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The real value of business etiquette courses



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More common business etiquette infractions are the infamous 'cc all' incidents, where a conversation between two people ends up in the inbox of thousands.

Demand by businesses for etiquette courses has tripled in the past two years. Organisations are responding to a decline in the way people engage with each other in business and are now focused on getting their staff up to speed in the work environment.

The most telling is the loss of articulate writing, largely because social media has introduced a casual way of engaging and a shorter form of language. While this informality may be fine in a social environment, it's not the language of business and not accepted in most workplaces. Bosses are telling us they're actually losing clients because staff aren't engaging professionally with others.

Many businesses want to return to a more formal style to show the market they are trustworthy, credible, and to gain a competitive advantage. It tells customers you care and respect them and in today's social environment where you can be praised or slammed in a second for your service attitude, it's critical.

Business etiquette is a situational challenge and what's an issue for one company may not be one for another. It can simply be what we eat at work – no one wants to smell the fish you ate for lunch for the rest of the day. Or about the way we communicate. For example, we know of a situation where a school sent an inappropriate broadcast email to parents.

More common business etiquette infractions are the infamous 'cc all' incidents, where a conversation between two people ends up in the inbox of thousands and where a business exacerbates a customer by responding badly to a complaint.

We suggest businesses audit their own situational challenges to identify

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interactions with stakeholders and customers, see where they fall short, and train accordingly.

Here are the golden rules of business etiquette:

Make a great first impression

Project the three 'C's:

- confidence – a good firm handshake with two or three pumps, maintaining eye contact
- competence – being prepared and knowledgeable when meeting with clients or customers
- credibility – being punctual and well groomed.

Avoid emailer's regret

Always re-read your emails and double check a recipient's address details. Avoid just forwarding emails – always check for sensitive commentary. Remember your response can be forwarded too!

Proper English please

Use full sentences, proper grammar and capitalisation. Leave text speak – LOL and BTW – for your mates. Avoid emoticons unless your business relationship is already built.

Mobile phones dos and don'ts

Don't take calls in the middle of a meeting. If you must, excuse yourself and give a brief reason why you are taking the call. Adhere to the '10-foot-away' rule and don't take calls in intimate spaces.

Dress for success

The way you look also 'talks' and it's seen as a courtesy to others. If in doubt, dress conservatively. Darker muted colours are perceived to be more professional. 'Casual' in business carries with it a lot of do's and don'ts. Avoid shorts, cut-off or cut-out clothes.

Remember names

Repeat it back, write it down and use mental imagery to associate that person with their name.

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