

Chapter 12: Business Etiquette

Overview

Mastering business etiquette is critical for success in today's work environment. This chapter covers a variety of aspects of business etiquette that are important in multiple work situations. Many of the items may seem to be common courtesy and politeness, but that just means that you are practicing good etiquette already.

Lecture Notes

A. Conducting Business

A professional image begins with professionalism, which includes the way one dresses and deals with others.

1. **Business Attire** is the way you dress for business. Some companies have specific policies, while others are more general.
 - a. Personal appearance should be neat, clean, and professional.
 - b. Conservative business attire means the men wear suits and ties and women wear suits or dresses.
 - c. Casual business attire does not mean jeans and sneakers; it may include slacks and a sweater or other type of top.
 - d. Use of jewelry may interfere with your appearance on the job if it is obtrusive in any way, but wearing conservative jewelry will meet approval.
2. **Introductions and Greetings** are important to make people feel comfortable in your organization.
 - a. Making introductions can be intimidating. Introduce yourself by standing up, smiling, moving toward the person, and extending your right hand for a handshake. A couple of tips include: a lesser-ranked individual should introduce a higher-ranked person; use courtesy titles in introductions; ask politely how to pronounce difficult names.
 - b. A greeting often includes a handshake; it is an acceptable physical greeting and should be firm, but not overpowering. Look at the name tag as you shake hands.
3. **Business Language** is often English; be patient when it is not a person's everyday language. Do not speak too fast or loudly, and avoid slang or jargon.
4. **Business Networking** requires that you circulate among people and introduce yourself. It is an opportunity to learn about each person you meet; you may make some long-lasting business relationships.
5. **Business Cards** provide contact information about you. They should be attached to reports/documents or gifts sent to a business associate.
 - a. Present business cards at the end of a conversation or introduction; be courteous and tactful. *Review the tips listed on p. 396 of the text.*
 - b. When receiving a business card, look at it and then the person to make a connection between the name and face later.

B. Workplace Etiquette

1. **Greeting Co-workers** in passing is courteous; it is rude not to greet others when you enter an office. It is important to use acceptable terms and speak in terms acceptable to the company culture.

2. **Sharing Recognition** with others on a team project is important; you shouldn't ever take credit for work done by others.

3. Respecting Personal Space

- a. As a guest, respect the other person's privacy. As you enter the office, don't take over their desk area with your belongings. To respect the other person's time, make an appointment and be punctual.
- b. As a host, greet the visitor and make him or her feel welcome. If you are busy when the visitor arrives, have someone else escort the person to the meeting place. Escort a visitor out of the office when the meeting is over.
- c. As a co-worker, show respect and courtesy, use "please" and "thank you." Respect the effort and concentration of others; do not interrupt them or enter an office with the door closed. Keep your work area neat.

4. **Communication Etiquette** is important because of the enormous amount of each work day that is spent communicating (verbally or in writing).

- a. Telephone etiquette should demonstrate courtesy; it is obvious to the person on the other end of the phone. *Review the tips presented on p. 399 of the text.*
- b. Electronic communication should be used effectively; modes of communication include cellular phones, e-mail, and fax. *Specific tips for each type can be found in the text on pp. 400-402.*
- c. Business meetings allow you to make a positive impression; watch what is said and the nonverbal communication as well. *Review the tips offered on p. 403 of the text.*

C. Business Dining and Entertaining Etiquette

1. **Meal Functions** can take place at any time during the day.

- a. Breakfast is for urgent meetings, reviewing an event, or convenience of the participants; it usually lasts between 45 minutes and 1 hour.
- b. Lunch meetings can last up to 2 hours. They are used to entertain clients or establish contacts. Be cautious with alcohol; some companies forbid consumption during work hours. Usually, the meeting begins once an appetizer is served.
- c. Afternoon tea is a new "power" meal used to get better acquainted with someone. It can be considered a healthy alternative to cocktail hour.
- d. Business dinners develop and solidify existing relationships. Allow 2 hours for the meeting, which may begin before the second drink arrives. Dinner should not be the first meeting with a client, unless he or she is from out of town.
- e. Business brunch might be for out-of-town contacts.

2. **Paying the Bill** should be the responsibility of the organization that benefits from the business association – if you invite the client, you pay.

- a. Arranging payment with the manager ahead of time assures that a bill is not brought to the table.
- b. Extending an invitation means that you should pay; emphasize the company is paying if it appears awkward (a female hosting a male client).
- c. Receiving an invitation to a private club is a sign that you shouldn't pay; reciprocate with an invitation at a later time.

3. **Tipping Practices** are based on good service.

- a. An acceptable gratuity for good service in the U.S. is about a 15% tip.
- b. Added service charge may be required for larger groups at some restaurants.

4. **Dining Etiquette** says that you should arrive promptly at the invited time; a few minutes late is acceptable if there is a cocktail period.

