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Learning To Behave Like A Professional

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GOOD manners are back, and for a good reason. As the world becomes increasingly competitive, the gold goes to the individuals and the teams that have an extra bit of polish. The person who makes a good impression will be the one who gets the job, wins the promotion, or clinches the deal. Manners and professionalism must become second nature to anyone who wants to achieve and maintain a competitive edge.

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You can probably think of sports stars who have earned a bad reputation by not acting professionally (e.g., spitting, swearing, and criticizing team mates in front of others). People in professional sports are fined if they are late to meetings or refuse to follow the rules established by the team and coach. Business professionals also must follow set rules. Many of these rules are not formally written anywhere, but every successful businessperson learns them through experience.

You can begin the habits now while you are in college so that you will have the skills needed for success when you start your career. Those habits include the following:

1.Making a good first impression. An old saying goes, "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression." You have just a few seconds to make an impression. Therefore, how you dress and look is important. Take a clue as to what is appropriate at any specific company by studying the people there who are most successful. What do they wear? How do they act?

2.Focusing on good grooming. Be aware of your appearance and its impact on those around you. Consistency is essential- you can't project a good image by dressing up a few times a week and then showing up looking like you're getting ready to mow a lawn. Wear appropriate, clean clothing and accessories.

3.Practicing considerate behavior. Considerate behavior includes listening when others are talking- for example, not reading the newspaper or eating in class. Don't interrupt others when they are speaking. Wait for your turn to present your views in classroom or workplace discussions. Of course, eliminate all words of profanity from your vocabulary. Use appropriate body language by sitting up attentively and not slouching.

4.Practicing good cell phone manners. Cellular phones are a vital part of today's world, but it is important to be polite when using the phone. Turn off the phone when you are in class or a business meeting unless you are expecting a critical call. Your introduction to Business class is not the place to be arranging a date for tonight. If you are expecting a critical call, turn off the audible phone ring and use the vibrating ring if your phone has that feature.

5.Being prepared. A businessperson would never show up for a meeting without reading the materials assigned for that meeting and being prepared to discuss the topics of the day. To become a professional, you must practice acting like a professional. For students, that means reading assigned materials before class, asking questions and responding to questions in class, and discussing the material with fellow students.

From the minute you enter your first job interview until the day you retire, people will notice whether you follow the proper business etiquette. Just as traffic laws enable people to drive more safely, business etiquette allows people to conduct business with the appropriate amount of dignity. How you talk, how you eat, and how you dress all create an impression on others. We encourage you to add a course or seminar on etiquette to your college curriculum. Many businesses today require their employees to complete such a course. Taking the initiative to do so on your own will help sharpen your competitive edge.

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