

PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE GUIDE

Presented by John Coleman from the Harvard Business School (MBA 2009)

October 6, 2007

This document includes a synopsis of a skills workshop presented by the Leadership Institute at Harvard College which focused on (i) contacting superiors (ii) networking, (iii) introductions, and (iv) attire.

Manners are made up of trivialities of deportment which can be easily learned if one does not happen to know them; manner is personality—the outward manifestation of one's innate character and attitude toward life.... Etiquette must, if it is to be of more than trifling use, include ethics as well as manners. Certainly what one is, is of far greater importance than what one appears to be. -Emily Post

□ Tips and tricks

➤ Initiating Contact

1. Try to have a mutual acquaintance introduce you; builds your credibility
2. Aim for an in-person conversation rather than email exchange
3. In-person is most intimate, phone is moderate, and email is least personal
4. Seek to build a two-way relationship, rather than just ask for things

➤ Email, voicemail, thank you notes

1. Keep emails brief; bullets are great for busy professionals; limit formatting since many professionals read emails on Blackberries (which destroys formatting)
2. Proof-read messages; spelling errors are a bad first impression
3. Be sure your contact information is included in every message
4. In voicemail, state your name clearly, reason for calling, what you would like the recipient to do, and how the action will benefit both parties
5. Send thank you notes within 48 hours; write neatly on simple stationery, refer to specifics – an idea, conversation, or gift

➤ Networking basics

1. Shake hands firmly; introduce yourself to most senior person in a group
2. Wear nametags on the right (when you extend to shake with right hand, it's natural to look at the right side of their body.)
3. Introduce your acquaintances with thoughtful details
4. In conversation, listen more than speak; remember and use the speaker's name
5. Focus on conversation; avoid wandering eyes or looking at guests or cell phone
6. Make a crisp but polite conclusion: "It has been a pleasure speaking with you."

➤ Meetings

1. Always show up on time, minimize distractions (computers, Blackberries)
2. Prepare materials beforehand
3. When leading a meeting: distribute an agenda, balance airtime (let everyone participate), conclude with clear to-dos and deadlines

- Public address introductions
 1. Never “wing” an introduction; request a biography of the speaker before hand. Good delivery of introduction is the best way to demonstrate your respect and appreciation.
 2. If you tailor the introduction, review it with the speaker
 3. Avoid humor, unless you are a) funny, b) situation calls for it, c) all will be comfortable
 4. Avoid modesty; you are the speaker’s best chance to build credibility while maintaining humility. Share all the relevant accomplishments; make the audience want to listen!

□ Senior Presence

- What is senior presence?
 1. Some people in a room appear to be senior: they are mature, professional, responsible, authoritative (you can just tell they’re important)
 2. Easy to identify by subtle signs
 3. People who appear senior get more opportunities
 4. Young professionals can learn to appear senior
- Tips for senior presence
 1. Appearance: Dress like the most senior person you regularly see, maintain good posture, smile easily, but not too often
 2. Persona: Observe proper etiquette, maintain eye contact, don’t be afraid to disagree (confront difficult questions directly), and appear calm and controlled. Poise and maturity are displayed by not following the crowd meekly; share your idea if it’s contrary.
 3. When speaking: Be clear and concise, avoid fillers (um, like), set the context for audience, use analogies and analysis, prepare a speech beforehand

□ Appendix

- Attire basics
 1. Black Tie
 - a. Men: Tuxedo or dark suit
 - b. Women: Formal evening dress or dressy cocktail dress
 2. Black Tie Optional
 - a. Men: Either a tuxedo or dark suit with white shirt, conservative tie
 - b. Women: Formal evening dress or dressy cocktail dress
 3. Business
 - a. Men: Solid color, conservative suit and tie, dark socks, briefcase or portfolio
 - b. Women: Solid color conservative suit with coordinated blouse, moderate shoes, limited jewelry, light make-up, no perfume
 4. Business Casual
 - a. Men: Khakis or slacks, seasonal sport coat or blazer, open collar shirt (polo shirts generally acceptable; blazer is generally optional)
 - b. Women: Khakis or slacks, skirt, open-collar shirt or knit shirt, nice sweater
 5. Sport Casual
 - a. Men: Khakis or jeans; nice tee, polo, or casual button-down-the-front shirt
 - b. Women: Khakis or jeans; nice tee, polo, or casual button-down-the-front shirt

□ Web Resources

- The Emily Post Institute online (<http://www.emilypost.com/>)
- Emily Post’s Etiquette online (<http://www.bartleby.com/95/>)

- Kwintessential Cross Cultural Solutions Global Guide to Culture, Customs, and Etiquette (<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html>)