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CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION (CDOE)

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA)
SEMESTER–II

SOFT SKILLS II: BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

(Candidates admitted from 2024 onwards)

UNIT- I

INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

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INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Business Etiquette is a set of social, professional and cultural sensibilities that a person is expected to possess in order to be considered a well-informed businessperson with proper business acumen. Business Etiquette focuses primarily on being polite in your interactions with people and paying them respect while dealing with them, the way you would expect them to. This politeness and respect is not limited to meetings held in person only. In fact, these levels of mutual respect and the polite way of addressing people and dealing with them are extended to business emails, telephonic conversations and business letters too.

Business Etiquette serves as an important tool to bridge gaps and develop a fast network of business-people who have a positive impression of your inter-personal skills and cultural sensitivity. However, it should be kept in mind that Business Etiquette varies from place to place. A set of etiquettes that may be held in high regard in one country might not necessarily be observed closely in another country, and in fact, could be viewed as strange or rude at times.

Defining Business Etiquette

Business Etiquette is a set of social, professional and cultural sensibilities that a person is expected to possess in order to be considered a well-informed business-person with proper business acumen. Business Etiquette focuses primarily on being polite in your interactions with people and paying them respect while dealing with them, the way you would expect them to. This politeness and respect is not limited to meetings held in person only.

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BUSINESS ETIQUETTE – SIGNIFICANCE

Most people mistake Business Etiquette as only a study of cultural differences and the ways in which inter-cultural barriers can be broken. However, the truth of the matter is that multiple cultures and their studies are only a part of Business Etiquette. Corporate culture has a distinct culture. It may not be necessarily an intercultural working place, and yet, there are many unwritten rules and codes of appropriateness that exist and are skillfully followed. These norms are practiced and followed both, between and within companies. For example, employees drawing appreciation from their clients for choosing to dress up in formal wear at a meeting, even if there is no strict dress code.

An interesting thing to note is that someone’s understanding of Business Etiquette could also be influenced and sometimes even limited by many factors that are prevalent at his working place. Things like a company’s mission statement, product lines, image, perception, brand value, reach, business partners, investors, clients and customers can all influence the idea and importance of etiquette in the minds of the company's employees.

The Importance of Business Etiquette

Etiquette can help businesses improve the following areas:

1. Branding: Everything we do will reflect on our company and our products. By acting professionally, we send the message that our business is credible and trustworthy. Personalized care may very well be your edge against the competition.

2. Customer Care: The best way to show customers that their patronage is valued is to treat them with respect and consideration. This in turn can inspire customer loyalty and positive feedback.

3. Employee Engagement: Good manners will help improve morale and confidence between employees and team members.

4. Team Synergy: Good manners will help establish smooth working relationships within a team, which contributes to greater productivity.

Business etiquette is a type of behavior that team members are expected to follow in order to uphold the company image and respect each other. Business etiquette may change from culture to culture, but when everyone understands and follows a particular set of standards, it can create a sense of unity. Business etiquette refers to accepted rules for behavior and communication in a professional environment.

It affects relationships between coworkers, managers and clients, which can impact the health of an organization and its culture. Having clear expectations of conduct can contribute to a professional, productive and respectful workplace for both employees and management. While businesses typically have their own rules for etiquette, some general professional rules persist in most work environments.

Elements Of Business Etiquette

- Polite speech and mannerisms
- Professional body language
- Consistent punctuality

- Adherence to dress codes
- Clean, well-groomed appearance
- Interpersonal communication

Workplace Etiquette

Workplace etiquette includes behaviors towards clients and colleagues, which is in their best interest. Working with others in an organization requires the necessity to conduct or behave so that people can work in a friendly and organized environment. Both etiquette and manners play a significant role in the office space. The two concepts revolve around human behavior and are often used interchangeably. However, the two are different at their core and should not be confused with each other. Office etiquette is a code of conduct and a set of rules that acts as a catalyst for positive workplace interactions.

On the other hand, manners are behaviors that reflect a person's attitude. A key difference between etiquette and manners is that the former changes with a change in the organization (thus, the etiquette required in an oil and gas company will be different from the ones required in a banking company). At the same time, the latter remains largely unchanged across and within an organization.

Some Examples Of Workplace/Office Etiquette

Examples of etiquettes can be categories under: Telephone etiquette, E-mail etiquette and Meeting etiquette. Phone Etiquette¬ This comprises appropriate ways for you to display good manners and properly represent yourself or the business via phone call conversations. Positive interaction especially from a community-relations-related establishment is needed to create a lasting impression that is instrumental to the company's success.

Examples of positive phone etiquette include; Try to answer your calls within two to three rings; in case you miss a call, immediately ring back. Do not speak too loudly or too softly; ask questions (do you need me to speak louder?) to make sure that you are audible enough to enhance effective communication.

If you are on a conference call and you are not speaking, mute yourself so as not to give unnecessary background disturbance. It is important to pay attention to the way you communicate with others. Use respectful language that makes your listeners feel valued. Say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to express your gratitude. E-mail Etiquette Electronic mailing assumes greater importance in today’s business world. It is imperative that workers especially frontline officers know and understand the proper etiquette governing the use of e-mail. Thus far, examples of e-mail etiquette include;

Aim to reply to your emails within 28 to 48 hours of receiving them¬ Be concise and to the point: avoid long sentences.¬ Always proofread your emails for grammatical errors¬ Keep your language gender-neutral.¬ Do not reply to spam.¬ All these coupled with attention to detail can make communication via email an effective one.

Meeting Etiquette

This refers to the behaviors expected in workplace meetings. It prompts you to behave professionally and respect others’ time and effort.

Examples of meeting etiquette include. Always be on time: if you find yourself running late, apologize and sit down quietly to avoid interrupting the flow of the meeting Prepare for the meeting; meeting organizers mostly send the meeting agenda beforehand, and go through it to gauge your expectations. Pay attention to your body language; avoid unnecessary agitations to avoid creating any distractions Dress appropriately;

While getting dressed for the office, look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself if you can go to a party in these clothes after work. If your answer is NO, then rest assured that you are dressed appropriately for work. Always remember to abide by the professional office dress code. Wear clothes that fit properly, too tight or too loose are not an option.

Relevance of Organizational Etiquettes

Proper etiquette and manners are necessary for us to coexist and live in harmony. We progress as a business when we know how to behave in socially responsible ways. Let us look at the benefits of adopting good manners and etiquette: It equips workers to avoid misunderstanding and conflict because it set the mode of channeling any grievances for appropriate actions other than confrontations. It strengthens interpersonal relationships among workers and their clients. Customers and clients will likely feel more secure because you are poised and exhibits professionalism Feel more comfortable being authentic when you understand how others expect you to behave. This can boost your self-confidence.

A lack of knowledge on protocols on the contrary can cause embarrassment and misunderstanding. It can increase productivity and effectiveness; proper knowledge of what is expected of workers gives them a sense of purpose and drive. Organizational managers are therefore required to stimulate, direct and sustain this drive towards the achievement of the overall organizational objectives.

Let’s Sum Up

Business etiquette is a set of behaviors and standards that promote respect, professionalism, and positive interactions in the workplace. Practicing good etiquette shows consideration for others and enhances one's reputation, paving the way for stronger relationships and smoother communication. Key elements include punctuality, as arriving on time to meetings or appointments reflects reliability, and professional appearance, as dressing appropriately demonstrates respect for the work environment. Communication etiquette is also crucial; speaking clearly, listening actively, and responding promptly to messages create a sense of trust and openness. In collaborative settings, recognizing others' contributions, giving credit where it's due, and handling disagreements diplomatically contribute to a positive and productive atmosphere. Good business etiquette also involves cultural awareness, as understanding and respecting cultural differences is essential in today’s global marketplace.

ABC OF ETIQUETTE

The ABCs of Etiquette refer to the principles of behavior that are considered acceptable in social situations.

These principles include being Acceptable, meaning conforming to the standards or expectations of society;

Believable, meaning being trustworthy and honest in one's actions and words; and Courteous, meaning showing politeness, respect, and consideration towards others. These qualities help individuals navigate social interactions and maintain positive relationships with others.

MEETING AND GREETING SCENARIOS

1. Stand Up

When you're greeting new people, do so face-to-face. It’s just polite, and shows respect. It means that you consider them important enough to change your physical position for them. It also helps you to make eye contact.

2. Look ’Em In The Eye

Making eye contact indicates engagement and focus. It shows that you’re interested in the other person. Staring at your shoes, your watch, or your phone shows the opposite, and suggests disengagement. Use positive body language.

3. Smile (And The World Smiles With You)

Even if you’re carrying the woes of the world on your shoulders, try to look happy to see your new acquaintance. A grimace immediately puts the other person on the defensive, while a smile is welcoming and inclusive.

4. Take The Initiative With A Handshake

Approach the person you’re greeting and extend your hand. You’ll come across as confident and assertive, not aggressive. Don’t wait for the other person to take a lead. Keep it simple: shake firmly, but avoid the "death grip." A "limp fish" leaves an equally poor impression. And keep your spare hand by your side: two-handed pumping and hands on shoulders are strictly for politicians.

5. Say Who You Are

Even better, say why you’re there and what you do. “Hi, I’m Paula” is a start. “Hi, I’m Paula. I’m an account manager with the Client Success team. How can I help?” is actually useful, and shows you’re making the effort.

6. Observe The Hierarchy

If you're making the introductions, remember business etiquette. Introduce less senior people to more senior ones. Start with the name of the senior person, then introduce the junior person to them. As you did when you introduced yourself, give some context. So, "Colette, may I introduce Phil? Phil is our new lead developer. Phil, Colette is our chief financial officer."

7. Get The Name Game Right

Make sure that you remember the name of anyone you've been introduced to, and use the name properly. It's better to ask the person to repeat the name than to keep using an incorrect version. Wait for permission before using someone's first name. It's respectful. Some people don't like informality from the get-go, and it may be seen as culturally insensitive.

GOOD MEETING ETIQUETTE

11 tips for good meeting etiquette Follow these common rules for proper meeting etiquette:

1. Be Punctual

Being on time for meetings shows maturity, professionalism and courtesy to the rest of the meeting attendees. Leaders want their meetings to run efficiently, so eliminating distractions associated with lateness is an important step in this process. Outside of the workplace, arriving a bit late for social events or appointments may be fine, but in professional settings, it is usually expected participants arrive on time. Coming a few minutes early is even better so you can sit down and get situated before the meeting begins. If you do find yourself running late to a meeting, give a simple apology to everyone, have a seat and focus on the discussion right away.

2. Come Prepared

Many meeting organizers send out emails with a rundown of the agenda, especially if it's a meeting with a lot of people and several topics that the organizer wants to discuss. An agenda will ensure the meeting runs smoothly and efficiently. They may also ask that attendees bring materials to take notes with, come with suggestions or ideas regarding a topic or complete an assignment before the meeting. Make sure you come fully prepared with anything the organizer requires.

3. Dress Professionally

Depending on the nature of your office, the appropriate attire may vary. Follow the dress code rules your office enforces for in-office meetings. If you are meeting a client outside of the office the same rules usually apply, but you may want to ask your manager what the appropriate attire is if you have uncertainties.

4. Speak Loud Enough

When you speak during the meeting make sure to speak loudly and clearly so everyone can hear you. This portrays confidence and makes you look more professional. It also ensures everyone hears your thoughts and can respond accordingly. Soft speaking can affect the meeting's efficiency if you need to repeat yourself or someone mishears you.

5. Actively Listen And Participate

Meeting productivity relies on participants listening well to others and actively participating in discussions. You could practice active listening by nodding or paraphrasing what the other person is saying to show understanding, expressing your concern or asking specific, probing questions.

In addition to showing the person that you respect their opinion and want to hear what they have to say, active listening helps you stay focused and offer more meaningful responses.

6. Take Turns Speaking

Business meetings sometimes create exciting and passionate conversations where everyone wants to give their input. The best thing to do is wait for your turn to speak and allow others to finish their thoughts before jumping into the conversation. Follow any speaking rules the facilitator has, such as raising your hand. Also, write down your main points if you think you might forget what you want to say while waiting, but try to continue listening to the conversation while writing.

7. Follow The Agenda

Staying on topic is good business etiquette because it reduces time wasted on tangents. Business meetings sometimes go off the agenda, but it's helpful to the facilitator if you stay on task and try to keep the meeting productive. If you can, lead the conversation back to the original topic if you notice it drifted to an unrelated subject.

8. Ask Questions At The Appropriate Time

The best time to ask questions is during the presentation at opportune moments when your question is relevant to the presenter's information. Be courteous and wait for a break in their speech to raise your hand. They will also likely invite attendees to ask questions periodically during the presentation. Try to avoid asking all of your questions at the very end when the meeting needs to wrap up. If you have unanswered questions at the end you could stay to ask them privately or send an email to the meeting leader.

9. Be Attentive To Your Nonverbal Cues

It's easy to get restless during long meetings. Try to avoid the following habits: Tapping pens¬ Fidgeting¬ Swiveling your chair side to side¬ Tapping your feet¬ Rustling papers¬ Making quiet noises like humming or clicks¬ Though harmless when at your own desk, these behaviors can distract presenters and listeners and also may give them the impression you aren't interested.

10. Put Away Technology

Many people tend to keep their phones on the table during meetings, but this may turn into a distraction if it accidentally rings, buzzes or lights up. Turn off or silence your device, then put it away where it is no longer visible, such as in a purse, briefcase or jacket pocket.

11. Eat And Drink Appropriately

Normally water and coffee are acceptable to drink during meetings, but check if food is fine to bring. Often the smell of food and chewing sounds can distract others, so it's likely best to leave the food for after the meeting. If it's a lunch meeting, eat quietly and respectively. Also, always clean up after yourself and leave your seat the way you found it.

Let’s Sum Up

Meeting etiquette is vital for ensuring that business discussions are productive, respectful, and efficient. Proper etiquette begins with punctuality, as arriving on time demonstrates respect for everyone’s schedule. Being prepared by reviewing the agenda, bringing necessary materials, and knowing key discussion points also contributes to a smooth meeting. During the meeting, active listening, avoiding interruptions, and allowing everyone a chance to speak create an environment where ideas can be exchanged openly and constructively. Participants should keep their contributions concise and on-topic, helping to keep the meeting focused and within the allotted time. Technology etiquette is equally important, which means silencing devices and avoiding unrelated digital distractions. Showing appreciation for others' contributions, even if disagreements arise, fosters a positive atmosphere and helps prevent conflict. By adhering to these etiquette guidelines, meetings can run more effectively, ensuring that objectives are met and that all participants feel their time and input are valued.

COMMUNICATION ETIQUETTE

Communication etiquette refers to the accepted ways of communicating with others in the workplace. Good communication etiquette includes behavior and strategies that can help you relay information clearly while maintaining positive relationships with your supervisors, colleagues and clients.

The Importance Of Good Communication Etiquette

Effective communication within a workplace is a vital aspect of efficient business operations. Proper communication can ensure that employees interpret the meaning of your message as intended. The resulting decrease in misunderstandings can contribute to stronger workplace relationships and more productive interactions. It can also label you as an effective communicator, suggesting that you possess leadership qualities and potentially leading to greater professional opportunities in the future.

Principles Of Good Behavior

Tips for following communication etiquette in the workplace

Here are some tips for following good communication etiquette in the workplace:

Determine The Correct Medium

In the workplace, there are several modes of communication you can choose from, including:

- Email
- Telephone calls
- Instant messaging
- Text messaging

Before you contact anyone, try to determine which mode of communication is the most suitable for a particular situation.

For example, if you have only a quick update to convey to your supervisor, a text message or instant message may be optimal, as the subject isn't time-sensitive or detailed. However, if you outline major changes to a project, email or video call might be the preferred mediums since they're better suited to long-form communication.

Decide On The Level Of Formality

The required formality of any form of communication often depends on the person you are addressing. However, there may be exceptions depending on the situation and individuals involved. Some organizations with relaxed working environments may prefer a more informal manner of communication, with some individuals in management positions wanting you to address them by their first name. Try to assess your organization's work culture to determine these variables. If you're unsure, consider asking a colleague for their opinion or consulting official company communication guidelines, if available.

Adjust Your Tone

It can be challenging to gauge the correct tone in your writing, but you can also prevent misunderstandings with a few adjustments. Often, rewording questions as indirect questions can seem friendlier, such as stating "I was wondering whether you could help" rather than "Can you help?" Also, expressions of gratitude, such as a simple "thank you," can show that you appreciate a recipient's time and consideration. If you're uncertain about your tone, consider asking a colleague to proofread your email or message and offer advice before you send it.

Be Respectful On The Phone

There are a few basic ways you can be respectful on the phone. Before a conversation, consider disclosing any information pertaining to the privacy of the conversation. If other people are listening to the conversation, let the other speaker know, and ask for permission to activate the speakerphone. During the conversation, try your best to actively listen. Treat the person as though they were in front of you by listening carefully and taking notes on the details they provide. Also, try to be conscious of the volume at which you speak. A casual, conversational volume is often suitable in most situations.

Consider Timing

The time at which you make a call or send an email can affect how the recipient receives it. For example, if you know a colleague is likely busy later in the day, they may be more receptive to communication in the morning. If an email or phone call later in the day is necessary, consider sending a notice to the person in question, asking whether it would be acceptable to email or call at a certain time.

Try Being Concise But Thorough

In the workplace, time is often a precious commodity, so you can value your colleagues' time by communicating details concisely. However, it's important to include as much necessary information as possible so you can reduce the number of follow-up communications necessary to clarify your points. It may help to arrange information under headings or in list form, which are easier to scan and navigate than complete paragraphs. Structuring your emails in this way can ensure others receive your message as quickly and clearly as possible.

Practice Proper Video Call Etiquette

Video calls can be a convenient form of communication, particularly for those who cannot attend a meeting in person. To optimize the video call format, you can take certain steps.

Before a call starts, consider testing your audio and video capabilities, as ensuring proper functionality can prevent delays or false starts. During the call, remember to mute your microphone when you're not speaking since your audio could interrupt other participants on the call.

Proofread Your Writing

When you've finished writing an email, text message or instant message, consider reading it again and checking for errors. Proofreading is especially vital when writing from your phone, which may autocorrect some words. While proofreading, also check that you've included the correct recipients and that you've remembered to provide any necessary attachments.

Constructively Criticize

If you provide constructive criticism to a colleague, it may be best to do so in person in a private setting, which may be more personal and can make the recipient feel more comfortable. If you cannot arrange a face-to-face meeting, a video or telephone call may be appropriate, as these often allow for a more personal setting than an email or text message.

ROLE OF GOOD MANNERS IN BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Good manners play a crucial role in business etiquette as they contribute to creating a positive and professional environment. Here are some ways in which good manners impact business etiquette:

Professionalism:

Good manners demonstrate professionalism, which is essential in the business world. Being polite and respectful towards colleagues, clients, and partners helps to establish a positive image for yourself and your company.

Building Relationships:

Politeness and good manners contribute to building strong and lasting relationships. In the business world, relationships are often key to success. Treating others with respect fosters trust and can lead to successful collaborations and partnerships.

Effective Communication:

Good manners are closely linked to effective communication. Being courteous, listening actively, and expressing oneself with tact and diplomacy enhance communication skills. This is particularly important in negotiations, meetings, and other business interactions.

Conflict Resolution:

In business, conflicts and disagreements are inevitable. Good manners help in navigating conflicts more smoothly. Being respectful and maintaining composure during disagreements can lead to more constructive discussions and resolution of issues.

Positive Work Environment:

A workplace with good manners tends to be more positive and enjoyable. This positive atmosphere can contribute to increased productivity, job satisfaction, and overall employee well-being.

Cultural Sensitivity:

Business often involves interactions with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Good manners include being culturally sensitive and aware of different customs and norms. This helps in avoiding misunderstandings and building rapport with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

Reputation Management:

Your manners and behavior in a business setting contribute to your personal and professional reputation. A good reputation is invaluable in the business world and can impact career advancement and opportunities.

Customer Relations:

In customer-facing roles, good manners are crucial for providing excellent customer service. Treating customers with respect and courtesy enhances the customer experience and can lead to customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.

Team Collaboration:

Good manners are essential within a team. Politeness and consideration for others foster a collaborative and cooperative work environment. This is essential for achieving common goals and objectives.

Leadership:

Leaders who exhibit good manners set a positive example for their team members. Leading by example in terms of professional behavior and etiquette can inspire others to follow suit, creating a more harmonious workplace.

In summary, good manners are integral to successful business interactions. They contribute to professionalism, effective communication, relationship-building, and the overall positive atmosphere within the workplace.

Let's Sum Up

Good manners in business are essential for creating a respectful, productive, and positive work environment. Politeness, punctuality, and clear communication help foster trust and cooperation among colleagues, clients, and partners. Simple acts such as greeting others warmly, listening attentively, and acknowledging others' contributions show that one values and respects their perspectives. Good manners also include observing professional etiquette, such as responding to emails promptly, dressing appropriately for the setting, and respecting others' time by being prepared for meetings. In interactions, showing appreciation, apologizing when necessary, and handling disagreements with diplomacy can prevent misunderstandings and maintain harmony. Furthermore, cultural awareness is increasingly important in today's global business world; respecting diverse customs and traditions reflects professionalism and broadens understanding. Ultimately, good manners are not only about following formalities but also about building relationships that are characterized by respect, consideration, and integrity, which are the foundation of long-term success in business.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND PERSONAL SPACING OF BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Professional conduct and personal spacing are important aspects of business etiquette that contribute to creating a comfortable and respectful work environment. Here are some considerations for each:

Professional Conduct:

Punctuality:

Being on time for meetings, appointments, and deadlines is a fundamental aspect of professional conduct. It shows respect for others' time and demonstrates reliability.

Dress Code:

Adhering to the appropriate dress code for the workplace or specific business events is crucial. Dressing professionally contributes to a positive first impression and reflects your commitment to the professional environment.

Communication:

Clear and effective communication is key. Use proper language, be mindful of your tone, and choose the right medium for communication (e.g., email, phone, or face-to-face) based on the context.

Respect for Others:

Treat colleagues, clients, and superiors with respect. This includes active listening, acknowledging others' opinions, and avoiding offensive or inappropriate language.

Integrity:

Uphold ethical standards and demonstrate integrity in all business dealings. Honesty and transparency are valued qualities in professional conduct.

Conflict Resolution:

Handle conflicts professionally and diplomatically. Focus on resolving issues rather than placing blame, and be open to compromise when necessary.

Email Etiquette:

Use proper email etiquette by keeping messages concise, professional, and respectful. Be mindful of your tone and avoid using all caps, excessive exclamation marks, or inappropriate language.

Meeting Etiquette:

Come prepared to meetings, contribute meaningfully, and be respectful of others' time. Avoid distractions such as excessive phone use during meetings.

Personal Spacing:

Physical Proximity:

Respect personal space during face-to-face interactions. Avoid standing too close and be aware of cultural norms regarding physical proximity.

Handshakes:

A firm and professional handshake is a common greeting in many business settings. Be mindful not to grip too tightly, and maintain eye contact during the handshake.

Cubicle and Office Etiquette:

Be respectful of others' workspace. Avoid invading their personal space and maintain a reasonable noise level. Knock before entering someone's office or cubicle.

Use of Shared Spaces:

In communal areas like kitchens or break rooms, be considerate of others' personal space. Clean up after yourself and avoid taking up more space than necessary.

Touching:

Be cautious with physical contact in a professional setting. While handshakes are generally acceptable, other forms of touching should be approached with sensitivity and cultural awareness.

Elevator Etiquette:

Allow people to exit the elevator before entering, and be mindful of personal space in confined areas. Understanding and practicing both professional conduct and personal spacing contribute to a workplace culture that values respect, consideration, and professionalism.

These elements collectively enhance the overall business etiquette within an organization.

Meeting And Greeting Scenarios

Creating an Effective Introduction

Three steps to introducing yourself effectively:

1. Project warmth and confidence. Many people size you up even before you say a word, which is why it's important to mind your body language. When you introduce yourself, stand up straight, relax, and establish eye contact.

2. State your first name and your last name. Depending on the situation, you may also state your affiliation or your position in the company. Example: "Hello. I'm Sachin Shah. I'm the Quality Control Officer."

3. When the other person has given their name, repeat it in acknowledgment. "It's nice to meet you, Mr. Aniket." Or "It's nice to meet you, Aniket." Repeating their name is an acknowledgment that you heard their introduction. When you are networking is not just about presenting yourself. You may also find yourself introducing two strangers to one another.

