

Professional etiquette: an essential tool for managing workplace impression

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The changing professional environment around us now demands more agility, adaptability, and fewer excuses from the workforce. With a growth mindset engraved into this population, having just good manners don't suffice for surviving the challenges that come with it. Having appropriate business etiquette goes a long way in terms of building lasting business/professional relationships. Simply dressing up formally, shaking hands firmly, making a polite introduction and adding a "nice to meet you" seldom result in effective communication nowadays. With professional environments becoming more dynamic and casual, conventional professional etiquette have become obsolete to some extent. The increased practice of emotional intelligence, critical thinking and diplomatic communication has mandated the use of evolved etiquette for effective impression management.

Understanding business etiquette

Business etiquette are a set of manners that are required in a profession. Violation of etiquette is oftentimes considered offensive. In terms of building a mutually respectful professional environment, these etiquette make the workspace feel more productive. Although it may seem like it is more of a corporate protocol, it applies to every profession. Knowing the right etiquette is important for a good start in any field of work. Networking with the right people becomes more seamless with its application. So, what are the must-have etiquette for excelling professionally?

Prepare better for first impressions

According to Forbes, within the first seven seconds of meeting, people will have a solid impression of who you are – with some research suggesting that within ten seconds people start determining traits like trustworthiness. First impressions also seem to last for a long time. Good first impressions can earn you job offers, better opportunities and professional relationships. To make a good first impression, get to meetings a little early or on time. Dress appropriately for the occasion and maintain eye contact to assure the person of your sincerity in the conversation. Avoid interrupting their



ILLUSTRATION:
ZARIF FAIAZ

speech. Disagreements are fine as long as they are constructive. This will say a lot about your communication skills.

Respecting the time and place

Texting under the table during a meeting, on a business dinner, or even during work conversations with a colleague is disrespectful. It is important to respect the time and place you're in, for maintaining absolute professionalism throughout. Otherwise, you can be conveniently misunderstood for being absent-minded and insincere.

One other aspect of showing respect to people's time is informing beforehand if you're going to run late for a pre-scheduled meeting. Let the attendees know that you're going to be late by 'X' minutes before the meeting starts. Apologise for your situation and never keep them waiting for you without a clue.

Using key phrases for better communication

It is a popular belief that using key phrases while communicating signals a higher emotional intelligence. Memorising a few short phrases improves the quality of professional behaviour. A

little change in verbal habits can leave a positive impact on the people at work.

1. Use "Thanks for your understanding" instead of a thousand sorry(s) for running late and failing to meet deadlines. Sorry, used too often, loses its meaning as an apology. However, avoid saying "Thank you" too many times in a conversation to not be considered desperate.

2. Say "I understand your disappointment" instead of "I didn't mean to do it" for addressing a mishap. Validating others' reasons through neutral explanations helps dissolve conflicts at work quickly.

3. Say "I'm not sure I understand what you mean by this" instead of "I don't understand what you mean" to sound more polite and friendlier.

In the case of email communication, use 'Please' for any request/requirement and end with 'Thank you. Address by Mr. or Ms., unless otherwise stated.

Follow professional networking practices on digital platforms

Professional networking is essential for being exposed to better opportunities. Nowadays, our social media profiles work

as a first impression. If you want to be taken seriously by professionals, your social media handles should be clutter-free.

1. Use professional headshots for your business profile on LinkedIn. Refrain from posting irrelevant photos/stories on the platform.

2. If you have added professional connections on Facebook, refrain from posting or sharing anything controversial, offensive or disrespectful. You can also set your post privacy accordingly for filtering the audience.

3. Avoid texting or calling coworkers after work hours unless it's an emergency. It is good practice not to call or text regarding work after 9 PM on a weekday and not at all on weekends. Understanding that people appreciate not talking about work during weekends means you acknowledge their need to relax.

4. Always leave a text before calling someone over the phone. Understand that the person might not be available to receive your call instantly. If they're busy, request a time for reaching out to them later. Unless their urgent attention is needed, refrain from sending too many texts and making too many calls.

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