-mail is often the primary means of communication in business.

Make sure that whatever you send online is as impressive as your handshake, your voice mail greeting and your personal appearance. Simple violations of email etiquette have derailed more one career.

Phone courtesy counts. While the telephone may seem to be playing second fiddle to e-mail, phone courtesy can never be overlooked. Your tone of voice and your choice of words can turn that customer on or off in a heartbeat.

The technology that brought us the cell phone, the smart phone and all their cousins has taken rudeness to a new level – one that is not

necessarily up. We often treat our portable communication devices with more importance than the customers, clients and colleagues who are standing in front of us.

Excellence in etiquette extends to networking opportunities and how we conduct ourselves at business/social events. When you are trying to make connections and build relationships, manners make the difference.

Dining skills have suffered as much as business dress in the past few years. Too much business is conducted over meals to let table manners go by the way side.

Your standards of etiquette should be as high when interacting with coworkers and colleagues as they are when you are dealing with clients. Showing courtesy and respect to your co-workers has a definite impact on productivity and profitability.

No matter your business, excellence in etiquette is vital to the company culture. You will win over potential clients and keep your current ones by meeting them on a path that has been outlined and understood for generations. Your business will attract and retain the respect and loyalty of those who work with you and for you.

About The Author

*Lydia Ramsey is an international business etiquette expert, speaker, trainer and author of numerous books, including the widely-acclaimed **Manners That Sell – Adding The Polish That Builds Profits**. She has been quoted or featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Investors' Business Daily*, *Entrepreneur, Inc.*, *Real Simple*, *Woman's Day*, *Men's Health*, *Men's Fitness* and *Golf Digest*. For more information about her popular presentations and products visit: www.mannersthat sell.com*

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