Guidelines To Introducing Others:

Take note of the pecking order. In business, introductions are made based on a person's seniority in a company. This is regardless of age and gender. When you make an introduction, present a person with the lesser status to the person with the higher status. Example: "Pooja Dandakar, I would like you to meet President Vijay. Pooja is the head of the Public Relations Department."

Introduce strangers first: If you are introducing two persons of equal rank to one another, start with the person that you don't know. This way you can use the introduction to make the newcomer feel welcome.

Mind titles: Unless invited otherwise, stick to using formal address such as "Mr. Gandhi" or "Attorney Saurabh Mukherjee".

Making a Great First Impression If you want to make a good impression, know that you need to project

3 C's:

Confidence

- Having a straight but relaxed posture. Hold your head high and steady. Don't slouch or slump.
- Moving in a natural, unaffected manner.
- Maintaining eye contact with the people you are talking to.

Competence

- Exhibiting knowledge of your craft. Know your way around the agenda. Being prepared for the meeting. Bring supportive materials to emphasize your points.
- Answer questions in a clear and professional manner, avoiding the use of slang or technical jargon.
- Asking relevant questions.

Credibility

- Arriving on time.
- Being presentable (well-groomed and mindful of dress codes)
- Keeping true to your word.

INTRODUCTIONS AND HANDSHAKES

Introductions in the corporate world are based on hierarchy and not gender, that is, you'll not introduce a woman manager first because she is a woman, but only if she is the senior most among the group to be introduced. Both men and women are expected to stand for all business introductions, when exchanging business cards and when shaking hands. Today, there exists no 'masculine' (read: extra firm) or 'feminine' (read: dainty) handshake. Regardless of the gender, you are expected to offer a firm handshake and are expected to shake hands with everyone in the group. Also, there is no gender-based protocol relating to who initiates a handshake.

Physical Contact

A handshake is the only universally accepted physical contact between professionals in the workplace. While a pat on the back for a job done well may be viewed as acceptable, terms of endearment (‘dear’, ‘sweetie’, for instance), showering excessive compliments or cracking off-colour jokes are all considered inappropriate.

In today’s fast-paced, high-tech world, people tend to forget the importance of simple human contact and kindness — remembering people’s names, trying to make a good first impression, and greeting people with a firm handshake. I’m asked many business etiquette questions; invariably, I find that many of them center on introductions. Rightly so. Even though people may have loosened up somewhat in their use of titles, you still find a very distinct pecking order in who is introduced to whom in the business world.

Being able to introduce people and explain who they are makes everyone feel comfortable in a new situation and is one of the most useful skills you can acquire in the business world. The ability to introduce yourself or others confidently demonstrates that you are at ease and in control — and by extension, you set others at ease too. In this chapter, I introduce you to the proper techniques for meeting and greeting people that will make you look — and be —completely at ease in public.

Making Introductions With Ease

The goal for making introductions is to provide information about each other in order to give you a common ground to carry on a conversation. How many times have you been at a business event where you were the one in a group not introduced to anyone? Or the person doing the introduction forgot your name? How did that make you feel? Not so good, right? Knowing how to make a graceful introduction will not only allow you to concentrate on making a positive impression but it will also empower you. The following section provides general guidelines on how to make a proper introduction in various business situations.

Deciding Who Makes The Introductions

The rules of who makes introductions depend on the situation:

In formal business situations, your host (generally, the most senior executive from the company that planned the event) meets, greets, and introduces you to other guests. If your company is hosting the event, and you’re the only or most senior representative of your company in a group, your job is to assume the role of host and make introductions.

_ In less-formal situations, you don the role of host for your immediate circle and facilitate introductions. _ If you enter a group in which introductions have already been made, introducing yourself is always appropriate and in most instances expected.

Understanding The Pecking Order

Who goes first? Traditionally, in social situations a man is introduced to a woman. The most common mistake made in introductions is the failure to keep all honorifics equal. If you use Ms Hughes, you must use Mr. Cunningham. You could use Karen Hughes and John Cunningham, although this would make it a less formal introduction. Of utmost importance to keep in mind is never to use first names only.

Introducing Someone Junior To Someone Senior

In business, introductions are based on a person's rank and position in a company. Whether that person is a man or a woman, young or old, makes no difference. You always introduce, or present, a "lesser" person to a moresenior person. You name the senior person first and the person who is being introduced, or presented, last.

If you're introducing a junior account executive named Alex Goldberg to the vice president of your division, Joanne Michaels, the proper form is "Joanne Michaels, I'd like to introduce Alex Goldberg. He is an account executive with Jones & Co. and Joanne Michaels is our division's vice president." If someone uses her first and last names when introducing herself, the proper

response is to still use her proper honorific or title and her last name: "Hello,my name is Janice Jones." Response: "Hello, Ms Jones" or "How do you do, Ms Jones." Don't use her first name unless she invites you to do so. If the person is of equal rank, you can feel comfortable using both his first and last names, if that's how the person introduces himself. I discuss titles and forms of address in more detail later in this chapter.

Introducing Your Boss To A Client

It must be noted a client always takes precedence over your boss or the owner or president of your company. You ntroduce the president of your company, Chris Rosati, to the vice-president of your client's company, Myra Pay, as follows:

"Ms Pay, I'd like to introduce Mr. Rosati, the president of Acme Graphics."You use "Ms Pay" if you normally address her this way. If you normally address your client as "Myra," then the introduction should be "Myra Pay, I'd like to introduce Chris Rosati, the president of Acme Graphics. Ms Pay will say, "How do you do, Mr. Rosati." Mr. Rosati will reply, "How do you do, Ms Pay." They may both say, "Please call me Myra/Chris." "How do you do" is not really a question. The correct response is "How do you do" or "Hello," but never "Hi."

Introducing Two People Of Equal Rank

When you're introducing two people of equal rank in the corporate hierarchy, introduce the person who is not in your company to the person in your company. If you and Mike Hirschman are both vice presidents in your company's Chicago office and you see Valerie Martinez, a vice president in the Los Angeles office, you say, "Valerie Martinez, I'd like to introduce Mike Hirschman. Valerie is vice president of our Los Angeles office, and Mike works here with me in our Chicago office." Because everyone is of equal rank, the key in this example is to honor the guest from another office over your pal in the same office.

As a result, her name is said first. If you happen to introduce peers to one another, a simple, "Carol, this is Karen Miller, Karen, meet Carol Andre;Carol works in our marketing department" will do. Introducing people in a group In a large group, introduce several people to one person at a time, following the hierarchy by using the "important" person's name first. Depending on the rank of the people in the group, the "important" person's name is first; the person or persons being introduced, or presented to the important person, is named last. "Mr. Rogers, I'd like to present Lauren Lundsten and Michele Swanberg.

They're summer interns from USC working for our firm for the next three months. Lauren and Michele, this is Mr. Andrew Rogers, the senior partner of our law firm." If you're in a group and making many introductions, it's helpful to give people a little information about one another to help them start a conversation. You don't want to make an introduction without offering something about each other's company or position and how they may relate to each other. You might say, "Mr. Raymond Godfrey, I would like to present Mr. Dwight Schaffer, who is the president of our company. Mr. Godfrey is the president of Express Shipping, and also serves on the International Shipping Council."

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Introducing Yourself

You often have to introduce yourself in business situations. If you're waiting in a conference room for a meeting to begin, and someone new to you arrives, you stand, offer your hand, and introduce yourself and your role: "Hi, I'm Mike Perez. I'm chair of the Echelon Promotion Board." At that point, the other person can introduce herself to you: "How do you do, Mr. Perez. I'm Linda Pollack, and I'm going to be handling PR for the new communications campaign." Be sure to always use both your first and last name, not just your first name. Never leave people guessing about your name. To save someone the possible embarrassment of forgetting your name, always offer a handshake and state both your first and last name. "Hello, I'm Allison Pay." Now the person can easily introduce you around. Even if the person remembers your name and says, "Of course, Allison; how could I forget you!" everyone will be comfortable and happy, and you'll have smoothed over a potentially awkward moment simply by saying your name right away.

Applying Titles And Forms Of Address

What's in a title? A whole heck of a lot. In a business situation, titles are crucial in introductions, because they put the people being introduced into context for others. Is he a marketing person, a salesperson, an engineer, an accountant? This information is critical to making sure that everyone is comfortable with one another (and immediately opens the door to conversation that can ease initial awkwardness). People want to know to whom they are speaking so that they can make appropriate comments. Never assume that you can automatically call someone by a first name. You should use a person's proper honorific until he invites you to use the first name. Stick with Mr., Ms, Doctor, General — whatever is right. In the case of a woman, if you're not sure which variation she prefers — Mrs. or Ms — just ask her. If you know that the woman is a physician, a PhD, or a military officer, use the appropriate title. In contemporary society, a grown woman is never a "Miss." Only young girls under 18 are addressed as Miss. If someone has been an ambassador, a governor, a senator, or a judge, he remains so all his life. Always use the title in front of the person's family name. Americans tend to jump to the first name very quickly, as any recent phone solicitation will convince you. This trend is an epidemic; regrettably, hosts and superiors often set the wrong example. When in doubt, err on the side of formality.

Remembering Names (And Behaving Properly If You Forget)

Everyone has problems remembering names, at least now and then (and sometimes more often). What's the best way to handle this embarrassment? First, try to recall and share something — anything — you do remember about the person, such as, "I know we met last month at the fund-raising event." Say, "I'm so sorry, sometimes I can't even remember my own name!" In some situations you can feel comfortable using humor, but you do not want to make a joke of the circumstances because in some cultures it's considered an insult to forget someone's name. It's best to simply apologize and move on.If — horrors! — you forget someone's name when you're about to make an introduction, don't make a scene. It's not the end of the world. Simply say, "I've momentarily forgotten your name." The person should jump in and say, "It's Rex Martin." You can say, "Of course, Rex, I'd like to introduce Linda Thornhill." It's a big deal only if you make it a big deal. Admit your mistake and move on. The ability to remember names and titles, especially in a large group, makes a lasting impression. If you can master this new form of professional polish, you will present yourself with confidence and authority — and outclass the competition. Remembering names is a skill, and one that you can acquire:

1. Repeat the person's name a few times to yourself after you're introduced.
2. Use the person's name immediately in the conversation after an introduction.
3. Immediately introduce that new person to someone else you know.If you don't have an opportunity to speak up immediately, you may want to try finding a word association with the person's name, such as "Bob —B — Brown shoes."
4. Jot down the person's name, if you happen to have a pad and pencil.
5. Listen, listen, listen. Good listening skills and concentration are the real keys to recalling a name. If you heard the name but didn't understand it, simply ask the person to repeat the name. You also can ask for a business card; just be sure to read it as soon as you receive it

Correcting Others' Introductions

If someone mispronounces your name or gets it completely wrong, just smile and say something like this: "Thank you, but my name is actually Karen Miller, not Morton." Should you mispronounce someone's name, simply apologize, ask for the correct pronunciation, repeat the name aloud, and continue with your introduction. If you happen to have a name that's easily mispronounced, you may jump in and help the person making the introduction. Many people find it helpful to find something your name rhymes with o r something people can visualize("It's Sue Fox, like the animal").

Never walk up to someone and ask, "Remember me?" Doing so is cruel! Always stop and reintroduce yourself politely. If you see someone you've met but can't remember the name, simply say something along the lines of this: "I remember meeting you recently. Was it at corporate headquarters?" Usually, the other person is flattered that you remember having met him or her, even if you've forgotten the name. And if you've been introduced to someone previously, allow yourself to be reintroduced if you're not recognized. Don't make this situation an issue.

Exchanging Business Cards

The biggest mistake you can make when you receive someone's business card is to glance at it and then slide it into a pocket. This treatment shows little respect for the other person, regardless of their position and rank. When you're handed a business card, read it thoroughly. You may want to repeat the person's name for pronunciation and acknowledge the person's company as being well respected, or ask something about the company or his position. Finally, express your gratitude for being given this information.

Handling The Handshake

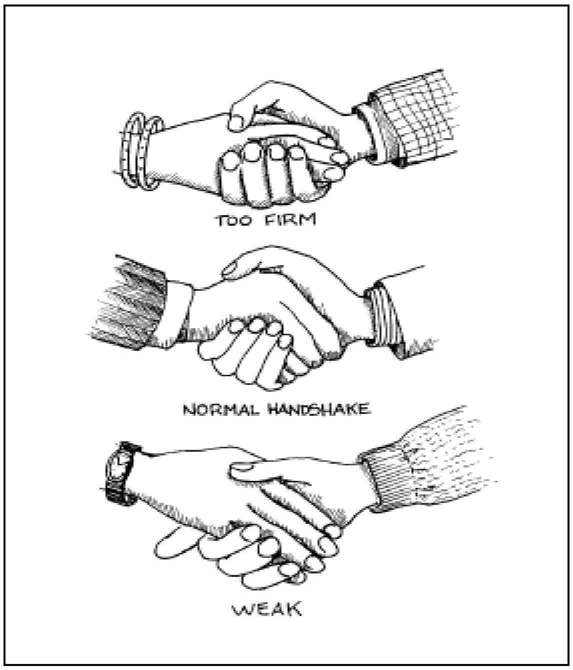
Does a handshake really matter? Think back to the last time you got a limp handshake or a bone-crusher. What impression did it make on you? Was it distracting? Disgusting? Shocking? Whatever your reaction, you probably weren't feeling positive about the other person. What a sloppy handshake says about the person behind the hand is that he just doesn't have things together. And if you're the sloppy shaker, you're telling the client, boss, or interviewer that you have problems. That conclusion can lead him to make a subconscious decision that he doesn't want to do business with you — or that you won't make a good representative of his company

The handshake is the physical greeting that accompanies a verbal greeting. Because the handshake is used universally in business, knowing when to shake hands and how to shake hands confidently is vital. Not shaking hands is a very clear form of rejection and is extremely insulting to the other person.

Using The Perfect Form

What is a proper handshake? The act seems so simple, yet people get confused about how to do it. In the United States, you're expected to offer a firm handshake and make eye contact at the same time. A firm handshake with good eye contact communicates self-confidence. In U.S. etiquette, an appropriate handshake begins with the introduction:

1. Extend your hand and grip the other person's hand in such a way that both are pushed all the way in to meet web-to-web and your thumbs are facing straight up.



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2. Shake just a couple of times in a vertical up-and-down motion.

The range of motion is 2 or 3 inches. The motion is extended from the shoulder, through the elbow, and straight through to your hand.

3. End the handshake cleanly, before the introduction is over.

If you want to count, a good handshake is held for 3 or 4 seconds. Handshaking is a form of nonverbal communication that says a lot about a person. For example, an overpowering handshake can indicate dominance or control. A weak handshake can indicate insecurity, disinterest, shyness, and aloofness. An awkward handshake indicates nervousness or a lack of social skills, which in turn reflects on credibility.

Understanding some rules of protocol

When someone makes an introduction, *always* remember to stand (if you're seated at the time) so that you can shake hands on an even level. That rule goes for women as well. If you happen to be seated at a table where reaching the other person is difficult or aw kward, however, you don't have to stand. In this situation, mention how regretful you are that you cannot stand to meet them properly. By doing this it shows your savvy of correct business etiquette. If you're wearing a name tag, place it on your right shoulder, because that's where a person's eye naturally wanders when shaking hands. Shaking hands can be awkward in some situations. Should you be introduced to someone when your hands are full, carrying files or other packages, don't try to rearrange everything. Simply nod your head in a cordial greeting, state how, unfortunately, you are unable to shake their hand, and respond to the introduction. When holding a cocktail at a stand-up reception, hold your drink in your left hand. You don't want to offer someone a wet or cold hand to shake. Except for opera-length gloves, when wearing gloves as part of formal attire, always remove them before shaking hands (the same goes for wearing sunglasses or gloves outdoors — you should always take them off, unless the temperature is bitterly cold or the sun is overly glaring).

Knowing when to shake hands

The answer is, all the time. When in doubt, offer your hand. Shaking hands is appropriate when you're

_ Renewing an acquaintance

_ Acknowledging someone who enters your office, cubicle, or home _ Greeting a client, new coworker, host, or others you know or are meeting for the first time

_ Meeting someone you already know outside work or home

_ Concluding a transaction

_ Leaving a business or social event

In fact, because you should shake hands more often than not, the real question is, when don't you shake hands? Mainly, you should avoid shaking hands when the other person has his hands full, and putting everything down to shake your hand would be a big inconvenience, or when the person is of a certain culture or religion. The final exception may be when the person you want to greet is someone much higher ranked than you and with whom you really have nothing in common. In this case, rushing up to shake his hand and introducing yourself may appear overly pushy.

Greeting Components- The protocol of shaking hands

We don't really know when humans gave their first handshake but this social ritual is depicted in ancient Greek art so we can safely say it's old and it's also something people learn from a very early age. It involves two individuals grasping each other's like hand and shaking it up and down for a few seconds. It's used during introductions as well as in various other settings, e.g. when we greet someone or say farewell, when we congratulate or offer condolences and in any situation where we feel some sort of physical contact is required but we're not close enough with the other person to hug or kiss.

Although we can probably all manage a half-decent handshake, a gentleman knows that making a good first impression is important. So here are the most important rules of handshake etiquette for you to practice in your next social interaction.

How does a modern gentleman shake hands

1. There's a time and Place

It's rather pointless extending your hand for a proper greeting when the other party is distracted or rushing off. Engagement is crucial so ensure the timing is right before initiating the gesture.

2. Where to Start

In business, whoever is hierarchically senior should initiate the handshake, e.g. during a job interview, the recruiting manager should offer a handshake to the candidate. In social interactions, allow older people and women to take the initiative, e.g. when meeting your future father-in-law for the first time, wait for him to extend his hand.

3. Personal Space

During a handshake, people should face each other so make sure you stand up if you are seated. However, maintain a reasonable distance because getting too close could be perceived as unnecessarily intimate.

4. Which Hand

Always offer your right hand for a handshake, unless there's an obvious reason why you need to use your left, e.g. if either party's right hand is injured. Also, if your palm is damp, pat it down as discreetly as possible because no one wants to grab a sweaty palm.

5. Glad to be here

A handshake indicates that we want to interact with the other person and our whole approach should give the same message. Take your left hand out of your pocket, maintain eye contact and smile, if appropriate. Introduce yourself, if this is the first time you're meeting someone, or greet them by their name.

6. Power Game

Your fingers should grip the other person's palm and your handshake should be firm but not bone-crushing. In a business or political context, this entire ritual takes on a symbolic meaning so, unless you want to appear intimidating, don't use your left hand to "cup" the handshake or pat the person's shoulder.

7. When in Rome

If you read our blog regularly, you know we always advise to think about cultural context. In Japan people may bow rather than shake hands and in the Arab world you should only initiate handshakes with people of your own gender. Although there may be some tolerance towards foreigners, a gentleman who finds himself in a different part of the world will make an effort to respect the social norms.

8. Perfect Ending

A handshake should last no more than a few seconds, 3 according to most etiquette experts. Obviously you're not a kettle and you shouldn't be on a timer but avoid lingering on unnecessarily. Withdraw your hand and either proceed to a meaningful conversation or part ways.

Let’s Sum Up

Introductions and handshakes are foundational gestures in professional and social settings, establishing the tone for a positive and respectful interaction. A well-executed introduction, including making eye contact, smiling, and addressing individuals by name, shows attentiveness and respect. When introducing oneself or others, speaking clearly and confidently is essential, as this creates a sense of professionalism and openness. In many cultures, a handshake accompanies introductions as a symbol of goodwill and mutual respect. A firm but not overly strong handshake conveys confidence, while holding eye contact during the gesture emphasizes sincerity. However, it's important to be mindful of cultural variations in greetings; for instance, in some cultures, a bow, nod, or other gestures may replace or accompany the handshake. Paying attention to these cultural nuances shows awareness and respect for others' customs. Together, a courteous introduction and respectful handshake set the stage for a successful and respectful interaction, making a strong, positive first impression.

Self- Assessment Questions

1. Define- Business Etiquette
2. Explain about the significance and importance of Business Etiquette
3. Is there any difference between Business Etiquette and Workplace Etiquette? How?
4. Examine the ABC’s of Etiquette
5. What are all the key points should keep in mind for meeting and greeting scenario?
6. Explain about the Good Meeting Etiquette
7. Illustrate the principles of good behaviour
8. Brief out the role of good manner in Business Etiquette
9. Inquire about the professional conduct and personal spacing
10. Investigate the term Introduction & Handshakes
11. How the modern gentlemen shake hands?

UNIT II

MEETING AND BOARDROOM PROTOCOL

Unit Summary

Board Meeting Protocol

Important Inclusion of Business Meeting Protocol

Business Meeting Etiquette Tips

Agenda for a Meeting

Steps for Planning

Guidelines for Attending the Meeting

Powerful PowerPoint Slides Preparation

Structure for Power Point Presentation

Outlining the Slide Design

Filling in the Content

Complaint Handling Etiquette

Business Entertaining

Host Etiquette

Guest Etiquette

Business Meals

Understanding Table Etiquette

Entertaining in International Business

Multi-Cultural Dining

Japanese Dining Etiquette

Objective

- To establish a structured and efficient process for conducting board meetings.
- To know for setting guidelines for member conduct, such as respecting speaking turns, maintaining a formal tone, and avoiding side conversations.
- To encourage in focused agenda that prioritizes essential items, allocates time appropriately.
- To acknowledge and respect the cultural practices, dietary restrictions, and etiquette of all participants, showing an awareness of different customs.
- To learn and observe key dining customs.

Board Meeting Protocol

The board meeting protocol dictates the steps a business takes to organise and execute a meeting of the board of directors.

There is no one legally set board meeting protocol to follow, but each organisation will have its own set of procedures. These are in place to:

- Enable the business to prepare its board members fully for the meeting
- Help board members use their time as wisely as possible during the meeting
- Allow board members to pass motions that affect the future of the company

Essentially, the meeting protocol is a template workflow from calling the meeting to signing off the minutes from the previous meeting.

The definition of protocol is "an official procedure or system of rules that govern affairs of states or diplomatic occasions." To more narrowly define **board meeting protocol**, look to the powers of the board of directors. A board meeting should not be considered the board's agenda or the board's meeting. Board members are the work horses that do the work of the organization according to its vision and mission.

The powers of the board members are granted by:

1. The Corporate Code
2. The Constitution

3. The Bylaws
4. Standing Rules
5. Established Customs
6. Parliamentary Procedure/Robert's Rules of Order
7. Open meeting acts when appropriate

The meeting chair follows a facilitation protocol including:

- Only one person speaks at a time
- The speaker must be recognized before speaking
- All comments are made through the chair
- Comments are confined to the current issue
- Discussion should alternate between pro and con arguments
- Not allowing lengthy papers to be read during the meeting
- No cross conversations
- No verbal attacks of other members
- All rules must be respected and obeyed

Within the board meeting protocol are:

Board meeting rules	The technical details that must be met to ensure the board can make its decisions. This could be the minimum number of members required for a quorum or the type of majority needed.
Board meeting etiquette	Actions that ensure everyone receives a fair hearing and that members show respect to each other. Includes anything from knowing when to speak to making sure your mobile phone is switched off.
Board meeting procedures	This involves the way the board meeting is structured. It includes rules for all meeting actions that should be taken, from call to order to adjournment

These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but other times separately. All are part of the protocol.

What Dictates the Board Meeting Protocol?

There are a number of different elements that inform a company's board meeting protocol. These include:

The Byelaws.

The byelaws are the very basis of the company's approach to board meetings. They detail the responsibilities of the chair and other officers, the number of meetings that should take place each year and other broad requirements.

The Standing Rules.

The board meeting standing rules or standing orders feature detailed guidance for how to implement the byelaws. They include information on the composition of the board, electing new members, date and location of the meetings, how to record proceedings, the forming of committees, duties and obligations amongst a number of other guidelines.

Corporate Governance

The Corporate Governance Act provides provisions for certain situations that can affect a company's board meeting protocol. It includes rulings on handling conflicts of interest, detailing governance concerns in the meeting minutes and other such issues.

Robert's Rules of Order.

Many organisations around the world run their meetings according to Robert's Rules of Order. It is also known as parliamentary procedure and provides an easy-to-follow template for presenting and passing motions, as well as conducting the business of the board in a meeting.

Open Meetings Acts.

