

Chapter 12: Professional Protocol

Overview

Interacting with others creates some nervousness in people, primarily because they are worried about saying and doing the right thing. This chapter provides an overview of the importance of protocol and etiquette in business situations. However, it is also a guide of topics to assist business people in making good choices when doing business locally or abroad.

Lecture Notes

A. Managing How Others View Us

Communicating with others involves the total presentation of one's self—verbal, nonverbal, and physical means. Where a person works or what their profession is often “identifies” them to others. Personal qualities influence how much others trust, follow, and support someone.

1. **The Importance of What Others Think** is significant; it controls trust, respect for authority, leadership acceptance, and affiliation.
 - a. Family members hold lasting, accurate opinions and expectations based on interaction and history. The impressions are probably beyond a person's short-term control.
 - b. Coworkers may have fewer interactions and less time to form their opinions, maybe even a few minutes a day or week.
 - c. Social acquaintances should see the image that one wants to project, since the time is very limited. The image is based primarily on how one looks and acts in this time frame, rather than the deeds performed. This group includes those in and out of the workplace.
2. **The Role of Impressions in the Workplace** can be very influential, positive or negative.
 - a. Hiring—The image developed during an interview can impact who gets the job; it can give an edge to a person with lower qualifications over a better-qualified candidate.
 - b. Performance appraisal—A good image on top of job performance can improve an appraisal and lead to a larger raise. The performance appraisal includes attitudes, demeanor, and a willingness to be an active part of the team. The less specific the appraisal, the more these things count.
 - c. Promotion—Besides observed performance and performance history, opinions influence who gets promoted. Those opinions may be developed by conforming to the ideas of decision-makers and accountability for successful projects.
 - d. Personal power and authority—Ability to use power and authority is an impression left by communication; exercise of power may be harmful.
 - e. Honesty and integrity—Demonstrated day-to-day in behavior; hopefully it never has to be proven. One failure (even wrongful) can be destructive to one's reputation.

- f. Persuasion—Appearing believable makes it easier to persuade others to accept one’s point of view or proposal. One must also be knowledgeable, prepared, and articulate.
3. **Impression Formation** occurs in the first few minutes of an initial meeting, and these impressions last. Most people have at least some control of that impression based on body language, voice inflection, dress, extent of formality, and eye contact.
 - a. Presentation or manipulation? Communication has two roles related to conveying an image of oneself to others: representation occurs when others communicate information about you and self-presentation occurs when you are the source of information about yourself (and you have control of that impression).
 - b. Leadership and self-presentation can be used to influence others in the organization. There are seven kinds of self-presentation used by leaders to influence others: self-descriptions, accounts of events, apologies, entitlements and enhancements, flattery, favors, and organizational descriptions.
 - c. Basking in reflected glory—there is a fine line between self-presentation and manipulation.
 4. **Impression Management** is actively and intentionally practiced more by some people than others.
 - a. Defining impression management originated in a 1959 text (*The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* written by Erving Goffman). It is a kind of drama, a process of acting out the image one wants to present to others. It includes the actor, audience, stage, script, performance, and reviews.
 - b. Impression management behaviors can be used to gain an advantage or defensively to protect an image. Positive impression management is an assertive method. The five assertive strategies are ingratiation, self-promotion, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication.
 - c. *Defensive behaviors* are used to avoid having to do something or avoid responsibility; one is trying to save face or protect an image.

B. International Professional Protocol and Etiquette

Interacting with others in one’s own culture is important, but working with people in other cultures is equally important. This text will just review the basics, but research is necessary before working with another culture.

1. **Protocol** refers to the specific rules or rituals that govern an action or process; **Etiquette** refers to the rules that govern the conduct or behavior of an individual in any given setting.
 - a. It matters because proper conduct makes interaction predictable and more comfortable (as long as it goes smoothly).
 - b. Common barriers may include lack of knowledge, assumptions of power, or miscommunication. Cultural differences can be signals of other problems—and insulting.

- c. Ethics refers to a code of conduct that governs the behavior and actions of those that subscribe to the code; professionalism refers to the ethical code required of the members of a particular profession.
2. **Culture and Etiquette** is another area that requires research. Cultural influence in communication is very broad (nonverbal and paralanguage).
- a. Finding common ground can lead to successful business and social interactions; it is important with local and international contacts, maybe more complicated with international.
 - b. International differences should be understood before interacting with a particular culture. It is important to make an effort to educate one another about the differences. Differences have been studied concerning these dimensions (*see details in text*): high- vs. low-context, individualism vs. collectivism, nonverbal behavior, and specific behaviors.
 - c. Geert Hofstede Dimensions were developed by Geert Hofstede; they are used to distinguish characteristics of culture (and still popular). The dimensions are based on Hofstede's research in 64 countries on these dimensions: power distance, individualism, task vs. social orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term vs. short-term orientation.
3. **Multicultural Issues at Work** are becoming more prominent with the globalization of the workplace. Minor tensions can lead to major disputes, so most companies use training to avoid issues from the start.
- a. Co-cultural issues occur when 2 or more cultures are present and both groups require the same treatment. Co-culture can arise from regional subcultures, ethnicity, or consequences of a co-cultural workplace.
 - b. Diversity refers to differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and religion. In all places, the bottom line rule is that disability is not identity. Use common sense, treat support equipment/animal respectfully, and be relaxed or natural around everyone. The ADA has assisted in developing an awareness of the needs of disabled workers.

