

The Top Ten Business Etiquette Faux Pas

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In the world of business, it's not what you do but how you do it. With one small gesture you can impress, insult, appear cultured and educated, or simply become a social outcast. In a competitive business environment whether you're looking for a job, a raise, negotiating a major deal, interacting with peers, or knocking on doors for customers you will be ultimately judged on how you conduct yourself.

Here's the top ten business etiquette faux pas that will keep you out of the executive suite and will land you on the "bush league" list. See how you stack up.

- 10) Wearing a digital or diver's watch with business attire.
- 9) Shaking hands without removing gloves.
- 8) If sitting, not getting up when introduced to, or shaking hands with a business associate.
- 7) Sending a FAX without a cover sheet.
- 6) Accepting someone's business card but not offering yours in exchange.
- 5) Offering a client an inexpensive plastic pen (under \$20) to sign a deal worth thousands. If you're worried about losing, or someone accidentally pocketing your favorite pen, have your initials or name engraved on it. Engraved pens seem to stay with their owner longer!
- 4) Not responding to e-mail messages within 24 - 36 hours.
- 3) Calling people whose telephone numbers you obtained from your "Caller ID" service that didn't leave a voice mail message. If they didn't leave a message, don't try to waste your time trying to hunt them down by calling that unrecognized telephone number on your

Caller ID and intimidating whomever answers into admitting that they or someone at their telephone number called you.

2) Having your mobile telephone ring during a meeting and making matters worse by taking the call.

1) Not leaving your telephone number on a voice mail message because you "know" the person has it. Most businesspeople access their voice mail messages from outside the office and may not have their telephone or business card directory with them. People who leave their telephone numbers in voice mail messages get called back sooner. People who slowly and clearly leave their telephone numbers twice in a voice mail message are real professionals.

Another twenty fatal mistakes worthy of note are:

1) Men wearing lapel pins that have no significance; if asked about them, how do you explain these things without appearing a bit green around the edges?

2) Wearing excessive jewelry (more than three rings, more than one lapel pin, etc.) with business attire.

3) Wearing extra strong cologne or perfume with business attire.

4) Leaving long voice mail messages (lasting over 180 seconds).

5) Ladies wearing skirts or dresses that go well above the knee in a business environment.

6) When asking for the name of a person on the telephone or in person, using the phrase "What was the name?" This is a definite cultural faux pas and an indirect insult to the person you're speaking with. If you forget the name of the person you are speaking with on the telephone, simply say, "could I get the correct spelling of your name?" Even if their name is an easy one, just comment that you have seen some variations and wanted to be sure you got it right. Be sure to really make a note of their name this time, as you can only get away with this once.

- 7) Calling a business or sales meeting without providing each attendee with a meeting agenda at least 24 hours in advance.
- 8) When charging a business lunch or dinner, not leaving a cash tip but putting the tip on the credit card charge.
- 9) Sending Faxes of more than six pages without informing the recipient beforehand.
- 10) Putting the person you called on hold. If you initiate a telephone call, you are obliged to complete it without interruption.
- 11) Sending a three page or less text document as an attached file to an e-mail message instead of pasting it in the body of the message. Maximize productivity & efficiency by minimizing effort! It will get read and handled faster in less time, and the recipient won't have to worry about whether they can open it.
- 12) Putting people on your e-mail distribution list without asking them first. You may e-mail them a request to be put on your list with a first edition of the material you are distributing, but they must respond to be placed on the list to receive further mass e-mail.
- 13) Leaving more than two consecutive voice mail messages. If you didn't get a call back on your first message, or have to update it, leave a second message. However, if you haven't received a call back from your second message, put at least 24 hours distance between your second and third message.
- 14) Leaving a voicemail message that tells the recipient to call you but not giving any hint of the purpose or general subject of the call. By doing this you can be assured that your call will not be handled as a priority and when you finally do get a call back, your caller will not have the necessary files or information on hand to make the call productive.
- 15) Men wearing a leather belt on a business suit that is not the same color as their leather shoes.

16) Men wearing white or light gray socks with a business suit. The best bet is to always wear black or dark blue.

17) Women wearing low neckline or bare shoulder or bare back tops for business attire.

18) Women wearing open toed shoes or sandals with a business suit.

19) Giving someone a business card that is dog-eared, crumpled or discolored because it's been in their pocket, wallet or purse too long. Professional people use a small leather or metal business card case to keep their cards fresh. When giving out your card, take one from the front of the case and place the one you receive from your business contact in the back of the case. At the end of each day, remove and file all the cards you have received and replenish your card case with your own cards for the next day.

20) Men waiting for, or on an elevator not allowing ladies to enter or exit the elevator first. If you ride an elevator watch which men allow the ladies to leave first. This is a carry over from what some might consider a more civilized time, but nonetheless if your peers, clients or boss see you rushing ahead of the ladies to get in or out of an elevator, don't expect to be on the "A" list for a major event.