Some countries or states have open meetings acts or public meetings acts to ensure certain organisations (usually governmental) must make their board meetings open to the public. This has an effect over the board meeting protocol. The person responsible for organising the meeting needs to take this scrutiny into account and post details of the event in public in good time. They must also make provision for exceptional circumstances when a meeting must take place in private. In certain situations such as emergencies, open meetings acts could allow closed sessions.

Important Inclusion of Board Meeting Protocol

The typical board meeting protocol procedure should run like this:

The Meeting Purpose

The first element in any board meeting protocol is, according to the Chartered Governance Institute, that "boards need to focus on the purpose of the meeting, and all the elements that can contribute to an effective discussion."

Calling the Meeting

You should set a date and time that suits enough members to form a quorum, but also fits with the schedule of the key members of the board required to fulfil the purpose of the meeting. These might be members with specific knowledge and expertise to inform a debate on a certain topic. You might also want to choose a date based on when financial information or other important data will be ready.

You should send members a formal notice of the date, time and location of the meeting. They also need the board pack, featuring all the key statistics, projections and financial documents they need to make decisions.

Draft the Board Meeting Agenda

Part of making sure the meeting runs to time and everything that needs to be discussed is included is creating a clear board meeting agenda. This details the old business that needs reviewing, the new business up for debate and which committees will report as well. The secretary and the chair should sit down together to work out the agenda. Once it is finalised, you can inform the relevant board members of any specific roles they have to play in the forthcoming meeting and send out copies of the agenda.

Preparing for the Meeting

All board members should read the board papers thoroughly to be prepared for the meeting. This is key in it running smoothly and to time. If members hold up proceedings by asking questions that are answered in the pack, there will be less time for important matters. During this preparation phase, the CEO and CFO must familiarise themselves with the financial and committee reports so that they can confidently field any questions the members might have during the meeting. Effective preparation and information management are crucial, similar to how a well-structured RFQ process can enhance procurement efficiency.

Closing the Meeting and Following it Up

On closing the meeting, the chair of the board or company secretary should read the resolutions decided upon. It is customary to announce when and where the next meeting will take place. Following the meeting, the secretary should send round the minutes for members to read. They can then approve them at the next meeting. If you use a board meeting portal, members can flag any corrections that you must make and you can adjust the document accordingly. It will instantly update for all members, meaning everyone always has the latest version of all relevant documentation.

Board Meeting Etiquette Tips

In order to facilitate the smooth running of the board meeting, there are a number of etiquette tips for directors that should be adhered to. These include:

- Good timekeeping is essential for the meeting to run as it should.
- Do not use electronic devices for any other purpose than for referencing meeting items.
- Refrain from interrupting other members as they speak.
- Do not try and chat with other members secretly. This includes whispers and notes.
- You should not attempt to undermine other members with body language, looks etc.
- Prepare fully by reading and digesting the board papers. Come up with relevant questions or solutions to problems.
- Ensure you know what you will be voting on and have a clear idea of the issues.
- Remain focused on the agenda items. Any deviation from the set plan for the meeting can cause an overrun.
- Declare conflicts of interest or potential conflicts as they come up in conversation.
- Treat everyone with respect, even if you disagree with their point.
- Accept that the full board is responsible for the board's resolutions, even the members who voted against them.

Robert’s Rules of Order

Robert’s Rules of Order, or parliamentary law, helps boards maintain order by providing an approved method of conducting meetings in a democratic, orderly, and expeditious manner. Orderly meetings effectively uphold the organization’s objectives according to the bylaws, and protect the rights of the organization’s members. Each rule is affected by, and in turn, affects all other rules. Robert’s Rules contains a comprehensive set of rules that addresses virtually every potential meeting issue.

One of the main parts of parliamentary procedure is the handling of motions. There are six steps to handling motions:

1. Members stands, is recognized, and makes a motion
2. Another member seconds the motion
3. Presiding officer restates the motion
4. Members debate the motion
5. Presiding officer asks for the affirmative and negative votes
6. Presiding officer announces the result of the voting

We have also written in the past on how to write a motion for a board meeting if you need a refresher. There are a few other notable protocol issues including addressing and appealing points of order and rules for suspending the rules.

Point of Order

When a member notices a violation of a rule, the rule can be called out without waiting for the chair to recognize the member that questions it. In such a situation, the member calls out, “Point of Order.” The chair listens to the complaint and makes a ruling on whether there is a violation. If the member disagrees with the chair’s ruling, the member may appeal the decision of the chair.

Appealing Point of Order

The member states, “I appeal the decision of the chair.” The chair explains the reason for the ruling. Each member has the opportunity to debate one time. The chair gives a closing statement and a vote is taken on whether the decision of the chair should be sustained. Only a majority of the negative may overturn the ruling of the chair.

Suspending the Rules

Sometimes boards need to perform a task that is specifically prohibited in the bylaws. There is a workaround for such a circumstance called "suspending the rules." The group can move to "suspend the rule that prohibits…" in order to complete a specific task.

Quorum

The quorum is the minimum number of members who must be present to conduct business and pass motions. The number of acceptable voting members that constitutes a quorum is specified in the organization's bylaws. Meetings can be held when a quorum is not present, but official business cannot be transacted.

AGENDA

The meeting agenda should be distributed to members in enough time before the meeting so that they may request additions and changes. Typical agendas include:

- Call to Order
- Welcome and introductions
- Approval of minutes from the previous meeting
- Chief Executive's report
- Finance Committee's report
- Other committee reports
- Old business
- New business
- Comments and announcements
- Adjournment

Also, check out our post on how to hold the greatest board meeting ever, which is full of helpful tips on creating a meeting agenda.

Steps For Planning A Meeting Agenda

Here's the sequence of steps to plan an effective meeting agenda.

1. **Define results first**. What are the results your group needs to achieve by the end of the meeting? Write them down. If there is not a defined purpose, consider whether there really is a reason to meet.

2. **Identify the meeting's time frame**. What kind of meeting time is needed for the meeting's purpose? Different time frames fit different purposes — from the five-minute daily check-in to the two-day retreat. Match the amount of time to the needs and the frequency of the group's gathering.

3. **List the meeting's topics**. Identify the topics that need to be covered to accomplish the results. Think through what has to be done, consider a logical order for discussing the topics or making decisions. Consider the information that the group needs in order to discuss a topic or make a decision knowledgeably. A good agenda considers the following:

- What topics do we have to cover to accomplish our goal?
- What outcome/s do we want for each topic?
- What information do we need?
- Who will make the decision/s?

4. **Allot time frames by topic**. Considering the total time available, assign realistic time slots for each item. During the meeting, if the group hasn't reached a decision within the time provided, suggest next steps or refer the item to the next meeting or committee.

5. **Plan participation strategies to address each topic**. Different methods of discussion can be used to make the best use of the group for each topic. Be clear about expectations for involving participants to assure that involvement builds trust and gets authentic action.

6. **Do a sanity check**. After you review your agenda, consider whether what you want to do is really "doable" in the amount of time you've got. If not, scale back expectations or schedule another meeting to address some of the topics.

Handling Minutes

At the specified time during the agenda, the prior meeting's minutes should be reviewed for accuracy and approved. Depending upon established **board meeting procedures**, the minutes may either be read aloud or distributed prior to the meeting. Corrections and amendments may be addressed during this part of the meeting. The past meeting's minutes should be voted on, approved, and signed by the meeting chair or board president and the board secretary.

(See also how to write minutes for a board meeting)

Bylaws vs Standing Rules

Bylaws can sometimes be confused with standing rules. Both sets of rules have different functions, so it's important to understand the differences between bylaws and standing rules.

Here are a few examples:

Bylaws usually state the number of meetings; whereas standing rules outline the time and location of the meetings. For example, bylaws outline the primary responsibilities of the officers and the chair; whereas standing rules give the specifics. Bylaws designate who is responsible for a committee or program; standing rules list who forms the committee or how the program is to be implemented. In short, bylaws broadly outline responsibilities; whereas standing rules specify the details of how that particular board carries things out.

Open Meetings Acts

Over growing concerns about the lack of transparency of government meetings, many states have passed various forms of open meeting acts. Open meeting acts typically state how soon before a meeting the body must publicly post notice of the meeting. Notices may be required to describe agenda items, allow free access to the public, allow the public to record the meeting, or address items presented at the meeting. Many open meeting acts also outline rules for participation via teleconference or video conference. Open meeting acts may allow boards to hold closed sessions or emergency sessions under certain conditions.

While the board protocol is designed to allow board to perform its duties in an expedient, orderly manner, some members become proficient at using the rules to their advantage. Each board member holds a responsibility to make informed decisions that hold true to the vision and mission of the organization. When parliamentary procedure is followed with fidelity, the board process protects everyone's rights while championing the board's work.

Meeting Etiquette in the Corporate Boardroom

No matter how far you may climb up the corporate ladder, meetings will continue to be a part of your professional life, and a keen sense of meeting etiquette will continue to be a crucial element of your interpersonal skill set. While some of the same rules that guide your behavior in meetings at all points of your career will continue to apply in the corporate boardroom, etiquette in the high-impact meetings that occur at an organization's highest levels is nuanced in some important ways.

Below, read about some key elements of meeting etiquette to keep in mind as you take your place in the corporate boardroom. By following these rules, you can help foster a positive, professional and productive atmosphere during even the most stressful meeting.

Pay Attention

The first rule of meeting etiquette is perhaps the most obvious. A mutually respectful meeting environment depends on the committed participation of everyone present in the room, and this means that all people present should remain alert and engaged with whoever is speaking at any given moment.

In order to maintain a professional level of active attention, avoid engaging in distracted or distracting behaviors like checking your phone, doing work unrelated to the meeting at hand or starting side conversations with those seated near you.[1] Respect breeds respect, and by steering clear of these bad behaviors, you can build a reputation as someone who should be taken seriously in the corporate boardroom when it is your turn to speak.

Ask Questions at Appropriate Times

It is common in meetings structured around a presentation for the meeting organizer to end their talk by turning to the room and asking "Are there any questions?" Because we are all comfortable with this format, it's easy to assume that the most appropriate—or even the only—time to ask questions is at the end of a meeting. However, by restricting yourself to this approach, you run the risk of irritating your colleagues and missing out on opportunities to spur a dynamic, productive conversation.

Rather than save all your questions for the end of a meeting, ask them as they arise naturally throughout. This enables the person who must respond to your question to do so while the information at issue is fresh in everyone's mind, and it allows time for the conversation to branch off into potentially important, unforeseen directions as well. And asking your questions at appropriate intervals respects your coworkers' time as well, as it can help prevent meetings from running over time and allow everyone to get back to their work promptly.

Disagree Politely but Firmly

Corporate boardrooms thrive on healthy debate. Agreeing even when you have misgivings can be counterproductive, even if you think doing so is important in the interest of maintaining a positive mood. Reasoned, cordial disagreement is often at the heart of the best business decisions, whether it results in a bold new strategic approach, helps avoid making a tactical mistake or simply works toward solving the thorny "wicked problems" that businesses face every day.

Appropriate boardroom meeting etiquette dictates that you voice disagreements politely, but firmly. Your colleagues deserve the respect of your honest opinion, and the success of your company demands the positive outcomes that result when every decision maker brings their experience and expertise to bear on important decisions.

Avoid Forming Cliques

For a group that meets on a regular basis like a corporate board, it can be easy to fall into predictable patterns of behavior. It can be natural for board members who tend to see eye to eye on most issues to gravitate toward one another, which can result in the formation of cliques within the larger group that can impede productive conversation.

The good news, is that there is a surprisingly easy solution to this potential problem. By simply shaking up the seating arrangements every time the board convenes, you can prompt each group member to engage directly with everyone else at the table.[4] By taking steps to avoid complacency, you can help prevent the onset of a routine that can have a negative effect on group dynamics.

Stick to a Schedule

All meetings thrive on efficiency, from tactical project-planning meetings between junior employees to the most volatile, make-or-break strategy-setting meetings in the corporate boardroom. The most effective ones are planned out thoughtfully in advance, with an agenda set to maximize the use of everyone's time, designed to cover only the necessary details, but to do so thoroughly.

If you are running a meeting, etiquette requires that you book enough time to get through everything you want to comfortably, that you circulate an agenda ahead of time and stick to it meticulously throughout the meeting, and that you promptly adjourn and leave the room when your allotted time has run out.[5] And if you are not a meeting's organizer, you should still be cognizant of everybody's time and do what you can in terms of paying attention and participating purposefully to keep the meeting on track.

Don't Fear Spontaneity

While it may seem to contradict the above advice about meticulous adherence to a schedule, it is equally, if not more, important to be open to the spontaneous emergence of a great idea or a productive opportunity. This can mean allowing conversation during a meeting to move in an unexpected direction—but respectfully, of course, and only with the buy-in of everyone else in the room.

It can also mean grabbing colleagues for impromptu, informal meetings and work sessions the moment inspiration strikes.[5] While this behavior may be described by some as a breach of professional etiquette, if done correctly, it can be a key driver for important ideas and can help establish you as a dynamic, hands-on leader.

Business meetings happen in all businesses—from media companies to law firms. The number of meetings you attend is directly proportional to your level in the hierarchy—the higher you climb, the more you attend. There is o ne timeless rule for all business meetings regardless of your industry and regardless of your age, gender or nationality—manners matter! While writing invitations write the goal, plan the agenda and then draw up the guest list. You may end up bruising a few egos but be firm about the people who should attend the meeting. The attendees should be driven by the agenda and their contribution towards achieving the goal(s). Always remember: To confirm your participation at the earliest and block your calendar. Study the agenda or the purpose of the meeting in advance. If you are unable to attend, inform the concerned person and after the meeting request for a copy of the points discussed.

Start

Start on time, signalling to all the late-comers that you respect the time of all the attendees who showed up on time. Like athletes need to warm up before plunging into the real sport, so do business people. Start the meeting with a general topic—the headlines of that day, the weather, India's cricket tally, and so on. Small talk for the initial few minutes aligns everyone's thinking and puts them at ease.

During the Meeting

No overtaking: Overtaking on the verbal highway by finishing off the speaker's sentences or interrupting their thought process puts them under pressure to complete. Wait till the speaker has finished before interjecting with your comments.

Shooting others down: It's rude, projecting you in a poor light. Listen to all the ideas and reach a logical conclusion.

Show professionalism: In a business meeting, it's not possible to record everything that is being said. So jotting down notes helps. This is an essential skill for any person who is interacting with clients—both internal and external—as running back to ask for points already discussed projects you as inadequate professionally.

Conversation is a two-way street: Conversation, like a game of tennis, is a two-way street. Use it to extract others' opinions, besides telling them your own. While extroverts are naturals at conducting conversation, they tend to hijack the talk by rambling on extempore, excluding the quieter ones. The art of conversation is to keep everyone involved, including the shy ones who are struggling to get their points in sideways. Asking too many questions makes it appear like a CBI interrogation!

Disagree gracefully: While a disagreement between two colleagues is best handled outside the conference room, at times diverse viewpoints can be used positively to reach the best option. Respect people's views, even if they are at odds with your own, allowing them the time and space to state their thoughts. Instead of launching on a mission to prove yourself correct, when you stumble upon a roadblock, accept it gracefully by saying, 'We have such diverse viewpoints …'

Accept that it's not possible to be a 'know-all': No matter how successful or well-travelled you may be, accept the fact that you don't have the answers to all the questions. Often, juniors can provide new and enlightening insights or pieces of information which you had no prior idea
about. Know-alls try to hog the spotlight and are hence unpopular.

Manage trouble-makers: The guy who strolls in 10 minutes late, the girl who interrupts every few sentences, the manager who gets emotional every time their department is mentioned, the human encyclopaedia who butts in every time—the list is endless. Manage the meeting with panache, taking control of the situation. Don't allow these trouble-makers to take the focus away from the meeting. This way you will win respect of the other colleagues who are giving their precious time to the meeting.

Finish

Summarize what has been discussed briefly and let go of business. Finish the meeting with a couple of minutes of small talk.

As the boss, you are calling the shots and the meetings too. While you may achieve your goals, do take the following into account while conducting business meetings:

1. **Gauge body language signals:** Look around you—drooping shoulders, glazed eyes, people slumping in their chairs, looking distracted, yawning, scoping the room for an escape, all signal lack of interest. Your options are —try to revive the mood and salvage the meeting with light jokes, take a break or reschedule the meeting.
2. **Give people a chance to speak:** The extroverts know how to jump in with an answer and grab the limelight. Invite the quieter ones to contribute, giving them time and a patient hearing. Allow people the pauses they need to articulate their sentences; look at their faces to judge if it is a pause or have they finished.
3. **Use simple language:** Make your comments and questions easy to understand, thereby putting people at ease. As a boss, if you use long words, your juniors will be too scared to say 'I don't understand …'
4. **It's called a 'dialogue':** Allow people to air their opinion, even if they disagree with you. This leads to healthier discussions, relaxes everyone and allows creativity. Bosses who launch into monologues forcing others to agree to their opinions are the biggest losers in the long run.
5. **Focus on 'You' and not 'I':** Bosses who use the word 'you' frequently invite audience participation, while those who use 'I' create a psychological barrier, distancing themselves from their audience.

6. **A smile helps:** Even if you are communicating a serious message, an appropriate story/quote/anecdote with a hint of a smile eases the stress when conv eying the message. Bosses who hammer their point aggressively drive their audience into a shell where they are unable to connect any more.

Guidelines for Attending Meeting

Guidelines for the Chairperson:

1. Preparation:

- Agenda: Prepare and distribute a clear agenda before the meeting. Include topics, timings, and objectives.
- Participants: Ensure all necessary participants are invited and confirm their attendance.
- Materials: Gather and review all relevant documents and materials needed for the meeting.

2. Facilitation:

- Start On Time: Begin the meeting promptly as scheduled.
- Follow the Agenda: Keep the discussion on track according to the agenda. If necessary, adjust the agenda to address critical issues.
- Encourage Participation: Ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute and voice their opinions.
- Manage Time: Allocate time appropriately for each agenda item and manage discussions to avoid overruns.
- Resolve Conflicts: Address and mediate any conflicts or disagreements diplomatically.

3. Documentation:

- Minutes: Ensure that minutes are taken and cover key points, decisions, and action items. Follow-Up: Summarize action items and assign responsibilities. Distribute the minutes and follow-up on actions post-meeting.

4. Conduct:

- Professionalism: Maintain a respectful and professional tone throughout the meeting.
- Clarity: Communicate clearly and ensure that all decisions and actions are understood by everyone.

Guidelines for Attendees:

1. Preparation:

- Review Agenda: Read the agenda and any related materials prior to the meeting.
- Prepare Input: Come prepared with your contributions or updates relevant to the agenda.

2. Participation:

- Be Punctual: Arrive on time and be ready to participate.
- Stay Engaged: Pay attention, and contribute thoughtfully to discussions.
- Respect: Listen to others and respect different viewpoints. Avoid interrupting.

3. Communication:

- Clarity: Speak clearly and concisely. Stick to the topic being discussed.
- Questions and Comments: Ask questions or provide comments at appropriate times, usually when prompted or when the floor is open for discussion.

4. Follow-Up:

- Action Items: Take note of any assigned tasks or action items and follow through on them.
- Feedback: Provide constructive feedback if requested or necessary.

Guidelines for Presenters:

1. Preparation:

- **Content:** Develop clear, relevant, and well-structured content. Ensure your presentation aligns with the meeting's agenda.
- **Materials:** Prepare and test any visual aids or handouts beforehand. Ensure they are clear and professional.

2. Delivery:

- **Practice**: Rehearse your presentation to ensure smooth delivery and adherence to time limits.
- **Engagement:** Engage your audience with eye contact, and encourage questions and interaction.
- **Clarity**: Present your information clearly and logically. Avoid jargon or overly complex language.

3. Interaction:

- **Q&A:** Be prepared to answer questions and address feedback. Handle inquiries with patience and professionalism.
- **Discussion:** Facilitate discussions or debates if appropriate, keeping the conversation focused and constructive.
- **Follow-Up:**
- **Provide Materials:** Share any presentation materials or documents with attendees after the meeting if necessary.
- **Address Questions:** Follow up on any outstanding questions or issues that were raised during your presentation.

Let’s Sum Up

Boardroom meeting protocol is essential for conducting effective and organized meetings that support productive decision-making and maintain high standards of corporate governance. This protocol outlines structured procedures for how board meetings should be conducted, ensuring that all members understand the rules of engagement, respect, and professionalism expected during discussions. An effective boardroom protocol includes setting a clear agenda, managing time efficiently, fostering open yet respectful dialogue, and documenting decisions and action items accurately through meeting minutes. Additionally, it emphasizes transparency, with all board members given the opportunity to contribute their perspectives while adhering to regulatory and governance standards. By following a defined protocol, the board can focus on key priorities, make well-informed decisions, and uphold its responsibility to shareholders and stakeholders alike. This structured approach not only enhances the effectiveness of each meeting but also contributes to a culture of accountability and trust within the organization.

Planning a Powerful PowerPoint Slides

1. Plan: Look at the Big Picture
2. Create Slides
3. Keep It Simple and Clear
4. Design Principles
5. Oral Presentation
6. Have a Back Up Plan

A good PowerPoint slideshow complements your presentation by highlighting your key message, providing structure, and illustrating important details.

While it is not difficult to create a good PowerPoint presentation, it is very easy to create a bad one. Bad PowerPoint presentations may have one or more of the following characteristics: too much specialized detail, too many slides, too many colours, unnecessary images or effects, small text, unreadable figures, and/or unclear slide order. The strategies below can help you to create effective presentations and to save your audience from “death by PowerPoint.”

Plan: Look at the Big Picture

1. Plan: Plan your talk first (see Academic Skills Oral Presentations) and then plan your PowerPoint to accompany your argument and evidence.
2. Audience: Who is in your audience and what do they know about the material? What do you want them to learn? Consider your overall argument and evidence that you want to present.
3. Purpose: Define the goals, topic and appropriate depth and scope of information.
4. Presentation Length: Know the time available for your presentation. Be realistic about how much material you can cover as it is important that you keep within your time limit. Follow the general rule of thumb: You need about one slide per minute.

Creating Slides

You are now ready to create individual slides. If you have never used PowerPoint before, you can find hundreds of good tutorials online. Find one that works for you.

The classic PowerPoint error is to write sentences on a slide and read them. Rather than treating your slides as a script for your presentation, let the content on your slides support your message. Remember: **LESS IS MORE**.

Keep It Simple and Clear

Text

- Where possible, include a heading for each slide
- Use bulleted points and avoid long sentences (it is often suggested that you include no more than 6 lines per slide or 6 words per line)
- Font size: 30 - 48 point for titles, 24 - 28 for text
- Avoid all capital letters
- Proofread carefully for spelling and grammar

Figures and Images

- Ensure images are clear and relevant
- Label all figures and tables
- Put units beside numbers on graphs and charts

General Design Principles

- Embrace empty space
- Use vertical and horizontal guide markers to consistently align elements
- Avoid too many colours, clutter or fancy visual effects
- Use high contrast to ensure visibility: e.g. Black text on white background or black on light blue
- Maintain consistency of the same elements on a slide (colours, fonts, styles, placement etc.), as well as, between slides in the slide deck
- Use animation sparingly, if at all. If you use transitions, use the same kind each time
- Edit entire slide deck to ensure organization is logical and design is consistent

Oral Presentation

Even with the best of PowerPoints, good presentations require practice and refinement Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Listen for awkward or unclear wording and make edits as needed. Keep an eye on time limits. Practice presenting alone, but also for friends. Advance the slide when you reach that point in the presentation. Do not stand in front of the screen or talk to it. Face the audience at all times.

Try to test your presentation in the room before your talk; you may need to adjust the colours or font size for the room and equipment. For further information, see How to Prepare and Deliver an Oral Presentation.

Have a Back-Up Plan

Remember that PowerPoint may look great, but technical failures do happen. Mentally prepare for any eventuality. Make sure to save the presentation several ways: save on a USB stick and email it to yourself. Print out the slides to have a paper version in case of equipment failure and practice giving your presentation without your slides.

Structure for a PowerPoint Presentation

1. Decide on a working title and the main takeaways.

Beyond picking a topic, your first step should be coming up with a working title for your presentation. A working title is more specific than a topic: Think "How the Right Nutrition Can Strengthen Your Kids' Bones" instead of "Raising Healthy Kids." Keep in mind that a compelling presentation title is much like a compelling blog post title: short, accurate, and valuable.

