

TOP 10 business etiquette tips

Have you ever been in a business situation and witnessed an event that was so cringe-worthy, it left you saying “Really?” With young brokers particularly in mind, learn how to impress with these top 10 business etiquette tips.

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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

We never get a second chance to create a first impression, so it's crucial to get it right. In a competitive market, positive first impressions communicate and reinforce personal and professional branding. We respond to the visual and those first seconds may be critical to a sale or business development.

HANDSHAKES

Your handshake is so much more than just a greeting. It can make or break first impressions. A handshake that's too limp (wet fish) can convey weakness or lack of self-confidence, while one that's too strong (bone cruncher) can convey hostility. A well-executed handshake conveys self-confidence and a genuine interest in the other person.

INTRODUCTIONS

The less prominent person is introduced to the more prominent. To determine prominence, consider age and position rather than gender and use that person's name first in the introduction. If seated when introduced, it's always good manners to stand.

WHO PAYS?

The rule is whoever invites, pays. At the conclusion of the meal, you should quietly excuse yourself (no need to say where you're going) to settle the bill. This eliminates any awkwardness as to who is paying. Taking care of this in advance builds on your professionalism and reputation.

CLIENT ENTERTAINMENT

Be aware of correct dining etiquette and how to navigate your tableware. You should know what to do with your napkin, glasses and cutlery. Be mindful of how to seat guests, serve wine, and make conversation. Never talk with food in your mouth, pick your teeth or use your napkin to blow your nose.

PERSONAL IMAGE

Your personal packaging speaks volumes. Consider the image you and/or your employees project. Does it convey credibility and professionalism at all levels? Is it in line with company values? Appropriate business attire supports your role and meets client expectations. Ensure you always dress for success.

ART OF SMALL TALK

At business events, making small talk isn't always easy although it's a great way to build a connection. Initial conversation topics should be kept light and interesting, so prepare three generic questions to use. Avoid discussing religion, politics, immigration policies or medical conditions until you know the person well.

MEETINGS

Business meetings are designed to be an outlet for sharing information, however, it's important to know some rules. Mobiles should be switched off and put away – as they say “out of sight, out of mind”. Ensure you are punctual, bring writing material and don't distract others by pen tapping or paper shuffling.

EMAILING

Keep emails short and concise. Initially, stick to more formal salutations until you have built rapport and avoid being too familiar too soon with recipients you haven't met. Avoid overusing the 'high priority' flag, cc'ing irrelevant parties or inserting emoticons, which may be perceived as being too casual.

BUSINESS CARDS

Ensure you carry sufficient, professional-looking business cards. Business cards are part of your extended image and should be pristine. If yours are dog-eared, smudged or scribbled on, toss them out as they can undermine your personal brand. At business meetings, cards are exchanged immediately after introductions.

Nikki Heald is the Managing Director of **Corptraining**, established to provide dynamic and modern training solutions appropriate to the business needs of today. Her programs focus on maximising professional and personal visibility through consistency in presentation, protocol and communication techniques. Contact Nikki on **0409 662 281** or email **nikki@corptraining.com.au**