C. Improving Professional Behavior through Etiquette and Protocol

No one can know every detail of protocol and etiquette, so staying as informed as possible is important.

- 1. **Civics, Ethics, and Legality** are all part of etiquette, protocol, and rules of conduct.
 - a. Etiquette and protocol workplace issues should be considered. Appropriate use of each can make work more productive and prevent blunders in areas related to interaction with supervisors, meetings, telephone, email, and interruptions. Improving workplace protocols is a duty of the administrative professional. Recently, technology has changed the way people interact with one another; new protocols have evolved. A good approach is to develop an ethical standard, continuous learning and improvement, review actions, and make changes accordingly.
- 2. **Negotiating** represents a special place for careful use of etiquette and protocol. Etiquette errors can be seen as negative feelings; be sure to use appropriate

body language. Protocol can create an orderly process for successful negotiations.

- a. Types of negotiations include employment contracts, vendor agreements, customer orders, legal resolutions, and mergers.
 - b. In all negotiations, preparation is the key. Have a clear understanding of what both parties want—and what they will accept.
 - c. The negotiation process is shaped by the attitude of the negotiators. Styles may be competitive, cooperative, power-oriented (or trust-oriented), or open. Proposals are presented and given a fair hearing. Nonverbal elements become highly charged and powerful signals in the process.
3. **Researching and Preparing for International Business Contacts** should be a priority when an applicable business assignment is made.
- a. Basic etiquette issues cover all aspects of the interaction—introductions, business cards, greetings, titles, progress toward a goal, ending, and follow-up. It is about communicating and interacting with people.
 - b. Courtesy is the key to interacting with all cultures.
 - c. Train for international negotiations; the circumstances and process may vary from country to country.
 - d. Research procedure for appointments and meetings by asking questions.
 - e. Business dress guidelines for various countries can be found with a little research; try the Internet. Choose acceptable business attire for all situations.
 - f. Facilitate communication—conversation, telephone, listening, and telephone.
 - g. Gift-giving customs should be reviewed when visiting a new culture.
 - h. Entertaining is done differently in different countries; again do your research.
4. **Tips for Preparation** can come from books and Web sites; there may be some differences for business and personal travels. Tips to remember include:
- Understand one's own tendencies; helps differences make sense
 - Anticipate the need to be respectful and follow through
 - Accept offers to help
 - Learn some of the language where you'll travel
 - Do not make comparisons with other countries; it is an insult
 - Time awareness is different; Americans move faster and have a sense of urgency

Additional Resources for Students

Recommended readings (no texts should be more than two years old):

- Boone, Louis E. and David L. Kurtz. *Contemporary Business Communication*. Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Bovee, Courtland L. and John V. Thill. *Business Communication Today*. McGraw-Hill, Inc.

- Carrell, Michael R. *Human Resources Management*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Davis, Fruehling, and Oldham. *Psychology: Human Relations and Work Adjustment*. McGraw-Hill Book Co.
- DeCenzo, David A. and Stephen P. Robbins. *Human Resource Management*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Dessler, Gary. *Human Resource Management*. Prentice-Hall.
- Gomez-Mejia, Luis, David Balkin, and Robert Cardy. *Management Human Resources*.
- Guffey, Mary Ellen. *Business and Administrations Communication*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Haimann and Hilgert. *Supervision*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Harris, Michael. *Human Resource Management*.
- Ivancevich, John M. *Human Resource Management*. Irwin/McGraw Hill.
- Milkovich, George T. and John W. Boudreau. *Human Resources Management*.
- Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux. *Human Resource Management*. Prentice-Hall.
- Sherman, Arthur W. Jr. and George W. Bohlander. *Managing Human Resources*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Wolf, P. and S. Kuiper. *Effective Communication in Business*.

Current issues of periodicals or business publications are also an excellent resource. Some of the following periodicals have an accompanying Web site.

Current Periodical	Web Address
<i>Gregg Reference Manual</i>	
<i>IAAP Complete Office Handbook</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/products/handbook.htm
<i>Modern Office Technology</i>	
<i>OfficePro</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/officepro/toc.htm
<i>The Office</i>	
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	http://www.wsj.com
<i>BusinessWeek</i>	http://www.businessweek.com