Once you've got your working title, make a list of the main takeaways of your presentation to begin to give it some structure. This'll help you stay focused when writing your outline and elaborating on those sections.

2. Create a short text outline with your audience in mind.

Once you have your main takeaways and your story in mind, it's time to begin outlining the content of your presentation in more detail, while keeping your specific audience in mind. A presentation on any topic should sound different if you're speaking to an audience of college students versus an audience of investors, for example. The tone, words, design, and delivery of your presentation should all cater to your specific audience for maximum impact.

Ask yourself: What do your audience members already know? What new information can you teach them? What are they expecting from your presentation? What's going to be interesting to them? What will keep them focused and engaged? Then, make choices during every stage of the presentation process accordingly.

Justin Champion, a content professor at HubSpot, says, "Before diving into a presentation, I create an outline of how it'll flow. I do this by creating an intro (what they're going to learn), the body (what they're learning), and finish with a conclusion (recap what they just learned) I use bullet point slide a lot for talking points I can expand on. Pro tip: use animations to guide the story. For example, instead of showing all the bullets at once, click through to each via animation."

3. Formulate your content as a narrative, if possible.

This may not apply for more formal presentation that have rigid structures (like performance reports), but for presentations that have more flexibility, presenting your content as a narrative can be much more compelling.

Stories appeal to people's emotional side in ways that information, facts, and figures can't. They help you relate to your audience -- and in turn, they'll make you and your message far more interesting to your audience. They also help make complicated concepts more easily understandable to your audience, who may not share the same experience level or work in the same industry.

Kyle Jepson, a senior professor at HubSpot, says, "Since I'm an educator, I always structure my presentations around the learning outcomes I want to achieve. If there are three things I want my listeners to understand at the end of the presentation, I'll have three sections. Whenever possible, I put some sort of interactive element at the end of each section to assess their understanding. In a virtual event, this might be a poll or a question for people to respond to in the chat. In an in-person setting, workshop activities or small-group discussions work well."

4. Collect data and examples.

While sweeping statements can help you set the stage, supporting those statements with evidence will make your argument more interesting and credible. Data and examples give your argument content, and people will understand what you're saying much better.

But don't just slap random stats on your slides and expect to "wow" your audience. Be sure your data comes from a reputable source and that you're presenting it in a way that's easy to understand, like through accurate charts and graphs.

Finally, don't overwhelm your audience with too much data. According to psychologist George Miller, we can only remember approximately five to nine bits of information in our short-term memory at any given time. Keep that in mind as you collect your evidence.

5. Engage with your audience.

During a presentation, it's important to connect with your audience. But how can you do that when you're just talking at them?

Anni Kim, an INBOUND professor at HubSpot, says, "Staying engaged during a virtual presentation is tough, so provide plenty of opportunities for participation. You should add a slide at the beginning that points out how people can take advantage of the chat and ask questions throughout the presentation."

Once you've set the expectations, keep up on the chat and answer questions as they arise.

Now that you have a structure in mind, you'll start to write the content. Below, we'll give tips for how to start and end your presentation.

How to Start a PowerPoint Presentation

1. Start with a story.

Not to be repetitive, but storytelling is one of the best ways to capture your audience's attention in general. Presentations are no different. Starting with a hook is a great way to get your audience invested in your content.

Champion says, "The best way to start a presentation is with an interesting story that connects to the content. A great way to keep you audience engaged is to make the content interesting."

2. Be yourself.

On the other hand, while you want to tell a story, you also want your audience to connect with you as the presenter.

Jepson says, "During the introduction, I think one of the most important things to do is to set expectations for your style as a presenter. You don't always need to start with a joke or a story. Start out by being you, and then keep being you for as long as you’re on stage."

3. Include surprising or unusual information at the beginning.

While you'll most likely use a standard approach with session title, presenter's bio, and an agenda, you don't want your audience to get bored.

Jepson adds "I think the standard approach (session title, presenter's bio, agenda) is pretty effective except that it's usually super boring. I try to include the standard information but sprinkle in things that are surprising or unusual."

Some examples include:

- **Adding a photo of your family on the About Me slide.** "A lot of presenters put a picture of themselves on their About Me slide. But I think that's silly because I'm standing right there," Jepson says. "If people don't know what I look like, they will by the end of the presentation! So I've started putting a picture of my wife and kids on that slide and saying something sweet or silly about that."
- **Asking people to use their phones.** "A lot of in-person presentations start with a request to silence cell phones," Jepson comments. "Sometimes I'll do the opposite and say something like, 'Before we get started, I want you all to pull out your phones. You probably think I'm going to ask you to silence them. But I'm not. I'm here from HubSpot, and I'm here to help you however I can. So if there's anyone from your team who might have questions or need help from a HubSpotter, I want you to send them a message and tell them to send their questions to you before we get to the Q&A section of presentation. To give you time to do this, I'm going to send a text to my wife to let her know I made it here safely.' And then I'll literally pull out my phone and send a text message on stage."

Now that you've structured your post and have ironed out the details of your introduction, it's time to work on the end of the presentation.

How to End a PowerPoint Presentation

1. Recap what the audience has learned.

First and foremost, the end of your presentation should tie everything together.

Champion adds, "Recap what they just learned, explain next steps based on learnings, and offer any associated resources to continue learning."

This will help people remember the content and give them resources to learn more or reach out if they have questions.

2. Q&A.

Another great way to end a presentation is with a Q&A.

Jepson remarks, "I always end with Q&A. The only tricky thing about that is knowing how to cut it off if you’re getting more questions than you have time to answer or if you aren’t getting any questions at all. In both of those situations, I do essentially the same: I cut it off and tell people to come talk to me individually."

For in-person meetings, Jepson will tell the audience to come find him after the presentation to ask more questions. However, for virtual meetings, he'll let people know how to reach him, whether that's via LinkedIn or email.

3. Call to action.

Calls to action are an important component of any piece of content and presentations are no different. What do you want your audience to do with this information?

In your recap, include actionable ways for your audience to incorporate your information into their day-to-day (if applicable). You can also let people know to reach out to you with questions so they know the next steps in case they want to discuss the presentation further.

Now that you have an idea of what you're going to be talking about and how you'll be laying it out, it's time to open up a new PowerPoint presentation and apply those basic design elements.

Outlining Your PowerPoint Design

1. Pick a color scheme.

Before you begin translating your text outline into PowerPoint, you'll want to start by adding some very basic design elements to your PowerPoint slides. First, choose a color scheme -- one that has enough contrast between colors to make colors stand out. Whether you decide to use two, three, or four different colors in your presentation is up to you, but certain color combinations go together better than others. Read the sections on creating color schemes in this blog post to figure out a good color combination.

2. Design your slide backgrounds.

In PowerPoint, less is more. You don’t ever want to let the design distract from your message. But at the same time, you want to get more creative than a plain, white background -- even if you're going for a very simple design.

The three main ways to add a background design to a PowerPoint presentation are: 1) to use a predesigned template from PowerPoint; 2) to create a custom background using a solid color; or 3) to create a custom background using an image. Here's how to do each of those things.

(We also have a few general PowerPoint templates available for download here, which come with a series of videos to teach you some basic PowerPoint creation tips.)

How to Browse Predesigned Templates in PowerPoint

PowerPoint comes with a series of predesigned templates to choose from.

To browse these templates on a Mac: Click on the slide or slides you want to add the background to. Then, click the "Themes" tab at the top of the screen.

You can either scroll through your options up there, or you can access the themes gallery in a bigger window by hovering your mouse over the theme previews and clicking the dropdown arrow that appears below them.

Right-click the background style that you want. To apply the background style to the selected slides, click "Apply to Selected Slides." To apply the background style to all of the slides in your presentation, click "Apply to All Slides."

To browse these templates on a PC: Click on the slide or slides you want to add the background to. Then, click the "Design" tab at the top of the screen. In the "Background" group, click the arrow next to "Background Styles" to open up the theme gallery.

Right-click the background style that you want. To apply the background style to the selected slides, click "Apply to Selected Slides." To apply the background style to all of the slides in your presentation, click "Apply to All Slides."

Pro Tip: You can also apply any PowerPoint template you already have as a theme, even if it doesn't show up in the theme gallery. To do that, click the "Browse Themes" option you'll find at the bottom of the dropdown themes gallery, and navigate to wherever the given presentation, template, or theme is located on your computer. Then, click "Apply."

How to Create a Custom Background Using a Solid Color

Want your slide background to be a simple, solid color? The steps to do this are almost identical on a Mac and a PC.

Simply right-click the slide(s) you want to add a background color to, then click "Format Background." In the window that appears, click "Fill" and then "Solid." Notice you can also adjust the gradient or make the background a pattern. Click "Apply" at the bottom to apply the changes.

How to Create a Custom Background Using an Image

Sometimes, making the slide background a high-definition image can really make that slide pop. It also encourages you to cut down on text so that only a few keywords complement the image. PowerPoint makes it easy to create a custom background using an image you own.

First, choose your image. Size matters here: Be sure it's high resolution so that it can fill your slide without becoming blurry or distorted. Here are the 17 best free stock photo sites to help you find some large, great quality images.

To create a custom background using an image on a Mac: Click the slide that you want to add a background picture to. To select multiple slides, click a slide and then press and hold CTRL while you click the other slides.

Next, click the "Themes" tab at the top of your screen. In the "Theme Options" group, click "Background," then "Format Background."

In the window that appears, click "Fill," then "Picture or Texture." To insert a picture from a file, click "Choose Picture..." and then locate and double-click the picture you want to insert. If you want to use this picture as a background for just the slides you selected, click "Apply." If you want to use the picture as a background for all the slides in your presentation, click "Apply to All."

To create a custom background using an image on a PC: Click the slide that you want to add a background picture to. To select multiple slides, click a slide and then press and hold CTRL while you click the other slides.

Next, click the "Design" tab at the top of your screen. In the "Background" group, click "Background Styles," then "Format Background."

In the window that appears, click "Fill," then "Picture or texture fill." To insert a picture from a file, click "File" and then locate and double-click the picture you want to insert. If you want to use this picture as a background for just the slides you selected, click "Close." If you want to use the picture as a background for all the slides in your presentation, click "Apply to All."

Filling In the Content

1. Fill in the text on your slides using concise language.

Your slides are there to support your speech, not replace it. If your slides contain too much information -- like full sentences or (gasp) paragraphs -- then your audience members won't be able to help but read the slides instead of listening to you. Plus ... that's boring. Instead, use slides to enhance keywords and show visuals while you stand up there and do the real work: telling a story and describing your data.

When it comes to your slide text, focus on the main phrases of a bullet point, and cover details verbally. We recommend using up to three bullet points per slide and making any text as simple and concise as possible. A good rule of thumb is this: If you're using more than two lines per slide or per idea, then you've used too much text. Depending on the type of presentation, two lines might even be a little text-heavy.

Are you planning on sending your slides to your audience afterward? If you're concerned about putting enough information on the slides for people to understand your presentation when they go back to it later, you can always add little details into the slide notes in PowerPoint. You can find the Notes pane at the bottom of your PowerPoint screen, right below your slides. Click and drag the edge of the pane to make it larger or smaller.

2. Brainstorm your final title with someone else.

Once all your content is there, you're ready to finalize your title. First, refine your working title as best you can on your own. Is it compelling and interesting enough to engage your audience from the very start? Does it accurately reflect your presentation?

Next -- and this is important -- connect with someone else to brainstorm the final title together. Read this blog post for a helpful walkthrough on writing a great title and title brainstorming with others.

Filling In Your PowerPoint Design

1. Choose a font that's easy to read.

Choose either one font to use throughout your presentation, or two (one for your headers and one for your body text) that contrast each other well. Here's a list of 35 beautiful fonts you can download for free to get you started.

If you decide on two fonts, your header font should be bold and eye-catching, and your body text font should be simple and easy to read. (For more guidance on what fonts work best together, take a look at this visual guide.)

2. Embed your font files.

Fonts changing from one computer to another is one of the most common problems PowerPoint presenters have -- and it can really mess up your presentation and flow. What's actually happening in this case is not that the fonts are changing; it's that the presentation computer just doesn't have the same font files installed.

If you're using a PC and presenting on a PC, then there is a smooth workaround for this issue. When you involve Mac systems, the solution is a bit rougher.

On a PC: When you save your PowerPoint file, click "Save As" and then "Save Options." Then, select the "Embed TrueType fonts" check box and press "OK." Now, your presentation will keep the font file and your fonts will not change when you move computers (unless you give your presentation on a Mac).

On a Mac: In PowerPoint for Mac, there's no option to embed fonts within the presentation. So unless you use ubiquitous typefaces like Arial or Tahoma, your PowerPoint is likely going to encounter font changes on different computers. The best way to avoid this is to save the final version of your presentation slides as JPEGs, and then insert those JPEGs onto your PowerPoint slides. In other words, make each slide a JPEG picture of your slide. (Note that the file size of your PowerPoint will increase if your presentation includes a lot of JPEGs.)

Mac users can easily drag and drop the JPEGs into PowerPoint. If you don't use actions in your presentation, then this option works especially well.

If you want your presentation to appear "animated," then you'll need to do a little tinkering. All you need to do is save JPEGs of each "frame" of the animation. Then, in your final presentation, you'll just display those JPEGs in the order you'd like the animation to appear. While you'll technically have several new slides in place of one original one, your audience won't know the difference.

If you're a Mac user and want to use this option, then be sure to add this to your checklist as the final step.

3. Adjust the font sizes.

Once you've chosen your font, you can start playing around with font size. Carefully choose the font sizes for headers and text, and consistently use the same font face and sizes on all your slides to keep things clean and legible. Be sure your font is big enough so even the audience members in the way back of the room can read them.

4. Adjust line and character spacing.

The biggest PowerPoint no-no is using too much text on a slide. The most effective slides use text sparingly and present it in a way that's easy to read. One trick to make text more legible without changing the font size or layout is to increase or decrease the space between each line and each letter.

To adjust line spacing:

Select the text you'd like to adjust. On the "Home" tab, in the "Paragraph" group, click "Line Spacing" and choose "Line Spacing Options." In the Paragraph dialog box's "Spacing" section, click the "Line Spacing" dropdown list and choose "Exactly." In the "At" text box, adjust the value accordingly. Click "OK" to save your changes.

To adjust character spacing:

Select the text you want to change. Then, on the "Home" tab, find and click the "Font" button." Choose "Character Spacing Options" from the dropdown menu. Adjust spacing as needed.

5. Add images.

Great visual cues can have a huge impact on how well your audience understands your message. Using gorgeous images in a slide presentation is the perfect way to keep things interesting.

It's important, though, that you don't use images to decorate. This is a very common mistake. Remember: Images are meant to reinforce or complement your message, but they can be distracting. Focus on finding high resolution images so that they look good when expanded without becoming blurry or distorted.

If you don't have your own images to use, check out our roundup of the 17 best free stock photo sites.

Pro Tip: If you're finding that the background of an image is distracting, you can actually remove it before putting it into your presentation directly inside PowerPoint -- no Photoshop required. Read this blog post for instructions.

6. Use multimedia, but sparingly.

Using multimedia in your presentation, like video and audio, can be an effective way to capture your audience's attention and encourage retention of your message. In most cases, it's best to avoid using more than one or two video or audio clips so you don't detract from your talk or your message.

PowerPoint lets you either link to video/audio files externally, or embed the media directly in your presentation. You should embed these files if you can, but if you use a Mac, you cannot actually embed the video. We'll get to that in a second.

PC users: Here are two great reasons to embed your multimedia:

1. Embedding allows you to play media directly in your presentation. It'll look much more professional than switching between windows.
2. Embedding also means that the file stays within the PowerPoint presentation, so it should play normally without extra work (except on a Mac).

Mac users: You need to be extra careful about using multimedia files. You'll always need to bring the video and/or audio file with you in the same folder as the PowerPoint presentation. It's best to only insert video or audio files once the presentation and the containing folder have been saved on a portable drive in their permanent folder. You can also record voiceovers for your presentation or hire a voice actor through Voice123.

If your presentation is going to be played on a Windows computer, then Mac users need to make sure their multimedia files are in WMV format. That can get complicated, so if you want to use PowerPoint effectively, consider using the same operating system for designing and presenting no matter what (if that's something you can control).

7. Design your title slide.

The title of your presentation is often the first impression it gives off -- especially if it's going to be on display as people file in to your presentation -- so it's important to put some time and careful thought into its design.

8. Add any consistent elements, like your company logo.

There's a reason this is at the end. If you add things like your logo that you want to be in the same place on every slide, any adjustments you make to individual slides could slightly alter the alignment ... and you'll have to go back and adjust them all over again.

Preparing For the Presentation

1. Review and edit your slides.

Spend some time on your own flipping through your slides while practicing your talk. Make sure you can check all of the following off the list:

- Your slides flow well and align with your talk.
- Your slides are free of all grammatical, formatting, or design errors.
- Your multimedia files work.
- You've double-checked any mathematical calculations you made yourself.
- You've properly attributed any statistics, data, quotes, ideas, etc. to the original source.
- You've double-checked you're actually allowed to use the photos/images you used. (Don't skip this step. Here's a cautionary tale about internet copyright law.)
- You're sure nothing in your presentation could potentially harm any of your partners, stakeholders, audience members, or your company.
- You've checked with a friend that nothing in your presentation might offend certain people in your audience -- or, if so, that it's worth it.

2. Know your slides inside out.

The best presenters don't read off your slides, so it's important to prepare and practice your presentation ahead of time. You never want to be the person finalizing your talk or presentation half an hour before an event ... that's just poor planning. Plus, what if the projector fails and you have to give your talk without slides? It can happen, and if does, you'll be incredibly happy you spent so much time preparing.

3. Practice using "presenter view."

Depending on the venue, you might have a presenter's screen available to you in addition to the main projected display that your audience can see. PowerPoint has a great tool called "Presenter View," which includes an area for notes, a timer/clock, a presentation display, and a preview of the next slide.

Make sure "Presenter View" is turned on by selecting it in the "Slide Show" tab of your PowerPoint.

To practice using "Presenter View," open the "Slide Show" tab within PowerPoint. In the "Presenter Tools" box, click "Presenter View."

4. Bring your own laptop and a backup copy of your presentation.

This isn't just a bonus step -- it's an essential one. Technology can mess up on you, and you need to be prepared. Between operating systems or even between different versions of Microsoft Office, PowerPoint can get a little wonky. One way to avoid problems is to ensure you have all the right hardware with you. Bring along your own laptop when you're presenting, just in case.

Even if you bring your laptop, but especially if you for some reason cannot, bring a backup copy of your PowerPoint file on a flash drive.

Let’s Sum Up

A PowerPoint presentation for a meeting is a powerful tool to convey information clearly, keep the audience engaged, and support effective communication on complex topics. Well-structured slides help presenters organize their thoughts, highlight key points, and provide visual aids that enhance understanding. For an effective meeting presentation, slides should be clear, concise, and focused, using bullet points, graphs, images, and infographics to illustrate data or concepts rather than overwhelming attendees with text. Presenters can use transitions, animations, and consistent formatting to create a cohesive flow that complements the narrative, making it easier for the audience to follow along and retain information. Additionally, a PowerPoint presentation serves as a reference point for discussions, helping to keep the meeting on track by covering agenda items systematically. With the right balance of visuals and content, a PowerPoint presentation can improve audience engagement, support collaborative discussions, and facilitate better decision-making during the meeting.

Show empathy

Showing empathy means having the capacity to understand and to be aware of and sensitive to the feelings, thoughts and experiences of others specially those who come to you with a complaint. If you can give the complainer that you empathize with him or her saying things like " yes you are right this is frustrating .." , " If I were in your place, I certainly would have felt bad.."

Listen carefully and be courteous at all times

Try to really put yourself in the complainer's shoes , you will see some real sense of why they are upset and then you can really genuinely help them instead of resisting any complaint immediately.

Ask a lot of questions

To uncover the whole situation and make sure to find out exactly what the complainer wishes to see changed and how is the situation resolved from his/her point of view.

Promise less and deliver more

Be direct and do not make promises you cannot keep, if there is nothing you can do you better let the person know upfront. It may be disappointing to the complainer now but it is better than just postponing the problem and getting the person more angry next time.

See if you can get the complainer to do something constructive on his/her own towards resolving the problem

Think well before you agree with the complainer, lets face it not all complains you will get are legitimate, people complain for all sorts of different reasons. Sometimes people complain just cause they feel like it. Those are known as professional complainers who do this for a living and make money out of compensations. so think well and make sure the complaint is legit.

Silence may not be golden while handling a complaint.

Saying nothing may imply agreement, which could compound the problem later. If you disagree, say so tactfully.

Let's Sum Up

Complaint handling etiquette is essential for managing customer grievances effectively and maintaining a positive relationship, even in challenging situations. Handling complaints with empathy, patience, and professionalism helps to build trust and demonstrate a genuine commitment to customer satisfaction. A polite and attentive demeanor, combined with active listening, shows the complainant that their concerns are being taken seriously. It's important to acknowledge the issue, apologize sincerely if warranted, and avoid defensive responses, which can escalate tensions. Clear and constructive communication is key, as it allows both parties to focus on solutions rather than on the problem itself. A well-mannered approach to handling complaints also includes timely follow-up to ensure the resolution meets the customer's needs and expectations. By following these etiquette principles, businesses not only address immediate concerns but also strengthen customer loyalty and enhance their reputation for responsive service.

BUSINESS ENTERTAINING

As you flit from a power breakfast to a power lunch, from a cocktail party to a 5-course, sit-down dinner, besides your business skills, your dining skills too are on display. People notice everything! Regardless of your academic background or intellectual ability, your table manners are important as they throw the spotlight on you and your ability to project yourself confidently. One of my best clients was a senior Indian professional working for an international consumer products firm. During his stay in India, I helped him upgrade his business entertaining and mingling skills. A couple of years later, he was invited for a 7-course, sit-down meal by his boss and courtesy the skills he had learnt, he was confidently ordering the food and the wine while concentrating on his boss's conversation, while his colleagues were fumbling with the knives and forks, unable to give their 100 per cent to the business conversation. That's the essence of business entertaining—it's not about the knives and forks, it's about managing the food and the beverages confidently while focusing on the business at hand and furthering your career!

Host Etiquette

Frequently in business we say, 'let's catch up over lunch' to an associate or a client. A business meal sounds casual but there are several skills, besides your dining skills, which are on display. Following are a few tips that you should keep in mind when entertaining for business:

Know your guest's taste: Some people prefer 4-course meals in upmarket restaurants, while others are happier with a quick sandwich in a coffee shop or a deli**.** Ask your guest for their preference of food—the best seafood restaurant in Delhi is of little use to your guest who is either a vegetarian or is allergic to prawn!

Choice of restaurant: Know your restaurant by referring to reliable sources. Some restaurants target business persons while others target families. Ideal business restaurants are those where the seating is in

discreet booths, making it difficult for the other patrons to either see or hear your conversation.

Choice of table: The restaurant you have chosen maybe the best in the city, the food may be divine but you end up being seated with an important client right next to the buffet counter! There is no way you can discuss any business in the chaos—a wrong table can be a dealbreaker.

Ask for your table when making the reservation, mention that you want privacy.

Reach on time: Reaching late is unacceptable as it's expected that as a host, you will reach the restaurant a few minutes before the appointed time. Use this time to secure your table and wait for your guest(s) to arrive. You can either wait in the foyer or the lobby area or you can sit at

your table, leaving a message with the front desk to show your guest(s) to your table. To avoid confusion about time and place, always follow up a verbal invite with an email.

You should not eat/drink before your guests arrive: If your guest(s) are running late, wait for them to arrive before you order any food/drink. It's a pleasant visual to see a well laid-out table instead of half- onsumed food scattered around it.

'No show': If your guest is already 10 minutes late, send them a polite SMS, stating that you are looking forward to seeing them soon. If there is no response, wait another 10 minutes before calling them on their mobile phone to enquire if they are on the way. If your guest does not respond to your SMS or your call and already 30 minutes have lapsed, leave the restaurant and send them a polite email from your office.

Stick to the budget: Ensure that you stay within the limits of your expense account. Order the food and wine yourself—the current corporate scandals on overspending show the risks of being irresponsible with money.

Food arrives at different times: As a host, encourage your guests to start eating before their food gets cold. In a formal dinner, it's your job to signal to your guests to start eating.