- a. Place settings are complete; work toward the plate with the silverware. *It might be helpful to draw a diagram of a place setting or bring in utensils to demonstrate.*
- b. Eating the meal should begin when two people to your left and right have been served. Pass to the right, offer items to your immediate left. Some foods are "finger foods." *Review the list on p. 406, understand that the list may vary depending on culture.* The best rule of thumb is to follow the example set by the host.

D. Giving and Receiving Gifts

This is an important part of doing business within the U.S. and internationally. It is very important that you research what is acceptable in other cultures before offering gifts.

1. **Giving Gifts** is considered a thoughtful gesture.

- a. Appropriate gifts include holidays, after a transaction has taken place, visiting an associate's home, lunch or dinner out. Present them at appropriate times. Gifts are usually opened immediately and shown to those that are there.
- b. Inappropriate gifts include questionable items for children (safety, ethics) and personal items (cologne, perfume, lingerie).

2. **Receiving Gifts** should be done gracefully. Be sure to acknowledge gifts you receive with a thank-you note.

E. Disability Etiquette

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires employees to make appropriate accommodations for disabled personnel, but there are other issues that fellow employees should be aware of.

1. **Practical Tips for Working with Disabled** relate to showing respect and behaving in a natural way. Some tips include (*others are on p. 409*):

- Wait for acceptance when offering assistance
- Speak directly to the person, not to an assistant

- Offer to shake hands, identify yourself when you meet someone
- Treat adults as adults
- Don't interfere with a wheel chair or guide dog
- Speak and listen carefully

2. **Etiquette for the Disabled** can make it easier to accommodate individual differences.

- a. Wheelchair etiquette includes viewing the wheelchair as an extension of the person using it; respect their personal space. *Additional tips are found on pp. 409-410 of the text.*
- b. Visual impairment etiquette varies depending on the impairment. That can range from partial sight to complete blindness. Offer assistance if you think it might be helpful to the person. *Additional tips are found on p. 410 of the text.*
- c. Hearing loss etiquette should be practiced regularly; hearing loss is very common today. Be observant and accommodate as necessary. *Additional tips are found on pp. 410-411 of the text.*
- d. Developmental disability etiquette requires patience and understanding in the work place; the same standards should be set for everyone. *Additional tips are found on p. 411 of the text.*

F. International Etiquette

With the extent of global business, it is important to be aware of international etiquette before embarking on such a situation. Research may be required to be sure everyone is behaving in a way that doesn't offend anyone.

1. **Eliminate Stereotypes**, they are generalizations that may not be true. Research cultures to learn about them before the meeting.
2. **Greeting Business Associates** with an acceptable gesture is important; research will help you make a good choice between a handshake, bow, or eye contact.
3. **Building Relationships** before conducting business is especially important when working with associates from outside the U.S.
4. **Language** may be a barrier, but it can be overcome by paying special attention to the words that are used. Also, watch use of nonverbal cues and gestures.
5. **Attention to Time** takes on new meaning in different cultures; be understanding of cultural differences so as not to offend anyone.
6. **Personal Space** varies from culture to culture; touch is also viewed differently. Be careful to respect everyone's personal space.
7. **Working Schedules** and break times will vary. The number of hours worked in a day and the start/end times will depend on the culture.
8. **Holidays** that are celebrated will vary from country to country; some places close for vacation time (referred to as "holiday").
9. **Food Customs** vary in a lot of ways. Main meal time varies and foods of choice will vary.
 - a. Differences in foods will change from country to country (or region to region). It is very important to choose food items that everyone will enjoy.

- b. Rules of etiquette should be considered when you are served unfamiliar foods.
 - Don't ask about a food, taste it
 - Politely refuse what you don't want
 - Don't offend the host
- c. Religious beliefs may impact foods that are acceptable; be aware and avoid food that would offend them.

Emphasize that the key to proper etiquette when working with people from other countries is research. With the vast amount of information available on the Internet, that shouldn't be too difficult. A little bit of work prior to a meeting can make the difference in the outcome for your organization.

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.
- Calkins-Fulton, Patsy J. and Joanna D. Hanks. *Office Technology and Procedures*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Certo, Samuel. *Supervision Concepts and Skill Building*. Irwin/McGraw Hill.
- Himstreet, William C. and Wayne M. Baty. *Business Communication*. Kent Publishing Co.
- Keeling, B. Lewis and Norman F. Kallaus. *Administrative Office Management*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Lesikar, Raymond V. *Basic Business Communication*.
- Ober, Scott. *Contemporary Business Communication*.
- Oliverio and Pasewark. *The Office: Procedures and Technology*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Quible, Zane K. *Administrative Office Management – An Introduction*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Tilton, R., J. Jackson, and S. Rigby. *The Electronic Office: Procedures and Administration*. 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.

<i>Current Periodical</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
<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>	
	http://www.executiveplanet.com
<i>Web sites for</i>	http://www.geocities.com
<i>international information</i>	http://www.odci.gov/cia/
	http://www.webofculture.com