Business talk: The appropriate time to talk about business is dependent on culture. In the US, it's after ordering the drinks and starters, while in Europe you wait till the host raises the toast. When in doubt, follow your instinct and take cues from those around you. Generally, breakfasts and lunches are considered business meals where you launch into business talk quicker than during dinners which are 'socio-business' meals.

Alcohol/teetotalers: Unlike the 1960s when it was fashionable to knock down a couple of gin and tonics for Dining and Entertaining Finesse a business lunch, today several companies have a strict 'no alcohol' policy for lunches. However, if your guest decides to order a martini, you cannot refuse them. If you are a teetotaler, during business dinners do insist that your guests enjoy their drink.

Rudeness to the wait staff: An ideal way to embarrass everyone! While it's acceptable to ask the wait staff questions about the menu, do not create a scene. If you need to send the food back, call the manager and politely explain to him/her your reason for doing so. Beckon the waiter by

making eye contact or briefly raising your hand. Business deals may go haywire after a potential client sees your shabby treatment of the wait staff.

Who pays? As a rule, the one who invites pays. Generally, clients do not pay. If you need somebody's advice or their business, you pay for the meal. Splitting the cheque works well with colleagues and peers but not with clients/investors/external consultants. However, never fight over the bill if someone insists on paying as you can always return the favour by picking up the tab the next time.

Settle the bill smoothly: Walk over to the restaurant manager and hand over your credit card to him/her. This is best done either before your guests arrive or during the dessert course. Instruct the restaurant staff to send the bill for signing and checking. The act of pulling out a credit card

while your guests are looking and creating confusion regarding who should pay can be thus eliminated.

End elegantly: End the meal with a firm handshake and a warm 'thank you'. Send a note to your client thanking them for taking the time out for a meal with you. This note can be used effectively to highlight your discussions during the meal.

Guest Etiquette

If your host has invited you out for a meal, you are expected to take your manners along with you. Although common sense dictates that you should not do anything to annoy your host, taking care of these important points will ensure that you are invited again:

Special diets—vegetarians/allergies: If you are a vegetarian or have serious food allergies, the time to inform your host is when they invite you and not when you sit-down to order, as certain restaurants (like steak houses, sea-food restaurants) across the world do not have a vegetarian selection and this may embarrass your host, who will have to make last minute changes to take care of you.

Punctuality: Reach at the appointed time. If you wish to cancel a business meal appointment, call personally, a day in advance, explaining your reason for doing so and offer to reschedule it at a later date.

Sitting down: Wait till your host either invites you to sit or they sit down themselves.

Waiting for the host: Let the host take the lead on the number of courses to be ordered and wait for them to ask you for your order. Do not ask the host about the price of the meal or the wine.

Teetotalers: If you don't drink alcohol, share this information when you are seated at the table. Order a soft drink and take part in the revelry.

Drinking alcohol: In some cultures (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese), drinking after work is an integral part of doing business. How much should you drink? While one drink per hour is the legal limit, do marry it with your personal capacity before arriving at your own personal formula. Under no circumstances should you get drunk.

Order medium-priced dishes: Order dishes like chicken, fish and not top-end ones like tiger prawns, crabs, lobsters, and so on. Leave the selection of wine to your host. If asked to choose, choose a mid-priced wine.

Extra person: Do not take an extra person (spouse, friend or child) with you, unless you have already requested permission. Ask for permission only in an emergency situation. It's better to reschedule the meal for another day if you are busy taking care of a friend or a guest.

When should I start eating? While entertaining, if there are 4 or less persons at your table, wait till everyone is served before you start eating. If you are seated at a long table with many people, you can start eating as soon as you are served. In a formal meal, the host will signal when to start the meal.

Politeness to the wait staff: Say the golden words 'please' and 'thank you' to the wait staff while they are serving you. If the food is pre-ordered and not to your liking, politely pretend to eat and don't pass any untoward comments about the place or the food.

Conversation: Talk to everyone at the table, not just the ones you already know.

End gracefully: Thank your host verbally after the meal and follow it up with a thank you email, phone call or note.

Let's Sum Up

Business entertaining is a valuable practice for building relationships, fostering trust, and creating rapport outside of the traditional office setting. Whether it's a meal, a sporting event, or a cultural outing, business entertaining provides an opportunity to connect on a personal level, making conversations more relaxed and open. It's an ideal way to strengthen existing relationships, celebrate milestones, or establish new connections with clients, partners, or colleagues. Successful business entertaining requires a thoughtful approach—selecting a suitable venue, being mindful of cultural or dietary preferences, and maintaining a balance between professional topics and casual conversation. While the atmosphere may be less formal, professionalism should still be upheld, with attention to punctuality, courtesy, and attentiveness. Done well, business entertaining can leave a lasting positive impression, build goodwill, and lay the foundation for more collaborative and productive partnerships in the future.

BUSINESS MEALS

Business meals come at all times of the day—breakfast, lunch, dinner, morning coffee, afternoon tea, a nightcap. As business has become 24 × 7, you choose the meal that best suits your client's time schedule. Clearly, breakfasts are for quick business discussions, lunches are the best for networking, while dinners are more relaxed and leisurely.

Power Breakfast

Breakfast meetings are ideal to conduct urgent business, to review an event happening on the same day or to meet with someone who doesn't have time for lunch or dinner. Your client (internal or external) can invite you for a power breakfast but you shouldn't invite them as it requires commitment of their personal time early in the morning.

As the host, make reservations; familiarize yourself with the menu or the buffet options and the pricing. Alternately, reach a bit early, securing a table which is at a safe distance from the buffet or the busy live-cooking counter. Schedule 45 minutes to an hour for this meal and ensure that the meeting ends on time. As this is a short business meal, it is imperative to reach on time for these meetings. And obviously, no alcohol or smoking!

Breakfast options: Breakfasts maybe ordered from the elaborate breakfast buffets, as set up by most hotel coffee shops or you can order a-la-carte.

A-la-carte or buffet? I recommend the a-la-carte breakfast over the lavish buffet, as it prevents your business associate and you from having to make frequent trips to the buffet counter, saving precious business time. Instead, wait to be served at the table and utilize every minute of this short business meal productively.

When should I start discussing business? After both of you have either some food or a drink in front of you—till then keep to small talk.

Ordering food: If you are trying to create an impact while conducting business conversation, it is best to eat foods that don't distract you with the complexities of eating them. Order foods which are easy to eat with a knife and fork; opt for venues which offer efficient service.

1. **Western:** If you want a Western breakfast, order cut fruit, cereal and milk, pancake, omelette, sausages, cheese and crackers, waffles, toast, cold-cuts.
2. **Indian:** Ask for idli and sambhar, upma, poha, yogurt, lassi, cutlets.
3. **Avoid** puri-bhaji, chole–bhatura, big masala-dosa and aloo-paratha—they can be messy and you will have to use your fingers. Keep these delicious Indian brunch foods for family outings.

The Business Lunch

Commonly referred to as 'power lunch' it can be best defined as a working lunch with important business associates, where eating is accompanied with decision making. Lunch is the ideal time to entertain clients, investors or other business associates and to establish new business contacts during the work day. However, breaching etiquette rules can leave a lasting bad impression, which may be difficult to erase in the long run. Remember:

Courses: Typically a 2–3-course meal.

Ordering food: If you are entertaining in an Indian restaurant, order a starter, a main course and dessert. If you are in a specialty 'tandoori' food joint, go straight for the kebabs, skipping starters like soup, which take additional time. In a café or an upper-end deli, order a soup or a salad, followed by a light main course and dessert or coffee.

Duration of a business lunch: Allow between an hour to 90 minutes. To get maximum benefit from such a meal, choose a venue that doesn’t rush you through your meal.

Should I drink alcohol? Several companies have a strict policy that discourages employees from drinking alcoholic beverages for day-time meetings. Do ask your guest, ‘What would you like to drink?’ If they ask for an alcohol-based drink, order one for them but refrain from ordering one for yourself.

When do we start discussing business? Start discussing business only after your guest and you have been served an appetizer and a drink.

The Business Dinner

Dinners are excellent for cementing existing relationships or for special occasions. They are longer meals, spouses are often invited and alcohol is served —leading to these meals being much more expensive than lunches. As these meals are outside the working hours, they are more about getting to know your business associate and enjoying their company and conversation and less about discussing business.

Courses: Dinners are longer and more expensive meals, with a minimum 3–4 courses—a starter or soup, a main course and a dessert, with alcohol/wine. The host should be familiar with the restaurant wine list or have a few favourites in each price category and not rely on the waiter’s recommendation.

Venue: Choose the venue wisely to suit the occasion and your budget. A place where you are a frequent customer is invaluable in ensuring priority service.

How long should a dinner last? Typically business dinners last 2–3 hours.

When do we start discussing business? Discuss general topics only until the drinks and starters are served. At times, it may be best to delay business conversation till the starters are finished.

The Business Tea

A sophisticated way to meet a client or conduct a business meeting, this business meal allows you to spend the first half of your work day in the office. Being a shorter meal (maximum 1 hour), you spend less time away from work and can entertain on a smaller budget. Tea serves as an ideal ice-breaker for a first meeting. In India we use this a lot at the social level—most arranged marriage meetings between families are over afternoon tea! Also, discussing a project/proposal over tea stands out as unique and therefore memorable, compared to the traditional business meals like lunch or dinner.

Afternoon Tea vs High Tea

Afternoon tea is served in the late afternoon, between 3.00 p.m and 5.30 p.m. High tea, or ‘meat tea’ as served in the UK, is usually around 6.00 in the evening and includes meat/fish/cheese, etc.

Pouring tea: Fill three-fourth of the cup with tea, leaving room for milk or lemon and sugar. Use your fingers to squeeze the juice from the wedge of a lemon. Place the used wedge on the side of your saucer/plate provided. It is one wedge per person. If you are adding milk, check the strength of the tea first.

Holding a tea cup and sipping: If standing/seated away from a table, pick up the delicate china cup with the saucer. If seated at the table, leave the saucer on the table. Swirling the vessel bowl creates an impact when sipping wine but not when sipping tea! Tea should not be used to wash down food—either drink or eat. Never drink from saucer or pour back from the saucer into the cup. Place the spoon on the saucer, not upright in the cup or on the tablecloth.

Stirring tea: Stir gently, avoiding the loud clinking of the spoon against the sides of the tea cup. Stir towards the centre of the cup—this prevents the noise.

Sugar tongs/tea bags: After transferring the sugar cubes, replace the tongs either beside the sugar bowl or over its handle. Rest the tea bag in the hot water for a few minutes and monitor the colour of the tea. Discard the tea bag on the service plate at the table. Never keep it on your saucer, as it will continue to leak, dripping every time you lift the cup.

Western accompaniments: Traditionally these accompaniments consist of scones with jam and Devonshire cream, tiny tea sandwiches and cookies/shortbread/cakes.

Indian accompaniments: Samosas, pakoras, biscuits and several other sweet/savoury accompaniments, specific to each part of the country.

When do you discuss business? Wait till everyone at your table has been poured tea/coffee.

Taboos at the afternoon tea: No alcohol: tea is the beverage here.

No smoking: Tea absorbs smoke, spoiling its flavour.

Business Buffets

Buffets (pronounced 'bufeis') are extremely popular in India as they're costeffective and are a quick way to serve meals to large numbers. As they are a volume service, it's unfair to compare the service or food quality of a buffet with the luxurious fine dining experience. Although buffets appear like a 'free-forall', a few etiquette rules still apply:

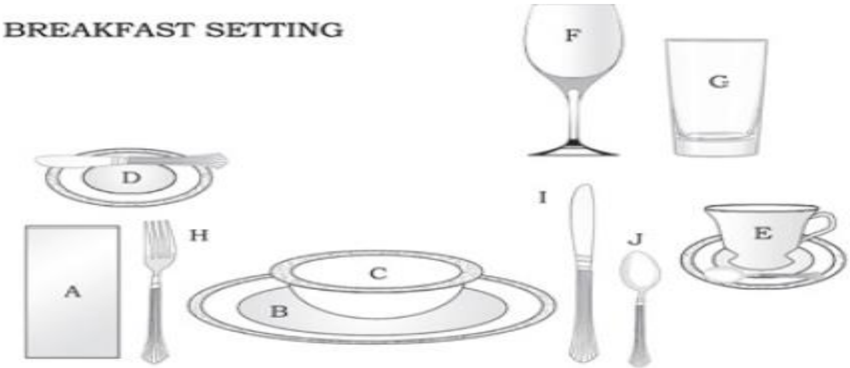
- While queues are annoying, wait patiently for your turn, instead of trying to break into the queue.
- Wait for the food to be replenished, instead of scraping the bowls.
- Eating while waiting or serving is not ideal. Resist the urge to pop that yummy tikka directly into your mouth, no matter how tempting it looks.
- While standing in the queue, don't complain about the food/the long wait/the caterer, as it's impolite to the host. Instead use this time to network or chat with the others waiting with you.
- Use the serving utensil/tongs to serve yourself and replace them on the holder or back in the dish. Avoid accidents and spillages by bringing your plate close to the serving dish.
- When deciding what to eat, don't sniff the food; instead take a small amount and if you like it, pile on more. As a rule, take what you touch on the buffet counter.
- Don't overload your plate. Exercise choice and serve limited portions ofselect dishes, ensuring that the food is cleanly arranged on your plate and presents a neat picture. No requests for doggy-bags please!

- To prevent food contamination, either leave the line while coughing/sneezing or move your face way from the counter and sneeze/cough into a tissue.
- The buffet staff work hard to ensure that all dishes are replenished quickly and need to be thanked if they serve you or take care of any special requests from you. In a paid-for buffet at a restaurant, waiters serve the drinks, bring certain hot foods to the table and take care of clearance every time you make another trip to the buffet. 5 per cent of the total bill is a good tip, which will be shared between the wait staff.
- Choose fuss-free foods like rice and pasta over bread and roti as they can be eaten using a fork and don't require the use of fingers. Small, boneless pieces of meat are easier to eat than tearing the meat away from the bone while holding the plate in one hand and no knife in the other. Lettuce, cherry tomatoes, olives with pits, big chunks of fruit/vegetables are best avoided as they can be rather unwieldy, especially if you're standing while eating.

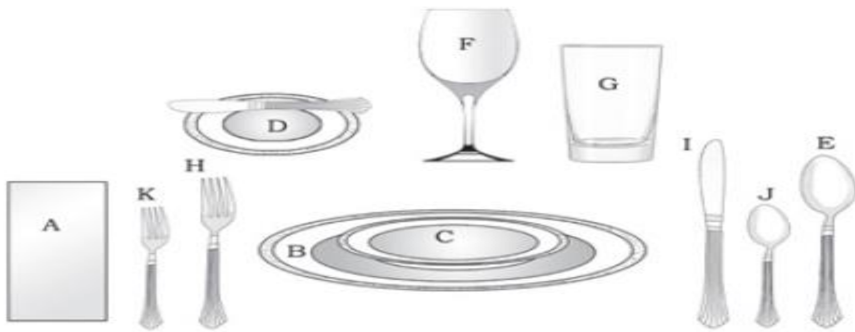
UNDERSTANDING TABLE SETTINGS

There's Oscar Wilde's famous line: 'The world was my oyster, but I used the wrong fork!' In a formal meal, when you take your seat at the table, you will notice that several knives, forks, plates, glasses and a napkin are already placed there before you. A lot of people get foxed seeing this line up. Relax! There are rules governing the placement of each of these items and the rules are easy to understand.

BREAKFAST SETTING



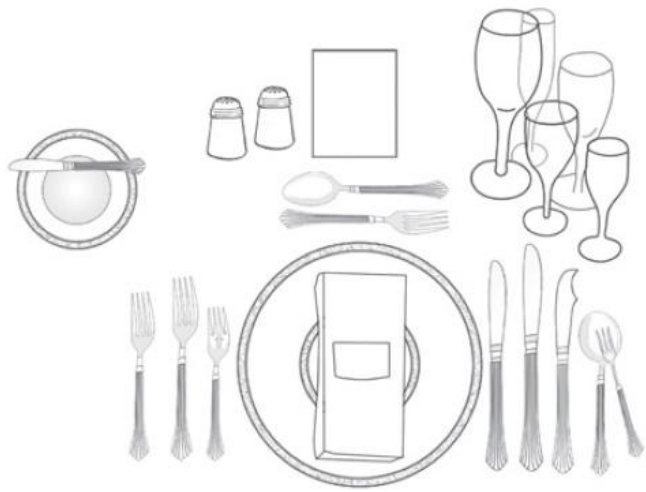
INFORMAL/COFFEE SHOP SETTING



Napkin Etiquette

Why does a napkin exist? Is it an adult bib, to save your clothes from getting stained or soiled—a fabric protector? Is it to wipe your hands and face? Can you put it to multiple uses like blowing your nose, wiping the sweat off your face, and so on? Can you wipe your orange-coloured fingers (courtesy the yummy tandoori chicken you just relished) on the starched white napkin?

FORMAL PLACE SETTING



A napkin is provided to dab the corners of your mouth. While eating, food particles accumulate at the corners and if you take a sip of water or wine, you run the risk of transferring these particles to your drink. The best napkins in the world are made of damask cotton, which takes its name from the Syrian city of Damascus. Formal dinners require the host to unfold the napkin, serving as a cue for the guests to do likewise. In informal or casual meals, wait till everybody is seated before picking up your napkin.

Opening the folds of a napkin: Dinner napkins are large squares, in complicated folds and placed on the table. Discreetly open them into a half and place them on your lap. You will notice that the restaurant wait staff open napkins into a triangle with a flourish. However, if you are doing this yourself, open the napkin to a rectangle as it's faster and more

discreet. Small tea napkins are opened full.

When finished with the meal: Just before getting up from the table, fold the napkin into half and place it on the table. This is an indication to the wait staff that you have finished your meal.

Emergency use: In case you spill something on yourself, on your fellow diners or on the table, use your napkin to block the spill. Hand over the soiled napkin to the wait staff and ask for a fresh one.

Flatware/Silverware/Cutlery

There are two simple rules regarding silverware:

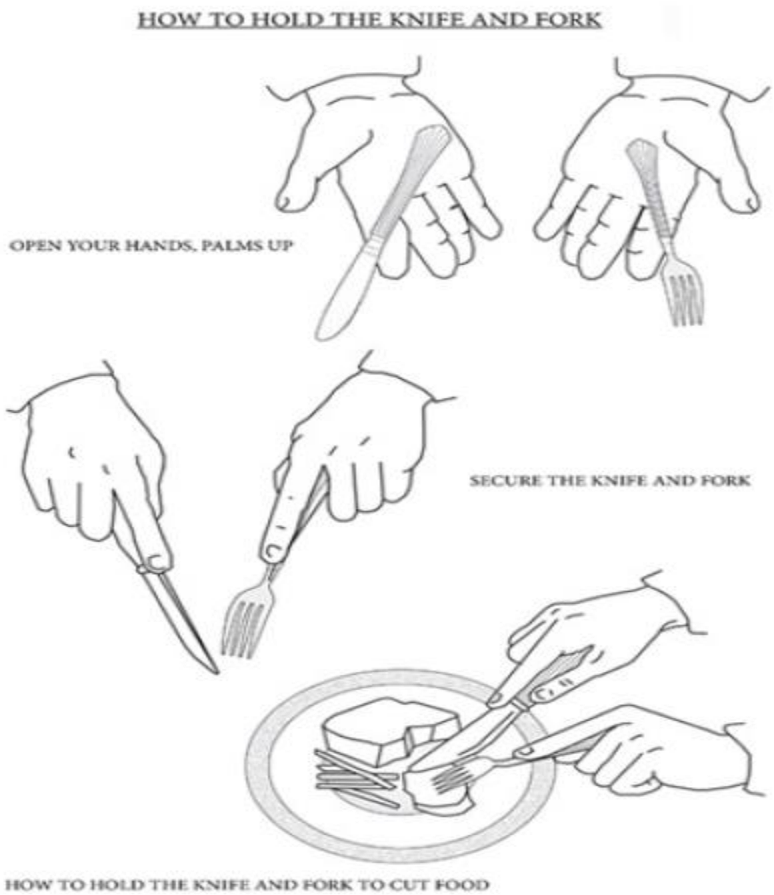
1. All forks stay on the left and all knives and spoons stay on the right. All utensils (usually a spoon and a fork) lying on top of your main plate are for dessert. There are no extras. An exception is the oyster/cocktail forks, which are placed on the right-hand side of the bowl in a spoon.

2. Use your silverware from outside to inside. Start with the outermost fork, knife or spoon. Example, soup spoon on the extreme right outside means soup is the first course. If the next in the line is a salad fork and knife, salad will be served next—it's like reading a road map.

Course and Cutlery

It helps to know the silverware corresponding to each course in the meal. So check the following list:

Course	Silverware
⇨ Soup	Soup spoon
⇨ Starter	Small knife and fork
⇨ Salad	Salad knife and fork
⇨ Fish	Fish knife and fork
⇨ Main course (largest portion)	Main knife and fork
⇨ Dessert	Spoon and fork



Plates

For formal events, you will notice a bread plate on your left and an ornate service plate at the centre. The bread plate remains on your table till the dessert course while the service plate gets replaced by the starter or the salad plate. In an informal setting, only the bread plate is set up on your table and based on the dish you order, the waiter brings the plate.

THE COURSES OF A MEAL

Our dining skills are on display when we sit down for a business meal. Knowing the courses and understanding the basics of dining finesse are essential to create a great impression.

Courses in a Meal

Continental food moves from course to course, in a pre-fixed manner. The French classical menu has 13 courses starting with appetizer and ending with coffee, including fish, salad, sorbet, dessert, fruit and cheese, with several others in between. Today, we commonly encounter 3–6 course meals, depending on the time of the day and the occasion. Typically, lunch has a starter or a soup, the main course and either dessert or coffee. Dinners are longer meals which include a starter, a soup, a main course, dessert and coffee or a nightcap (liqueur, Cognac, Irish coffee, etc.)

Starters/Hors d'oeuvres

These are bite-size pieces of well-garnished food which serve as appetizers—that is, stimulate the appetite for the heavier courses to follow. Aperitifs are drinks which are consumed before a meal. Starters are served on small plates and are eaten using the small fork placed on the right side of the mat (an exception to the 'all forks go on the left' rule). In formal continental meals, seafood cocktails, canapés, cheese and cold cuts are served as starters. In a formal Indian meal, items like pakoras, cocktail samosas,chaat items are served in a similar style and are eaten using a small fork (at times, a small spoon). In a cocktail party, starters are served as food and they are not followed by the main course/formal dinner.

Soup

Thin soups (like the Japanese miso, broth or clear soups) are served in cups, like tea/coffee and are consumed by holding the bowl in your hand. The vegetables/noodles in the thin soups are eaten using a spoon. Thick soups are served in bowls, with or without handles and are eaten using the soup spoon provided.

At formal dinners, the soup course is served in flat soup plates (wide-rimmed shallow bowl), placed on an under plate. Take a couple of sips to gauge the taste and the temperature before loading the soup with condiments. Holding the soup spoon in your right hand (left-handed persons can use their left hand), spoon the soup away from you, that is, towards the outer rim of the dish. This prevents any hot soup from dripping on you or on the table. Sip noiselessly from the side of the spoon. Dunking bread in the soup is a complete no-no! Either drink the soup or eat the bread but not simultaneously. Place the soup spoon in the bowl between sips.

When finished place the spoon on the under plate.

Fish Course

Fish is served before the heavier meats like poultry and red meats. Flat fish on the bone is eaten using the fish knife (hold delicately like a pencil, using the broad blade to lift the flesh off the bones) and fish fork. Boneless fish needs the fish knife only for cutting it into smaller pieces.

Salad

Salad is served either before (USA) or after the main course (France). It is used as a course to cleanse the palate and aid digestion. Salads are a blend of greens, cheeses and vegetables, topped with dressing. The smaller salad knife and fork are used for eating salads. Lettuce is a nightmare for most people. If the lettuce is chopped into smaller pieces, scoop it with your fork; if the leaves are larger, use the fork with the support of your knife to hold down a leaf and to fold it, making small bundles before transferring them to your mouth. Be careful with cherry tomatoes as they squirt—using a knife and fork, cut them carefully into halves.

Main Course

This is the main part of the meal, composed of rich meats and gravies, accompanied with vegetables and full-bodied wines. Main course is eaten using the all-purpose knife and fork.

Cheese

This course was an integral part of the French classical menu and has found its way back into fine dining restaurants across the world. Cheese and wine is the classic combination.

Dessert

Hot or cold sweetened dishes/fruit are served as dessert, which are eaten using the dessert spoon and fork. The flatware is placed at the top of the main plate, lies horizontal throughout the meal and is brought down before serving dessert. Also, the bread crumbs are brushed off the table, and the bread basket and plate and butter dish are removed. Sweetened dessert wines are served with this course.

Sorbet

They are delicately flavoured frozen desserts, made with crushed ice. They are served as cleansers between courses, to rinse and refresh the palate for the next course.

Coffee/Tea

The classic coffee is served in the French demitasse or placed in a pot. Tea is served in a pot and you are expected to pour for yourself. Do not dunk the French petit fours secs (decorated pieces of cake, fruit, chocolates) or the Italian biscotti into your cup of tea or coffee.

Eating Tricky Foods

Some foods are tricky, making the entire experience of eating them while trying to conduct conversation with an important client into a nightmare. A few guidelines to handle difficult-to-eat foods in a formal setting:

Asparagus: Although finger foods, in formal dinners, use a knife and a fork. In a casual setting, using your fingers hold sauced asparagus over the serving platter, to drain off the excess butter sauce.

Avocado: Served as two halves, pitted and stuffed, use a small spoon to eat the flesh.

Barbequed meats: If served in a casual setting, eat the smaller portions like ribs and hot dogs as finger foods. Use a steak knife and fork for large pieces of steaks/chicken/fish. In a formal setting, use knife and fork.

Caviar: Served in a bowl, on a bed of crushed ice. The traditional accompaniments for caviar are chopped shallots and chopped hard-boiled eggs. Using the accompanying spoon, serve a very small portion on your plate. Using the fish knife provided, transfer a tiny bit to the triangular toast and eat using your fingers.

Eggs: Break the soft-boiled egg shell with a spoon, shell the top and eat with a small spoon. Omelettes are cut using the sides of the fork.

Fruit: Stewed fruit are eaten using a spoon. For fresh fruit, using the knife and fork cut the larger pieces into smaller sections or quarters. Fruit like apricots, cherries, strawberries and plums are eaten using your fingers. To remove the pit from your mouth, cup your mouth with your hand and push the pit into your fingers, discreetly transferring to the side of your plate.

Green peas: Use your knife to push them on to your fork. Also, you can flatten them by applying pressure with the tines of the fork.

Olives: Use the olive fork to transfer the olives from the relish tray to your plate. Olives are finger food and pits are removed using your hand.

Pasta: Use the side of your fork to cut macaroni, cannelloni or penne. Roll the spaghetti around the fork and eat it without any sucking sounds.

Pizza/french fries: In a fast-food restaurant, these foods can be eaten using your fingers. However, in a fine dining establishment, use knife and fork to cut them into bite-sized pieces.

Sandwiches: Cut into halves or quarters, pick them up with both your hands and eat. Open sandwiches are eaten with a knife and fork in a fine dining restaurant or with your hands in a fast-food joint. Any filling which has fallen on your plate is eaten with a fork.

Spaghetti: Using your spoon and fork, hold the fork vertically into this pasta, making contact with the bottom of the dish and twirl the fork until the strands form a neat cluster around the tines of the fork. Spoon will be provided instead of knife, as this dish has a thick sauce. Never order this dish when you want to create impact—it may get very tricky!

Snails: Hold the shell with snail pincers in one hand; use the snail fork to remove the flesh.

Tacos: Eat with your hands and use a fork for the filling that falls on the plate.

Tandoori chicken/kebabs/chicken tikka: As this is dry meat, in informal settings use your hands to pick up the meat and eat it. In formal settings, use knife and fork.

Let’s Sum Up

Business meals are an important part of professional culture, providing a more relaxed setting for discussing deals, building relationships, or simply getting to know clients and colleagues better. Unlike traditional office meetings, business meals allow conversations to flow more freely, fostering a sense of openness and camaraderie. Etiquette is crucial during these meals, as they balance the line between social and professional settings. This means being mindful of dining etiquette, such as ordering appropriately, avoiding overly messy foods, and respecting cultural or dietary restrictions. While light, non-business topics often start the conversation, experienced hosts know how to smoothly transition to business discussions when the timing feels natural. Active listening, showing genuine interest, and maintaining good manners contribute to a positive atmosphere.

ENTERTAINING IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Food is an important part of every culture and eating habits vary across the w orld. Interestingly, the setting of a continental meal remains essentially the same—forks on the left, knives and spoons on the right of the main course plate, bread plate on your extreme left and all glasses on your extreme right.

Dining across the World

In Asia, the styles of eating vary considerably:

Using forks in Russia

Using your fingers to eat from a common plate in the Middle East

Using your fingers in the Indian subcontinent

Using spoons and forks in Thailand

Using chopsticks in the Far East—varies across Japan, China, Vietnam and Korea

Interestingly, in Asian countries where people use their fingers to eat food, the left hand is considered dirty. Also, the knife is missing from most dinner tables across the continent as it's considered a show of aggression.

Here are a few points Indians should keep in mind while eating in an international setting: India is a paradise for vegetarian food and many Indians are strict vegetarians. Internationally, although the movement is picking up speed, a large percentage of the population continues to eat a heavy meat diet— China, Japan, USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa, the Middle East. Develop an open mind to the food habits of your business counterparts and don't criticize their food or try to enlighten them about the benefits of being a vegetarian.

Indians should experiment with international cuisines, offering themselves a chance to sample the different foods of the world. Instead, one often sees a bunch of Indian executives searching for Indian restaurants on the Internet! While other cuisines may not offer you rice/rotis and sabzi, they do have breads, salads, soups, tossed vegetables and local cheeses (plenty for vegetarians too).

In the US, three meals are consumed, lunch being the lightest, usually a cold sandwich/salad/soup. In Latin America and Spain/Portugal, lunch is consumed late (around 3.00 p.m.) and dinner is served later (10.00 p.m.).

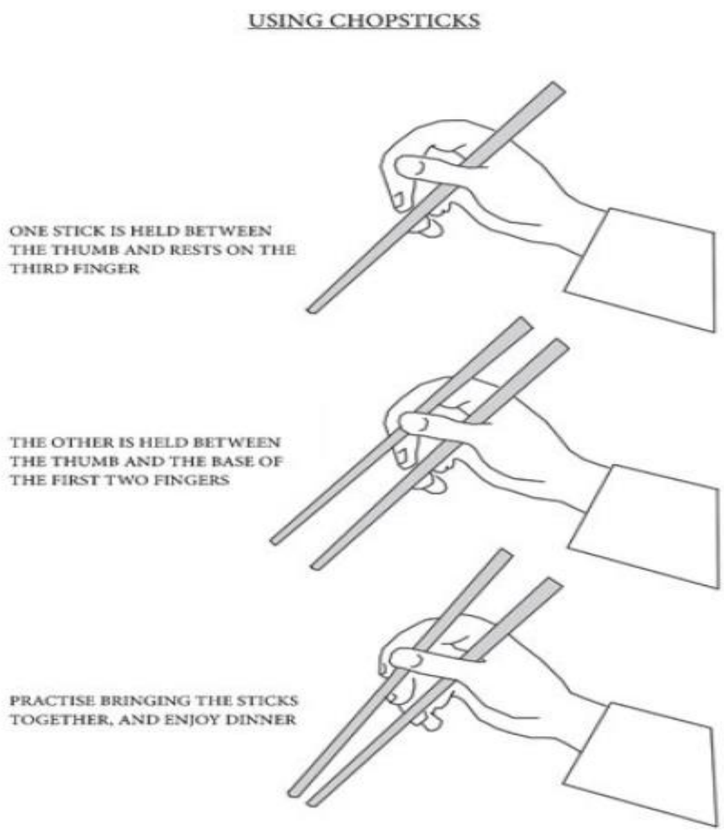
West Europeans eat dinner early, usually between 6.30 p.m. and 8.00 p.m.and lunch is called dinner in Scotland while dinner is called supper. Asians usually eat four hot meals starting with an early breakfast, a complete lunch, a light snack at tea time (4.00–6.00 p.m.) and a heavy dinner later in the evening (usually 9.00–10.30 p.m.). Alcohol consumption is dependent upon culture. In some cultures, it’s an integral part of business entertaining (like Russia and Korea) while in other cultures (like India) it is not linked to business entertaining. Also, it varies according to the time of the day. For example, in Australia, alcohol is discouraged at business luncheons but is acceptable at dinners. Drinking moderately at business lunches is acceptable in Germany; in Russia, you are expected to drink to establish closer relationships, though again, in moderation. In France, avoid drinking hard liquor before meals or smoking cigars between courses as the French feel it compromises the taste of the meal. In India, most people do not drink alcohol during business lunches. Rarely will you come across a person who orders a beer
or vodka-tonic with their lunch.

Chopsticks

Chopsticks are traditionally used for eating in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and a few other parts of East Asia. Traditionally held in the right hand, they are used very much like we Indians use our fingers. Rice (a special variety called ‘clumpy’ or ‘sticky’) and noodles are the staple food in these countries and are ideal for eating with chopsticks. Chopstick dos and don’ts:

Do use them only as a utensil to transfer food.

Do hold them closer to the thicker end.



Do use the chopstick stands to lay them down when not in use, with the pointed ends resting on the stands.

Don't stick them vertically in the bowl or place them parallel on top of the bowl—it is believed to bring bad luck.

Don't put them in your mouth or lick bits of food stuck to them.

Don't drop them, use them as drum sticks or toothpicks, wave them or point at people/things.

Don't dig them into the common dish, trying to choose your piece. If already used, use the opposite end to take food from the common dish.

Raising a Toast

Toasting in business is about bonding while celebrating! If done well, it gives due recognition to the deserving people and demonstrates elegance on your part.

Occasions for Toasting

Business presents several occasions for toasting:

- Signing a joint-venture
- Declaring good annual results
- Launching a new product
- Welcoming a new team member
- Retiring senior/colleague
- A visiting senior executive

Types of Toasts

There are two types of toasts, as discussed below:

Welcome toast: A less formal toast, offered before dinner by the host, who uses this as an opportunity to welcome everyone to the event. Say a few words (for example, 'I would like to thank all of you for taking the time out from your busy schedules to join us. Thank you! Cheers!') Followed by raising glasses.

Guest of honour toast: A formal toast, offered prior to dessert, when the host proposes the toast to the guest of honour. The guest of honour responds with a smile but doesn't drink to himself. This requires the host to prepare a crisp yet short speech prior to the event and to brush up on their toasting etiquette, as the spotlight is on the host.

Japanese Dining Etiquette

It has a rich culture centred on politeness, respect and graciousness (everything I love!). So when visiting Japan it's important for Westerners to understand basic etiquette and customs in order to avoid looking uneducated and perhaps being viewed as disrespectful. This is especially important when it comes to Japanese business relationships.

Although there are many different types of restaurants in Japan, if you're invited for a business dinner, it's more than likely you'll be invited to a traditional Japanese restaurant. Your host will want to proudly share with you their culture (post Covid obviously). Therefore as a respectful guest, you need to be aware of the basic rules of Japanese table manners. There are so many rules and customs when it comes to Japanese dining that a foreigner would never be expected to know them all. However, there are a few simple rules that you can bear in mind to be a refined guest in any Japanese establishment.

1. Wait to be seated. Your host will have prepared a seating plan. The guest of honour has an important place at the table and hierarchy is of the utmost importance in Japan.

2. Don't be surprised if you're expected to sit at a low table without chairs, instead sitting on a '*tatami*', a woven straw mat on the floor. You shouldn't sit with your legs out spread out directly in front of you under the table as this is too casual. Instead, men can sit cross-legged and women can sit with their legs modestly placed to one side. If your host adopts the more formal '*seiza*' position (legs tucked underneath body) then you should try to do the same.

3. Typically the host will offer a toast at the beginning of the meal. The correct etiquette when toasting is to raise your glass and say '*Kanpai*'. If you are the guest of honour then you must reciprocate, preferably immediately after the first toast.

4. After cleaning your hands with a wet towel, the host will say '*Itadakimasu*' (I greatly receive) before starting the meal. This is the standard way to express gratitude at the start of every meal. At the very least be sure to nod your head politely as an alternative form of gratitude.

5. If the chopsticks are in a paper wrapper, watch how your host will remove the paper and fold it horizontally in half and then tie it in a knot to create a chopstick rest before placing it at the right hand side of the plate. Now you can try it!

6. Other important points about chopsticks to be aware of - when sharing from a communal plate it is polite to turn your chopsticks round and use the blunt ends (the opposite end from which you eat) to take food from the shared dish. Don't pass the food from chopsticks to chopsticks – it's a very offensive gesture in Asian cultures and placing your chopsticks upright in a bowl of rice is also considered very rude.

7. A soup bowl may be lifted up (with both hands) from the table to your mouth so that you can avoid any spills.

8. As in Western cultures, it's polite to serve others a drink instead of yourself. The difference with Japanese etiquette is to not pour yourself a drink after you have finished pouring for others. Rather you should wait for someone else to pour your drink for you.

9. At the end of the meal everyone will say '*Gochisosama deshita* ' (thank you for the great meal). Remember for a foreigner, a nod or two of the head will suffice but the end of the meal must be acknowledged.

10. Where's dessert? Don't be surprised if there's no dessert after the meal. It's not typical in Japan to eat in the same manner that we do in the West. Something sweet may be served along with savoury foods however if you're lucky, your host will take you to a local dessert bar. Look out for the sweetened red beans with rice cake, served hot with a side dish of pickles for those who find it too sweet!

Let's Sum Up

Entertaining in international business is a valuable tool for building relationships, showing respect for different cultures, and setting the stage for successful partnerships. When working with international clients or colleagues, hosting meals, events, or outings allows for a more personal connection that transcends formal meeting rooms. However, cultural sensitivity is essential, as customs around hosting and entertaining vary significantly across regions. This may include considerations for greetings, gift-giving, appropriate topics of conversation, and even meal etiquette, such as dietary restrictions or traditional seating arrangements. Understanding and honoring these customs demonstrates respect, helps avoid misunderstandings, and reflects a commitment to the partnership. Effective international business entertaining is not about closing deals on the spot but about establishing rapport and building trust that can lead to long-term collaboration.

Self-Assessment Question

1. Explain about the board meeting protocol
2. What are all the criteria fixed for the board meeting?
3. Illustrate: Robert's rule of order
4. Tell about the Board meeting etiquettes
5. What steps have to follow for preparing the agenda?
6. Elaborate the guidelines in attending meeting separately for presenters and attendees

7. How could you start and end the powerful power point presentation and also explain its structure of design?
8. Explain the probability of handling the complaints
9. Brief out: Business meals
10. Examine your understanding of table etiquette
11. How Japanese Dining differs from our Indian Dining?

UNIT III

TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

UNIT SUMMARY

Cell phone Etiquette

Social Media Etiquette

Telephone Etiquette- Introduction

Meaning of Telephone Etiquette

Do's and Dont's in Telephone Etiquette

Guidelines for telephonic Calls

Telephone Etiquette Elements

Etiquette Tips in Workplace

Mastering the Telephone Courtesy

Transferring Calls

Placing Calls on Hold

Handling Voicemail

Taking Messages

Ending the Conversation

Screening Calls

Handling Rude/ Impatient Customers

Internet Etiquette

Email Etiquette

Online Chat Etiquette

Netiquette

General Rules for Netiquette

OBJECTIVE

- To emphasizing the importance of clarity in speaking, listening actively, and avoiding misunderstanding
- To Encouraging respectful language, tone, and behavior to make callers feel valued
- To ensure that calls reflect the organization's standards and values, fostering trust and credibility
- To handle calls promptly and keep conversations focused to respect of the people.

Cell Phone Etiquette

Learn to use your phone's features like silent ring, vibrate and voice mail to handle the times when your phone would be bothering others if it rang and you answered it. Be in control of your phone, don't let it control you.

July is National Cell Phone Courtesy Month.

- Speak softly
- Although it may be tempting, avoid texting during face-to-face conversations
- Be courteous to those you are with; turn off your phone if it will be interrupting a conversation or activity.
- If it must be on and it could bother others, use the "silent" mode and move away to talk.
- Watch your language, especially when others can overhear you.
- Avoid talking about personal or confidential topics in a public place.
- Speak in a soft tone when taking calls in public
- Don't make calls in a public place like library, theater, church, or from your table in a restaurant.
- Don't text during class or a meeting at your job.

- Don’t light up your screen in a dark theater
- Private info can be forwarded, so don’t text it.
- NEVER drive and use your phone at the same time.

Cell Phone Etiquette

Hidden Cell Phone

Whether you are attending an important business meeting, on a date, or in a casual setting with friends and family, keep your phone out of sight. Placing your phone on the table or desk sends the clear message that they are not your number-one priority. According to Forbes, 84% of working professionals believe texting or sending emails during a formal business meeting is highly unacceptable and rude.

Silent Smartphone

It’s polite and responsible to turn off your cell phone before meetings, meals, and meaningful moments. If you can’t turn your device off, turn it to silent or vibrate. Your phone is not a replacement for an in person meeting.

Exceptions There are exceptions to every rule:

- Doctors, nurses, first responders, and health providers
- Those expecting emergency calls
- Those who have an infant with a babysitter, or a person with a caregiver
- Those momentarily sharing photos with others
- Those researching an important request, such as directions.

Get Excuse

If accepting an emergency call, excuse yourself as quietly and calmly as possible from the gathering with an apology.

Consider Content Carefully

With cell phones, spontaneity can be contagious. Remember, once a text, tweet or post is sent, it’s live. Sure, you can delete it, but it’s out there on the Internet, just waiting to bite you back. According to a survey, 57% of Americans regret a text or social media post they’ve sent. So use common sense and don’t post inappropriate photos, or text while consuming adult beverages. Consider these tips when the urge strikes to send a spontaneous message:

• Step away from your phone, take a deep breath, and count to 30 to attempt to dissolve negative emotions towards the receiver

• Ask a friend to advise whether your content is appropriate Respond promptly When you miss a call, text, or email, respond in an appropriate and timely manner by apologizing for missing their message. Then respond with substance.

10-foot rule

When making or taking a call, move 10 feet away from the building including windows. No one wants to see you nervously pacing or gesturing during your conversation. Step outside when responding to a call while in a house of worship, medical office, library, theatre, or hospital. Refrain from confidential conversations on planes, trains, and automobiles.

Don’t Talk & Drive

Many cities now ban Smartphone use while driving. If you must use the phone, drive to a safe area away from traffic. New vehicle technology comes with integrated hands-off, Bluetooth options. If your vehicle has this technology, be attentive to the road and use caution. Safety first.

The Cellular Crutch

Your phone isn’t a gadget to turn-to when you are not sure what to do in uncomfortable situations. If you walk into a new office, or a wedding reception and don’t know anyone, take time to engage face-to-face. Deferring back to your phone as a crutch will keep you from truly connecting with new people. Practice improving your face-to-face interactions by turning your cell phone off, or leaving it hidden in the car.

Focus Attention Towards Other Hobbies

We tend to use our phones everywhere- at parties, at work, before we go to sleep. This dramatically impacts how much, or how little, we accomplish daily. Make a conscious effort to focus on projects, without the distraction of constantly checking your phone for email, texts, or surfing the web.

Etiquette For Cell Phones At Work

- If you are a part of a business that allows you to use your phones, it is important to follow proper cell phone workplace etiquette to help reduce the chances of you getting these privileges taken away.
- Be aware of your ringtone. If you work at a business that requires you to answer your cell phone often you may want to download a ringtone that sounds professional (no high pitches, isn't too loud, no obnoxious sounds, no profanity, etc;
- Don't look at your phone during meetings;
- Don't place your phone on your lap;
- Focus on the person that should have your attention i.e. customer, client, coworker, boss, etc;
- Keep your personal calls private;
- Keep your phone out of sight;
- Don't engage in arguments over the phone while at work;
- Silence your device- If necessary.

Etiquette for Cell Phones at Professional Gatherings

There are cell phone etiquette tips to keep in mind for professional gatherings such as conferences, training sessions, seminars, product launches, and more:

- Don't take photos unless you're allowed to;
- Don't use your phone as a way to avoid social interactions;
- Focus on face-to-face networking;
- Keep your phone on silent;
- Verbally excuse yourself for important calls when necessary;
- When you do take photos, turn off your flash as a courtesy to others around you.

When to not use your cell phone

In some scenarios, it is unacceptable to use your mobile phone entirely, despite taking the above etiquette tips into consideration. The following list outlines different situations when you'll want to avoid your phone altogether:

- At movie theaters and other large gatherings of any kind;

- Attending religious functions or gatherings;
- During a job interview;
- Funerals;
- When someone is talking to you;
- While driving;
- While you're eating a meal;
- While you're studying.

How often you use your cell phone is entirely up to you. However, when doing so, keep in mind that there is a time and place for it. By following the above cell phone etiquette guidelines, you can ensure you're not being disrespectful or breaking any rules and are mindful of those around you

Let's Sum Up

Cell phone etiquette is about using your mobile device in a respectful, considerate manner that minimizes disruption and distraction for others. It's important to be mindful of when and where you use your phone, as constant use in public or shared spaces can intrude on others' comfort and focus. Simple practices, such as keeping your voice low during calls, using headphones for media, and silencing your device in meetings, classrooms, or theaters, show respect for others' space. Texting or checking notifications during conversations can seem impolite or disengaged, so it's best to give your full attention to those you're with. Additionally, being aware of your surroundings—like avoiding phone use while walking or driving—promotes safety. Practicing good cell phone etiquette helps create a courteous and attentive environment, reflecting positively on your interpersonal relationships and social awareness.

Social Media Etiquette

- Social media etiquette refers to the guidelines that companies and individuals use to preserve their reputation online.
- Just as social etiquette dictates how people behave around others in the real world, social media etiquette revolves around online guidelines to follow.

- Know why you're getting online. In an interview with Business Insider, eBay's chief blogger Richard Brewer-Hay pointed out that it's not enough to start a social media campaign just because "everybody's doing it." It's important to "have specific goals and stick to them."

Importance of social Media Etiquette

- Protect against legal and security issues. If you exist in an industry with stringent privacy and compliance laws, your system will keep you on the right side of the regulations.
- Empower staff. When your employees know how to share content safely online, they can represent and advocate for your organization, without harming your reputation.
- Defend your brand. Social etiquette ensures that everyone who interacts with your brand on social media will see a respectable, professional business.

Don't pretend to be someone you're not

Even though the internet gives you a sense of anonymity, you don't even realize how easy it is to find info on anyone. You don't need to reveal every detail of your life, but if you are an Indian man, don't pretend to be a UK Modal.

Don't behave as an Expert of All Fields

It's nice to have something valuable to say, but what the internet (ok, the people on the internet, to be more precise) hates is self-acclaimed experts in every field. So if you say you know everything about military, politics, foreign affairs etc... Sure you do.

Don't get into arguments

Social media is a great source not only for news, but also exchanging views. Even if you don't agree with others, don't let it turn into a nasty argument.

Don't stoop too low

If you do get into an argument, say whatever you have to say and leave. Don't call anyone names, swear or use 5 th grade-worthy comebacks.

Double-check your grammar

Nothing undermines your credibility more than grammatical errors. And although nobody's perfect, everybody can use Google and a spell check.

Interact with people

If someone replies to your post or tweet, say thanks or start a conversation. Social media, like the name suggests, is a social activity and no one likes to be ignored.

Censor yourself. Don't make your private data public

Some people treat their Face book or Twitter accounts as diaries. But please, don't share EVERYTHING with your readers. Some things are meant to be kept private and let's keep it that way.

Don't post party photos

Maybe you impressed your high school friends with photos of you drinking and smoking, but avoid doing it. Don't post or repost anything illegal Nevertheless, you can be fined or face even more serious consequences for posts, reposts, and other actions on social media in most countries. So you'd better know the laws in your country and remember them when posting or reposting something on Face book or Twitter.

Link original sources

Although the idea of original source on the internet is rather an unachievable fantasy, posting a photo/video/article/joke with a link to the site or person you got it from will surely be appreciated.

Think of readers' reactions

You probably have colleagues, superiors, and clients among your Facebook or Instagram connections. When you apply for a new work position, for example, human resources will likely check your social media profiles. Consider what you want them to see — and more to the point, what you don't want them to see.

Don't repost scams

I you Don't want to check each and every post of this kind, then don't click on it at all — don't risk turning yourself and your friends into scam victims.

Have fun

Last but not least, social media is supposed to be fun. Leave whining, crying and complaining elsewhere and instead meet new people, share interesting stuff, broaden your horizons and enjoy it to the fullest!

Top Rules of Social Media Etiquette

- Fill out your online profiles completely with information about you and your business Use your real name and your own photo.
- Use a different profile or account for your personal connections. Business and pleasure do not mix in this medium.
- Create a section on your main profile detailing who you are seeking to befriend. Everyone need not apply.
- Offer information of value. Don't talk just about yourself and your company.
- Pick a screen name that represents you and your company well. Don't call yourself 'Loser1' unless you want to be known by that name.
- Don't send out requests for birthdays, invitations to play games or other timewasters for those using the site.
- Don't put anything on the Internet that you don't want your future boss, current client or potential clients to read.
- Check out the people who want to follow you or be your friend. Your mother was right when she said that people will judge you by the company you keep.
- If someone does not want to be your friend, accept their decision gracefully. They have the right to make that choice and you have to accept it.
- Never post when you're overly-tired, jet lagged, intoxicated, angry or upset.
- Compose your posts, updates or tweets in a word processing document so you can check grammar and spelling before you send them.

Let’s Sum Up

Social media etiquette refers to the guidelines and behaviours that encourage respectful, responsible, and positive interactions online. Since social media platforms reach a wide audience, what you post, share, or comment on can impact others’ perceptions of you, both personally and professionally. Practicing good etiquette includes being thoughtful about the content you post, such as avoiding offensive or overly personal topics, respecting privacy, and refraining from sharing unverified or misleading information. It’s also important to engage respectfully, even when disagreements arise, as public confrontations or rude comments can escalate quickly and reflect poorly on all parties involved. Additionally, consider tagging others appropriately, avoiding oversharing, and practicing discretion with self-promotion. By following these practices, you contribute to a more positive online environment and build a reputation for being considerate and respectful in your digital interactions.

Telephone Etiquette: Introduction

At the core of a successful organization lies outstanding customer service, with telephonic communication serving as its fundamental form. Each phone call represents an opportunity to strengthen client relationships, fostering increased revenue and customer loyalty. These interactions serve as pivotal annotations in elevating and enriching your brand's value. Consequently, upholding decorum during professional phone conversations becomes immensely vital. This article delineates telephone etiquette and underscores its significance in enhancing the overall quality of your phone-based communications.

Meaning

Telephone Etiquette is the way you present yourself and your organization to your fellow colleagues and clients through telephonic conversations. It encompasses various aspects, such as how to greet your customer, the tone of your voice, choosing appropriate words, and how to conduct a successful call. Additionally, good telephone etiquette also involves actively listening to discussions related to professional matters or your customers. Phone etiquette is vital while dealing with clients or cooperating with colleagues at work.

Importance of Telephone Etiquette

While communicating over the telephone, phone etiquette is vital. The consumer evaluates you and your company based on your communication. The following example demonstrates the significance of phone etiquette training when speaking on the phone:

1. Professionalism: Your choice of words and tone of your voice is what displays your professionalism and work ethic. It also helps the caller build trust that they are in good and safe hands.

2. Impression: Telephonic communication has a long-lasting impact, so make sure you impress. Give respect to your caller and discover techniques to cultivate and maintain special client relationships.

3. Loyalty and Trust: Gaining trust and establishing a loyal relationship with your client/customer over a call is difficult but is a must if you want them to listen to you and make frequent purchases from you.

4. Customer Satisfaction: One thing that every phone etiquette training teaches you is to satisfy your customer. As a customer service executive, make sure you answer all their questions and queries to give them a great experience.

The Do's And Dont's Of Telephone Etiquette

Do's of Telephone Etiquette

1. Introduce Yourself: Always start by identifying yourself when answering the phone is a must professional phone etiquette. For instance, Hi! This is [Your Name] speaking.

2. Speak Clearly: Communicate the desired message clearly and speak at a moderate pace. So that the listener can understand you easily.

3. Listen Attentively: A good speaker needs to be a good listener in order to respond. So, make sure you listen to it all.

4. Be Polite: Even if the other person is difficult or harsh, use polite vocabulary and a respectful tone.

5. Be Patient: Be patient and kind if the person on the other end of the line is difficult to understand or has to repeat things.

6. End the call politely: Always end the call by saying "thank you" or "goodbye," and let the other person hang up first.

7. Avoid using foul language: The first thing professional phone etiquette teaches is to avoid using slang or offensive language when talking on the phone.

Don'ts of Telephone Etiquette

1. Don't Interrupt: When the other person is speaking, avoid interrupting them. Before reacting, wait for them to finish.

2. Avoid Multitasking: Multitasking when on the phone is distracting and makes it harder to focus on the discussion.

3. Don't Shout: Avoid shouting or raising your voice on the phone, even if you are frustrated or angry.

4. Don't put the caller on hold for too long: If you need to put the caller on hold, make sure you get their permission beforehand and don't keep them waiting too long.

5. Don't use speakerphone in public places: Avoid putting your call on speakerphone in public places to prevent others from listening to your conversation.

6. Don't use your phone in inappropriate places: Avoid using your phone in public venues such as movie theaters, libraries, and houses of worship.

7. Don't take a call while eating or drinking: Taking a call while having food or a drink can make the caller feel disrespected, so avoid taking/making calls at that time.

Etiquettes To Keep In Mind On Different Kinds Of Calls

1. Conference call etiquette

Conference Call Etiquette is easy to grasp once you know what to do and how to do it. Since virtual meetings are an important part of the business world, it's worth keeping these etiquettes on your tip.

Teleconferences can be daunting, especially if the following conditions exist:

· There are several folks on the line.

· You must impress a prospective customer.

· You're in charge of an international conference call.

Simple conference call etiquette is the greatest approach to guarantee that you and your organization come across well.

1. **Don't Be Late:** Even if you have a hundred things to do, conference call etiquette dictates that you be on time for the call. Though this is a crucial lesson, it is easy to ignore with time. If you are in charge of conducting a call, make it obvious to the other participants that you intend to begin on time.
2. **Be Kind:** The second conference call etiquette involves being kind. In fact this applies everywhere and to everyone. Treat others on the call the way you would like to be treated for a harmonious and productive call.
3. **Don't Interrupt:** Let the other person finish their point before you act or react to it. Interruptions have the potential to completely disrupt a discussion and leave a negative impression.
4. **Make Sure to Hit the Mute Button:** Do you know what the most common mistake new conference callers make? They forget to put themselves on mute. It's a common mistake since it's not immediately obvious while you're doing it, but it's absolutely a breach of conference call etiquette.
5. **Come to the Call Prepared:** Nothing is worse than a quiet conference line. Bueller? … Bueller? Fortunately, adhering to some basic conference call etiquette will help you prevent this!

   It might be scary to participate when you're on a call with a large number of individuals you don't know personally. The simplest method to assure a fantastic call is to arrive prepared with facts, observations, conclusions, and intelligent questions for other departments. Also, it will speed up the conversation because the host will not have to work as hard to elicit responses and contributions.

2. Personal Phone Etiquette

Personal Phone Etiquette refers to behavior that one must exhibit when on a personal call with an individual when using their phones, especially in public or when communicating with others.

Here are some examples:

1. **Answering Calls Promptly:** It is important to respond to calls as soon as possible, whether they are from a professional or personal contact.
2. **Avoid Loud Conversations in Public:** In public, it is important to be mindful of others and avoid loud conversations that may disturb others.

3. **Keeping Calls Short:** Calls should be kept brief, especially while in public or in a shared place.
4. **Being considerate of others' time:** When scheduling calls or meetings, it is critical to keep others' time in mind, and to arrive on time.

   Personal phone etiquette entails being courteous, thoughtful, and considerate of others when on a call.

3. Receptionist Phone Etiquette

When you are working a desk job, you know answering phone calls has become the bread and butter of your position. A person who answers calls on reception is typically hired for their strong communication skills.

While it may appear straightforward — simply pick up the phone and say "Hello?" - answering professional calls is not the same as answering personal ones. It's normal to make a mistake and speak to your customer as you would do to your best friend or mother.

Yet, by following these principles outlined below, you can ensure that you are constantly on your A-game.

- Respond to the phone call within three rings.
- Introduce yourself right away.
- Speak Clearly
- Only utilize the speakerphone when absolutely essential.
- Take notes while actively listening.
- Employ appropriate wording.
- Keep a positive attitude.
- Before placing someone on hold or forwarding a call, enquire.
- If you don't know the solution, be honest about it.
- Be mindful of your volume.
- Check and respond to voicemails.

In conclusion, good telephone etiquettes are essential for effective communication and building strong relationships. Remember, the key is to speak clearly, precisely and effectively. The use of a friendly and professional tone will help you gain the trust of the customer. Following these answering phone calls etiquette will surely leave a truly awestruck impression on your colleagues and customers. Hence, practice proper telephone etiquette and urge others to do the same. Together, we can create a more pleasant and efficient telephone communication experience for everyone.

Telephone Etiquette Elements

Every caller has their way of talking on the phone. However, there are some set of rules and Telephone etiquette guidelines that should be followed whenever you have Telephone communication. These are briefly discussed as follows:

- **Friendly Greetings**

  The way you greet your caller must be warm and pleasant. The call should get a feel that you are alert and attentive to his call. The cheerful and positive greeting will get back the same enthusiasm. Start with a proper salutation, thank you for calling, a brief introduction of yourself and the Business and then enquire about the reason for calling.

- **Body Language**

  Gestures, facial expressions, body language also have an impact while you communicate on the Telephone. While you talk on the phone, a cheerful voice and a bright tone give the feeling to the receiver that you are relaxed and at ease. Thus, body language has its communication even when you talk on the phone. Professional body language gives a good impression.

- **The Tone of Voice**

  The attitude on the phone gives customers opinions about your Business. Also, the attitude is conveyed through the tone you adopt to talk. The tone of your voice should be confident as well as respectful towards the caller. A pleasant pitch of voice gives a sweet note to the ears.

- **Tact**

  Sometimes it becomes inadvertent to inform unpleasant, upsetting and sensitive information on the phone. At such times, it becomes imperative to handle the situation tactfully. The choice of words should be soft yet stern and should not at all offend the caller.

- **Active Listening**

  An important point that office phone etiquette considers is active listening. You should provide undivided attention to your caller with the least possible disturbances. It gives the impression that you care about the customer and his needs.

- **Appropriate Closing**

  While bidding goodbye, always thank your customer and ensure that all that he wants to convey is completed. This ensures the customer that your Business is a customer-driven one. Also, try that the customer hangs up the call. This ensures there are no accidental hang-ups.

Business Phone Etiquette Tips

Let us discuss some of the Business phone etiquette tips:

- Try answering the calls in the first two or three rings. This gives the feeling of being valued
- The call should start with giving identification of yourself and your business to avoid any confusion
- A positive tone of voice always has a better response back and helps to build a good rapport
- A friendly and cheerful body language is always preferred
- Always have minimum possible interruptions and distractions when you are on a phone call
- Active listening and taking notes in parallel is beneficial for giving periodic affirmation of understanding the customer
- Any customer always prefers a polite and sympathetic honest message
- Before placing the call on hold for any reason, seek permission from the caller
- Ensure all the requirements and queries of the caller are solved before you appropriately close the call

Golden Rules for talking on the Phone

Some Golden rules for people when they are in a call are-

- **Answering the Call-** How one manages the calls they receive will determine the impression of the brand they represent. The first words the person speaks will give the caller an idea of how one is. Nobody likes to handle a call with a lazy customer service representative of a company. While attending a Business or work-related call, professionalism must be the priority in mind throughout the call. Knowing the Business and its guidelines is a crucial aspect of determining any issues the caller might be experiencing.

- **Listen is the Key-** One should always let the caller speak and determine their problem in detail before cutting them or offering a solution. No one likes to be unheard and the person who called should feel that his opinions and problems really matter to the person who is on the call with them.
- **Putting Someone on Hold-** No one likes to be put on hold. Especially during a Business call when the client or customer has some questions regarding the service, putting it on hold can be a task that is necessary. The person should know before they'll be put on hold and should not be left on hold for a very long time. This will annoy the customer and they might not wish to call again or buy again from one's organization.
- **Every Call is Important-** One should never answer according to their mood and always stay calm while talking to clients or customers. No problem is a small problem when it comes to customers and it should always be kept in mind. Making every client feel important will build trust and loyalty within them and is very important for the general belief in the organization.

Telephone Etiquette Guidelines

- Answer the call within three rings.
- Immediately introduce yourself.
- Speak clearly.
- Only use speakerphone when necessary.
- Actively listen and take notes.
- Use proper language.
- Remain cheerful.
- Ask before putting someone on hold or transferring a call.
- Be honest if you don't know the answer.
- Be mindful of your volume.
- Check for and respond to voicemails.

- Avoid Eating or Drinking
- Minimize Multi-Tasking

Be consistent.

Have everyone answer the business line consistently. If it's an inbound call, all the customer wants to know is that they got the right number. Your "hello" should be brief. Train staff to use a professional greeting that mentions the company and then their own names. "How can I help you?" is assumed, so don't waste precious time adding those five words. "Hello, IBM, this is Yogesh" is sufficient.

Never interrupt.

Don't interrupt a complaining customer. It can be hard not to do this, but train your team to listen to the whole problem, no matter how long it takes. Even if call center employees will eventually hand off the call to another member of your staff, listening to the whole story is important so the customer feels taken care of.

Get to know the hold button.

The hold button is your friend. Never put the phone to your chest to muffle the mouthpiece, so you can speak among yourselves. Clients may hear things you don't want them to hear.

Then get to know the transfer button.

You need to know how to transfer someone to another member of the team. Say to the client, "The best person to handle this is Joseph, so I'm going to transfer you." If it's going to take time for you to locate Joseph or explain the problem to him, tell the client it'll be a while. For instance, say, "It will take me about three or four minutes to get Joseph up to speed, so can I please put you on hold?“

Keep customers informed.

It's important to train your team on this. They have to give the client a list of what they're going to do, then a longer timeframe than necessary. Because when you fix the problem in less time than you stated, they know you went to bat for them. You'll have a loyal customer at that point. Take longer than you said and they're steaming mad.

Smile when you talk to customers.

Did you know you can hear a smile? Research shows that smiling while speaking on the phone makes a detectable difference in your tone of voice, so make sure that your team sounds happy to talk to customers. Words and inflection are much more important over the phone than in a face-to-face encounter.

Answer after the first few rings.

You should answer within the first few rings rather than keeping a caller waiting. Customers often grow frustrated or even hang up if they are left on the line without assistance for too long.

Learn how to handle angry and abusive people.

First, don't tell someone to calm down. No one wants to sound like a crazy person, but when a client is that mad, they can't help it. Our words should be reassuring, like "how awful," "you're absolutely right to be upset" or "I can't believe this – how terrible." The client will feel understood. Slowly, the caller's voice will resume normal volume. Once the customer is quieter, you can explain them to describe how you will solve the problem.

Eliminate background noise.

Background noise is extremely distracting and unprofessional. To eliminate unwanted sounds, make sure you are in a quiet area, like a call box or private office, and don't use the speakerphone. If your typical workspace happens to be too loud, try taking the call elsewhere or asking those around you to lower their voices.

Ask questions and take notes.

If you're unsure who exactly the caller is and what they need from you, ask them. Make sure you jot down information like their name, number and company, and understand exactly what they're asking or requesting. For instance, if they're trying to reach someone in the company who is currently unavailable, you'll want to record the message they wish to relay, along with their phone number and full name, so you can deliver it accordingly.

Mastering the Telephone Courtesy

Effective Listening

With a telephone in our hand, we can often feel a sense of power and can feel the urge to perform all of the speaking – and forget how to listen.

Focus

Stay focused on the purpose of call and listen for the facts or ideas being presented. Pay attention to the callers tone of voice and try to understand the message the caller is telling you from their point of view.

Take Notes

Take notes as you listen to capture key points that you can refer to later.

Eliminate Distractions

Try to prevent yourself from becoming distracted by colleagues and side conversations. Listen carefully and do not multi-task by checking emails, texts, Face book or continuing to do data entry. Remember the caller deserves your undivided attention.

Demonstrate Empathy

Listen to the emotion in your caller's voice. Adjust your own tone of voice accordingly by showing empathy and interest in what the caller is saying.

Ask questions

When in doubt as to what your caller is saying, ask questions to gain more information on points you need to clarify. This shows the customer that you are interested in what they are saying and that you are taking responsibility for the call.

Don't interrupt

You listen more effectively when you're not talking, so refrain from interrupting your caller. Listen objectively and let them finish what they are saying as interruptions may break their train of thought.

Confirm and Summarize

Let the customer know you understand what they are saying by summarizing the conversation. Use statements such as "I understand", "I agree", "I see", "You're right". These are all great ways to reflect back and summarize. Refer back on your notes by asking questions such as "It's my understanding that we will be installing on…" or "May I take a moment to confirm what you've said?". If your customer is upset, emphasize with them by saying statements such as "I understand how you are feeling right now. I will get this resolved as soon as possible."

Ask the Customer to Repeat Some Information

While it's not good to ask callers to constantly repeat information, if you are having difficulty listening, you could say, "I'm sorry I missed what you just said. Could you please repeat that for me?

Transferring Calls

Transferring a call to another telephone number may seem like an easy task, but it still requires a bit of skill in any office environment. Many times, when a caller is transferred, they feel as though they are being ignored and simply 'dumped' onto someone else. So if you have a caller on the line that needs to be transferred to somewhere in the department or the company, first notify the caller as to why you are transferring them. Once they understand why, let them know where you are transferring them to and the name of the person to speak with, if known. This lets the caller know that you are trying to help them by getting them to the correct place.

When possible, 'warm transfer' the caller to the extension. Warm transferring allows the telephone operator to call the department they are trying to reach, speak with an agent and give them information about the call. Once the agent is ready, the operator transfers the call directly to them.

Tips for transferring calls:

• Tell the caller why they are being transferred

• Let them know who/where you are transferring them to

• When possible, introduce the call before transferring

Placing Callers on Hold

Just the same as transferring a call, placing a caller on hold can make them feel ignored and that the telephone operator does not want to help them. In order to assure the caller that we are there to help them, we must take precautions when placing them on hold. When handling calls from within or outside the office, always ask the caller if they are able to hold and wait for their answer before doing so. Let them know why you may need to put them on hold, such as if you need to search for more information or find the person they are trying to reach. When you return, be sure to thank them for their patience while holding and let them know what you have found for them. If, for some reason, the caller cannot or will not hold, offer to take their contact information and give them a call back when you have the information/party they are searching for.

Tips for placing callers on hold

• Always ask permission to place the caller on hold

• Check back periodically if the caller is on hold for a long time

• Remember to thank the caller for waiting when you return

• If the caller does not want to hold, offer to take a message

Handling Voicemail Messages

Voicemails are a great tool to have in this age of technology, especially since the employee may not always be at their desk or may be busy taking calls from another customer. It is important to understand how to retrieve and deliver these messages efficiently so that critical information isn't lost and the chance to build a professional relationship isn't missed.

Ensure the Voicemail Has a Proper Greeting

• For your personal voicemail, record your own message in your own voice. Include your name, title and department when possible. If you are going to be away for an extended period (i.e. vacation, business travel), it is helpful to include this information on your voicemail greeting so that callers can know to expect a callback once you return.

When Leaving a Message for Others

Many voicemail machines only allow a certain amount of time to leave a message, so it's important to only leave the essential information with enough details for the recipient to know why you called. When on a voicemail, leave your name and title. Also leave the date and time that you called and the reason you're calling. Finally, be sure to leave a good contact number where you can be reached and the best time of day to contact you. Try and limit your message to one topic at a time and do not overload the voicemail with various topics.

• Answer Important Messages Right Away

• Ensure Messages are Delivered to the Right Person

Taking Messages

The occasion can arise where an employee receives a call from someone looking for another person and wants to leave their callback information. When taking messages for someone in the office, it is similar to the process of taking a message from an outside caller. First, make a note of what day and time the call came to you. Then obtain the caller's information, such as name and their title, if they have one, and ask them for the best callback they want to leave with you. Finally, note what the caller wants from the other party, such as requesting a callback, simply leaving information for the other party, or if the message is urgent and they need to speak with them right away. Ensure you have all the information you need before disconnecting with the caller.

Tips for taking messages

• Note the date and time of the message
• Get the caller's name and title (if they have one)
• Verify a good callback number
• Note what the message is for

End the Conversation

Sometimes ending a call with someone can be an awkward feeling and can leave both parties unsure if the call is over. The key is to remain professional while letting the caller know that the conversation is over, which means you are about to hang up. Begin by reviewing the information from the call, such as if you took a message for them or will need to connect them to another party. Once the caller has understood that you have everything you will need, offer a salutation or parting phrase, such "Thank you for calling today" or "It was a pleasure speaking with you". This alerts the caller that you are wrapping up and they may offer a farewell first. Always end with a professional "Good bye" or "Have a good day/evening/night". Avoid using slang terms such as "bye-bye" or "Alright" when dismissing callers since these can cheapen your sentiments and sound unprofessional.

Samples Phrases for Ending a Conversation

• "Is there anything else I can do for you?"
• "Thank you for calling today."
• "Have a good day/evening."

• “I’m glad I was able to help you today.”

Screening Calls

Many companies that offer a telephone service have taken advantage of some sort of call monitoring service. The service records each employee call and allows them to be played back at a later time for review. This process, known as screening calls, can be a great tool for reviewing employee phone calls and checking for correct telephone etiquette. A manger or supervisor can review as many calls as needed to review an employee’s performance and determine if any poor telephone etiquette was a small occurrence or a consistent problem. After the manager/supervisor has reviewed the calls, it is best to bring the employee into a secluded meeting to review the calls together. From here, the employee can hear how their calls sound to others and identify areas they need to improve on. This process is also a helpful tool for the manager/supervisor and the employee to create and set future performance goals.

Handling Rude or Impatient Customers

- Handling Rude or Impatient Customers
- Stay Calm, Don't React Emotionally
- Don't Take It Personally
- Train yourself to be pleasant
- Listen to Their Needs- If Appropriate, Apologize
- Never Interrupt
- Identify What You Can Do for Them
- Be honest, avoid vague terms, and don’t make promises you can’t keep
- Stand Firm
- Avoid putting a caller back on hold
- Find the root of the problem
- Offer multiple solutions
- Solve the Problem
- If all else fails, just hang up
- Dealing With the Aftermath

Stay Calm, Don't React Emotionally

Staying calm with an angry or rude called can be one of the hardest tasks a phone operator must do. Our natural reflect to anger or rudeness is to become defensive and lash back. However, if we show our emotions, especially negative ones, it only makes the caller angrier. So avoid "fighting fire with fire.“. Remember that the customer just wants to be heard and wants to have their problem resolved. So even if the customer starts speaking rudely or becomes angry with you, using your favorite tip or trick to help you stay calm and you’ll be able to help the caller once they have begun to cool down. Resist the temptation to give someone a "taste of their own medicine.

Tips for staying calm

• Take deep, relaxing breaths

• Empathize with the customer

• Speak in calm, assuring tones

Don't Take It Personally

• Chances are, your customer is angry about a bad product or service, and you're just the unfortunate target for their frustration. Many other issues may also have contributed to those feelings. During a long-lasting crisis such as COVID-19, for example, emotions such as fear, anxiety and restlessness can build up, until even the slightest inconvenience can become the "last straw."

• So, instead of taking someone's rudeness to heart, try to empathize, Develop emotional intelligence have enough self-control to make the right response.

Train yourself to be pleasant

You can actually practice your tone of voice, and of course the more experience you have with handling callers, the more proficient you will become. Train yourself to maintain a pleasant and calm tone of voice, no matter what the person says to you.

Listen to Their Needs- If Appropriate, Apologize

When we encounter rude or angry callers, our first instinct is to stop listening to what they have to say due to their poor attitude. However, this is not the key. The caller may be upset, but they still want to be assured that someone will hear their complaint and help them get what they need. As the telephone operator, it is important to listen to what the caller has to say and try to identify what they are seeking. Many times the upset caller will tell us exactly what they need, but will mask it with harsh words and raw emotions. It is your job to put these feelings aside and let the customer know you can still help them get what they need. if your customer's grievance is genuine, a prompt apology may stop the flow of rudeness and provide the basis for a better relationship.

Tips

• Empathize with the caller's needs

• Remember that their needs/concerns are important too

• Identify what the caller is asking for

Never Interrupt

When a caller is angry or rude, interrupting them will only make the caller angrier, causing the situation to worsen. Although it may sound counter-productive, the best method to use with callers such as these is to let them speak until they begin to slow down and eventually finished with their rant. During this process, listen empathetically and continue to acknowledge their concerns. Once the caller has finished speaking, or to least pauses for a continued response, then you can begin to offer ways you can help the caller and what you can do for them. In many cases, the customer just wants to know their complaints or problems are heard and acknowledged by someone in the company. Once they feel like someone has heard their concerns, they will be more open to accepting some sort of solution available.

Identify What You Can Do for Them

When a customer is angry or upset, the last thing they want to hear from the company is what can't be done for them. This can cause them to become angrier and more upset. Once you have identified why the caller is upset, it is time to offer a real solution. By identifying what you can do for the caller, rather than what you can't do, you are assuring them that you are there to help and can help them resolve the problem. Give them realistic options that can actually be done, such as speaking with a manager, filing a complaint with customer service or receiving help with the product/item/service. If you're able to solve the problem, do what you can to do so. If the caller needs to speak with someone else, take the time to ensure they reach the appropriate person and can go to the next step of reaching a solution.

Be honest, avoid vague terms, and don’t make promises you can’t keep & Stand Firm

Avoid putting a caller back on hold

If at all possible, you should avoid placing a customer back on hold because that will usually only irritate them further. If you need to check something or confer with another department to find a solution, then try to do so while they are still on the line, if possible.

Find the root of the problem

Now, as you’re listening and gathering information, you can start to figure out what the root of the problem is, and this is key. Once you know the root cause, it’s only a matter of time before it’s solved and you can end the call on good terms.

Offer multiple solutions.

You should express an apology for the trouble the caller is having, but you can’t keep apologizing forever. Give this person a single, definite solution if you have one, but offering a variety of solutions for a difficult issue is helpful because they can decide for themselves how they would like to proceed. Everybody likes options.

Solve the Problem

- The best way to disarm a rude customer is to involve them in solving the problem. Look for quick, simple solutions. Many problems that lead to customer rudeness will have occurred before, so your company may have policies that allow you to offer refunds or replacements, for example, with little fuss.
- However, the truth is that there may be no easy answer to a customer's problem. During times of crisis, in particular, some people will push for responses that aren't possible, or answers that you simply don't have. When that happens, acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, explain your position clearly – but stick to it.

If all else fails, just hang up

Sometimes, a caller simply refuses to calm down or is being downright mean. If they won’t listen to reason and continue to yell at you, then it’s probably time to hang up the phone.

Dealing With the Aftermath

• Encountering a rude customer can be a highly stressful experience, so it's important to take a breather afterward. You'll likely gain some valuable perspective if you remember that very few of your customers behave in this way.

• It's also important to think through what happened, to consider whether this customer's rudeness reflects a bigger problem or a recurring issue.

• You may need to report the situation to your manager. Always do this if you were badly affected by the incident; if the problem is beyond your remit to resolve; or if this encounter seems to be part of a pattern.

• You might also need to follow up with the customer – even if that's not a pleasant prospect. Before doing so, check that all the information you're referring to is correct. Don't be afraid to seek advice from your manager, too.

Let’s Sum Up

Telephone etiquette is the practice of handling phone conversations in a professional, respectful, and effective manner. Good telephone etiquette starts with answering calls promptly, introducing yourself or your organization clearly, and speaking in a pleasant, clear tone. It’s important to listen actively, avoid interrupting, and confirm that the caller’s needs are understood. If you need to place someone on hold, ask politely and keep the hold time brief. When transferring calls, explain the reason for the transfer and ensure the caller has the correct contact information in case the call is disconnected. Ending the call politely, by thanking the caller and saying goodbye, helps leave a positive final impression. Practicing these behaviors not only demonstrates professionalism but also enhances the caller's experience, fostering clear communication and building trust.

Internet and Email Etiquettes

Netiquette Network + Etiquette (The Rules of the Internet) Netiquette also called Internet Etiquette refers to a set of rules an individual needs to follow while communicating through mails, writing blogs, sharing views on online portals or any other online forum. An internet usage policy is a document used by employers to communicate the acceptable use of technology in the workplace. The document provides rules and guidelines surrounding the organization's expectations of their employees when using the internet and other company-provided devices.

Important Email Etiquettes

- Make sure emails are self explanatory. The other person should understand your views and ideas.
- Don't use capital letters in emails Unless and until it is the first alphabet of a word, turn off the CAPS lock key. Emails written in all capitals are considered rude and loud.
- Be crisp. Lengthy emails are seldom read. Never ever deviate from the actual topic.
- The subject line ought to be meaningful and relevant. Through subject line employees can quickly know what is written in the email.
- Start your mail with formal greetings.
- Format your emails correctly. Justify your text. Break the complete message into short paragraphs with equal spaces in between. Use bullets -points wherever required.
- Keep all related members in loop. Do mark a blind copy to your reporting boss for him to know what you are up to?
- All official emails must have signatures at the bottom. Your signature should include your name, your company's name, your designation and contact details. Make sure your signatures do not have incorrect information.
- Avoid writing offensive emails to anyone. It worsens the situation. It is always better to sit with the other person and discuss issues face to face.
- Take care of your font style and size. Official emails should ideally be written in Arial style with a font size of twelve. Emails written in various colours and designer styles are considered unprofessional and childish.
- Make sure you reply to all your mails. Don't add members just for the sake of it.
- Don't send mails to individuals who have nothing to do with your information. It is a sheer waste of yours as well as their time.
- Don't write anything in your mail which might fall back on you. Read your mail twice before hitting the send button.

- Employees should not open illegal or porn sites at workplace. Read carefully the terms and conditions before opening any website. Do not open any site which might harm your office computer.
- Take care of spelling errors, punctuation marks and grammar. Wrong spellings irritate the readers.
- Be polite and soft in your communication.
- Avoid using short forms or abbreviations in official mails.
- It is important to respect other's privacy. Don't check anyone's mails in his absence.
- The mail meant for a particular individual should be marked only to him. Do not mark anyone else in bcc. Communicate with him in private.
- Use words like "regards", "thanks", "yours sincerely" to close your mails.
- Avoid attaching heavy files to your mail.
- Do not upload objectionable photographs in any networking site.
- Respect the other person's views while sharing information on various online forums.

Internet Usage in the Workplace

- Company employees are expected to use the Internet responsibly and productively. Internet access is limited to job-related activities only and personal use is not permitted.
- Job-related activities include data for the job, research and educational tasks that may be found via the Internet that would help in an employee's role.
- All Internet data that is composed, transmitted and/or received by company's computer systems is considered to belong to company and is recognized as part of its official data. It is therefore subject to disclosure for legal reasons or to other appropriate third parties.
- The equipment, services and technology used to access the Internet are the property of company and the company reserves the right to monitor Internet traffic and monitor and access data that is composed, sent or received through its online connections.

- Emails sent via the company email system should not contain content that is deemed to be offensive. This includes, though is not restricted to, the use of vulgar or harassing language/images.
- All sites and downloads may be monitored and/or blocked by company if they are deemed to be harmful and/or not productive to business.
- The installation of software which is against the interest of the company is strictly prohibited.

Unacceptable use of the internet by employees includes

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images on the Internet or via company's email service.
- Using computers to perpetrate any form of fraud, and/or software, film or music piracy.
- Stealing, using, or disclosing someone else's password without authorization.
- Downloading, copying or pirating software and electronic files that are copyrighted or without authorization.
- Sharing confidential material, trade secrets, or proprietary information outside of the organisation.
- Hacking into unauthorized websites.
- Sending or posting information that is defamatory to the company, its products/services, colleagues and/or customers.
- Introducing malicious software onto the company network and/or jeopardizing the security of the organization's electronic communications systems.
- Sending or posting chain letters, solicitations, or advertisements not related to business purposes or activities.
- Passing off personal views as representing those of the organization.

Online Chat Etiquette

- Stay on Topic
- Avoid Emotionally Loaded Topics
- Be Careful With Your Tone
- Be Accurate and Factual

- Search First, then Discuss
- Use humor cautiously; avoid Sarcasm
- Be as Polite as You are in Person
- Use Proper Grammar and Punctuation
- Remember That Nothing Is Private Online
- Make Clear and Brief Points
- Respect People's Privacy
- Use the Proper Titles
- Respect Others' Opinions
- Control your emoji

All Caps Make You Smaller

In written language, capitalized sentences stand for shouting. So don't send emails or chat messages THAT READ LIKE THIS. People will think you're being commanding or angry at them.

- Assume Positive Intent
- Avoid Ambiguity
- Be Transparent
- Show your Response Immediately
- Don't Stress about Typos
- Instant Messaging / Instant Replying Send your messages directly and get them out of your head, but don't feel entitled to receive – or pressured to send – instant replies.
- Tailor your Level of Formality

Business Chats

- Start the chat conversation with a friendly greeting.
- You should know the person.
- Be mindful of the receiver's preferred style of communication.
- Don't act like a robot.
- Be careful with abbreviations.
- Keep the conversation short.

- Do make promises you can keep.
- Don’t take on more than you can handle.
- Never send bad news via Instant Messaging.
- Don’t leave customers hanging.
- Do remember to take breaks.
- End conversations with a short closing.
- Do train your team.

The Webinar Etiquette Tips for Presenters and Attendees

The current situation has provided us with an alternative for holding meetings in the form of online meetings. Previously, if unforeseen circumstances arose, people would put meetings on hold or cancel them. However, technological advancements now allow us to conduct meetings online. These online meetings, also known as webinars, are organized on various online platforms.

Webinars provide brands with a valuable opportunity to directly connect with their audience, while consumers benefit from gaining knowledge on specific topics. When executed correctly, webinars can be a win-win situation. However, not all webinars run smoothly. There are instances where the content must match the promised webinar topic, presenters must arrive on time, or attendees engage in distracting chatroom conversations. These situations can diminish the overall webinar experience for both presenters and attendees.

Participating in live webinars can become frustrating when one has to adhere to rules and regulations, whether as a presenter or an attendee. Unfortunately, engaging in a webinar does not exempt individuals from these rules and regulations. Presenters and attendees need to play their part to ensure more productive webinars. Presenters can deliver engaging and relevant content by adhering to specific guidelines, while attendees can actively participate and contribute constructively. Creating a positive webinar experience requires collaboration and mutual respect, ultimately leading to more successful and beneficial interactions.

It is essential to follow webinar etiquette, similar to the rules of conduct for in-person meetings or presentations but with some adjustments for the online format. To ensure a successful webinar experience, here are the crucial guidelines for presenters and attendees. These rules will help you maximize the benefits of your webinars.

Webinar Etiquette Tips For Presenters

Presenting through webinar platforms can be intimidating, but with the right approach, presenters can still captivate their audiences and deliver engaging and professional presentations.

To help presenters conduct successful webinars, here are some valuable tips to consider. These suggestions will aid in delivering effective presentations and maintaining audience engagement.

1. Familiarize yourself with the webinar software in advance.

Technical difficulties can be disruptive and challenging to recover from during a presentation. It can be frustrating for everyone involved if the presenter pauses the webinar to install a screen-sharing application, update slides, or adjust their microphone due to feedback. To avoid such disruptions, allocate time before the webinar to test all the necessary online meeting technologies. Learn the key features and functionalities, including sharing your screen, playing audio/video clips, spotlighting attendees, and adjusting their audio/video settings.

Consider having a moderator to assist you in managing the chatroom and facilitating the presentation flow. Once you feel comfortable navigating the webinar platform, conduct a trial run of the entire presentation to determine the appropriate time allocation for each section and ensure you stay on schedule.

2. Always wear a headset.

Wearing a headset ensures superior sound quality for your viewers, enabling them to hear you clearly without disruptions. By doing so, you can avoid unnecessary audio-related inquiries during the webinar, fostering self-confidence and enhancing the overall quality of your presentation.

3. Establish eye contact

Maintaining eye contact establishes a connection with your viewers, and it is essential to ensure you look directly into your webcam during the webinar. Doing so demonstrates your undivided attention to both the content and the audience. Additionally, this approach allows viewers to feel as though you are directly engaging with them, mirroring the experience of a face-to-face conference.

4. Try to be engaging, even when you're not talking.

Maintain engagement even when you're not speaking by utilizing your body language. Employ facial expressions, nodding your head, and other gestures to demonstrate active listening and genuine interest. 67% of webinar attendees say that the most important thing is for presenters to be passionate and engaging. By doing so, you will convey your enthusiasm and create a positive impression of someone genuinely pleased to participate in the webinar

5. Adjust your pace for the webinar presentation.

Remember that watching an online webinar presentation differs from engaging in a conversation, mainly when slides are used and physical cues are absent. If you sputter, consciously slow down your pace during the webinar. If you are demonstrating something, allow pauses between steps to accommodate any possible lag time and allow participants to catch up with your instructions. It will facilitate better understanding and engagement for all attendees.

6. Avoid reading your slides during the webinar presentation.

When creating slides for your webinar, keep them simple and concise, utilizing bullet points and relevant graphics to complement your lecture. Slides overloaded with text can be distracting, diverting the viewer's attention away from your spoken content. Simply reading the slides aloud diminishes the effectiveness of your presentation, rendering it no more impactful than sharing a written report.

7. Utilize visuals to enhance your points during the webinar.

Incorporating graphics and visual aids can effectively engage your audience and facilitate better retention of information. Using images such as pie charts or other visual representations instead of relying solely on text provides your audience with visual cues that enhance their understanding and help them retain the information you present.

8. Repeat audience questions during the webinar presentation.

In cases where there is a live audience component in the webinar, it is essential always to repeat audience questions during the question-and-answer sessions. Refrain from assuming that the online audience can hear the questions. Consumers reported that they would most like (22%) to see a host or presenter that takes questions from the audience. By repeating the questions, you ensure that both the in-person and online participants are aware of the queries. Answer the questions clearly and address both audiences, providing comprehensive responses after restating the question.

9. Incorporate multiple hosts or guests in your webinar presentations.

It can be beneficial for businesses to involve multiple hosts or guest speakers rather than having just one host during the webinar. This approach allows for promotion to a larger audience by collecting more email addresses and enables sharing of awareness about the webinars on various social channels. Incorporating multiple hosts or guests adds diversity and fresh perspectives to the presentation, making it more engaging and dynamic.

10. Familiarize yourself with your webinar audience.

When delivering a presentation, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of your webinar audience. Gather information such as their job roles, expectations from the webinar, and the specific topics they are interested in learning about. This knowledge about your audience can assist in tailoring your presentation to make it more relevant, interesting, and engaging for the attendees.

11. Establish the webinar's expectations and guidelines upfront.

Each webinar format may differ, from educational sessions where the presenter primarily addresses audience questions to more interactive settings. It's essential to communicate your expectations to the audience early on. Send a reminder email to attendees a few days before the webinar, including a dedicated section on guidelines. Address the following questions in your communication:

- Should attendees keep their cameras and microphones on or off?
- Is active participation encouraged? If so, how can attendees engage?
- Are there any preparatory work or materials that attendees need to know?

Additionally, you can reiterate these instructions at the beginning of the webinar when participants are joining the session. It serves as a helpful reminder and ensures that everyone knows the guidelines from the start.

12. Present what is expected and align with audience expectations.

Imagine ordering a medium-well steak at a restaurant but receiving a piece of chicken instead. Even if the chicken is delicious, it doesn't matter because it doesn't match what you ordered. Meeting audience expectations is crucial for building trust. In the context of webinars, it can be highly frustrating for attendees to anticipate a presentation on a specific topic and receive something entirely different. This sudden shift can confuse, leading to high drop-off rates and low engagement. Furthermore, each webinar type serves a distinct purpose and caters to a specific audience.

13. Enhance webinar accessibility.

While webinars provide valuable information, they may lack accessibility features for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing (HoH), or visually impaired. Review your webinar hosting platform and utilize the built-in live captioning and transcription features. Sharing presentation slides with attendees in advance can also aid non-native speakers in familiarizing themselves with the content. If feasible within your budget, consider hiring an interpreter to sign your presentation for deaf and HoH audiences. Alternatively, explore video relay service providers that connect your audience with interpreters during the session. Use high-contrast colors in your slides to enhance visibility for visually impaired attendees.

14. Record the webinar session.

Recognize that not all registrants can attend the live session due to scheduling conflicts. By recording the webinar, you can provide value to those who missed it. 56% of hosts broadcast live video, making it available for on-demand viewing. Consider limiting access to the recording for a designated period and add password protection for added security. It allows interested individuals to review the content at their convenience, further engaging with your brand.

Webinar Etiquette Tips for Attendees

1. Join the webinar on time.

Webinars typically adhere to strict agendas, leaving little room for catching up if you join late. To fully benefit from the webinar, make sure you are on time. Most webinars allow attendees a one- to three-minute grace period to log in. Please join a few minutes early in case of any login difficulties, providing ample time to seek assistance from the webinar organizer if needed. Setting reminders before the webinar ensures that you are prepared when the event begins.

2. Turn off your webcam during the webinar presentation.

Turn off your webcam or cover the lens with a post-it note, especially when you're in listening mode. This precaution prevents unintentional sharing of your video feed if the presenter switches from a PowerPoint presentation to a webinar software that defaults to displaying participants' webcams.

3. Exercise patience and wait for your turn during webinars.

In a physical meeting, it's easier to gauge when someone has a question or when it's appropriate to interject. However, in a webinar, especially when not everyone is visible on a webcam, it's essential to rely on cues like hand-raising icons or questions posted in chat. Waiting for your turn to speak or ask questions helps maintain a smooth and organized flow of communication during the webinar.

4. Take notes.

Many individuals participate in webinars to expand their knowledge on various subjects. Listening to an expert share insights and information can be highly informative, making note-taking a valuable practice. By taking notes during a webinar, you enhance your focus on the presented material and provide yourself with a resource for later reflection. Webinars sometimes give distractions, but detailed notes enable more effective content review. Moreover, note-taking facilitates active engagement with the material. As you listen to the host and jot down key points, you actively process the information, leading to a better understanding and retention of the material.

5. Ask questions during the Q&A portion.

Ask your questions during the Q&A session rather than interrupt the host or presenter while they are speaking. 92% of attendees expect a live Q&A session at the end of the webinar. Asking questions during their presentation can distract them and cause them to lose their thought. To ensure a smooth flow, jot down your question and patiently wait for your turn during the designated Q&A time. However, consider utilizing the chat feature if your question is urgent. This way, you can ask questions without interrupting the proceedings, especially if you are not attending the entire meeting but have a crucial inquiry to address.

6. Keep your questions concise during webinars.

Webinars are typically focused and time-sensitive, so asking questions concisely is essential. Avoid lengthy introductions or self-promotion before getting to the point. Prioritize questions that benefit the entire group rather than sharing long personal opinions or comments. Before sharing, ask yourself if your words will genuinely contribute to the discussion.

7. Avoid using the chat room for personal conversations during webinars.

Just as you wouldn't engage in distracting side conversations in the back of a conference room while someone is presenting, refrain from using the chat room in a webinar as a platform for socializing or engaging in unrelated discussions. While you can share some relevant comments or resources, it is crucial to maintain the focus and purpose of the presentation actively. Refrain from derailing the conversation by participating in conversations more suited for separate, non-presentation-related discussions.

8. Turn off your camera during breaks.

Although it may seem minor, turning off your camera during breaks or when you must attend to other matters, such as answering a phone call, can prevent potentially awkward or distracting situations. Many webinar attendees have found themselves uncomfortable, such as being caught eating or inappropriately dressed on camera. Minimize these occurrences by turning off your camera during breaks to maintain professionalism and respect for other participants.

9. Respect the presenter and avoid interruptions.

Interruptions can disrupt the flow of the presenter and hinder their ability to deliver the content effectively. Only unmute yourself and provide input if the presenter has specifically invited audience participation. As a professional courtesy, refrain from interrupting the presenter unless explicitly encouraged. Instead, wait for designated opportunities such as dedicated Q&A slides or when the presenter asks for input.

10. Avoid self-promotion.

Engaging in self-promotion during someone else's webinar is considered impolite. While mentioning your brand if relevant to the presentation may be appropriate, refrain from redirecting other attendees to your website or social links. The focus should remain on the content being presented rather than self-promotion.

11. Give feedback after the webinar.

When the webinar concludes, provide feedback if the host requests it. Take the opportunity to answer the host's questions and actively engage with the meeting. Additionally, it would be highly beneficial if the host inquired about your thoughts on the webinar. Express whether you enjoyed it, any areas for improvement, or suggestions for the next webinar. Such information holds significant value for the speakers, enabling them to enhance their future presentations.

General Webinar Etiquettes

You can enhance the productivity and enjoyment of webinars by following specific tips. Attending an online presentation or meeting can be annoying if the presenter is unprepared or needs more skills to navigate a formal online environment. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain good webinar etiquette, just as it is essential to maintain good online decorum. It fosters effective communication, respect, and efficiency. Whether you are a presenter or an attendee, it is vital to adhere to these often-forgotten rules of webinar etiquette:

1. Avoid noise.

Noise can disrupt a webinar, causing echoes and distractions for the presenter and attendees. When attending a webinar, it is crucial to avoid noise as it can create unpleasant sound waves that cause echoes in the background. These echoes can be distracting for both the presenter and the attendees. Seclude yourself in a quiet, serene environment while preparing for the webinar to ensure a smooth experience.

2. Be punctual.

Many people mistakenly believe they can connect to an online meeting whenever they like since nobody is watching. However, this needs to be corrected. Both presenters and attendees must adhere to the scheduled time and avoid lateness.

3. Dress appropriately.

Especially for webinars, it is essential to dress appropriately and professionally. Don't neglect your appearance just because it is an online meeting. Consider how you would dress for a live webinar and aim for a similar level of comfort and professionalism.

4. Maintain good posture.

Maintaining a good sitting posture throughout the meeting, especially during long webinars. Investing in a comfortable ergonomic office chair can make a significant difference. Your sitting position can significantly impact your comfort, focus, and engagement during the session.

5. Ensure good lighting.

If you plan to use video during your webinar, ensure adequate lighting. Avoid having a visually noisy background that can be distracting. Create a well-lit environment that allows participants to see you.

Etiquette plays a crucial role in the success of webinars, whether you are attending or presenting. Webinars aim to provide participants with a seamless, valuable, and engaging experience. Understanding webinar etiquette helps prevent conflicts and ensures it addresses everyone's questions. By adhering to these guidelines, you can contribute to a successful webinar. Remember, like in face-to-face interactions, practicing good etiquette goes a long way.

Respecting proper etiquette in webinars can significantly enhance their effectiveness. Whether you're delivering a webinar presentation, hosting a video meeting, or participating in an online event, following respectful etiquette can substantially increase the value of shared information. Webinars and conferences have become an integral part of modern business practices, even extending to activities traditionally conducted in person.

In addition to etiquette, choosing the right webinar platform is essential for a successful webinar. A reliable and user-friendly platform can significantly contribute to the smooth execution of the event, ensuring seamless communication, interactive features, and easy access for participants.

Netiquette

Netiquette is a made-up word from the words *net* and *etiquette*. Netiquette thus describes the rules of conduct for respectful and appropriate communication on the internet.

Netiquette is often referred to as etiquette for the internet. These are not legally binding rules, but recommended rules of etiquette. Netiquette is mostly used for dealing with unknown people on the internet. The rules of netiquette very depending on the platform and its participants . Generally, it is up to the operator of a website or communication app to specify the type and scope of netiquette. It is also their responsibility to monitor compliance with these basic rules and to penalize violations of them.

Netiquette: General rules of conduct

When communicating on the internet, you should always remember that you are communicating with people and not simply with computers or smartphones. As in the real world, rules of etiquette are necessary on the internet. Netiquette is therefore important to avoid adverse consequences.

Below you will find 20 general recommendations for conduct on the internet that you should follow when communicating online.

1. Stick to the rules of conduct online that you follow in real life

When communicating online, remember the rules of etiquette that you follow in your everyday life. Refrain from insulting, provoking, threatening or insulting others. Respect the opinions of your chat counterparts and express constructive criticism. Remember that you can be prosecuted for insulting people online.

2. Netiquette: Think of the person

Think of the person behind the computer when you compose your messages. You are not communicating with a machine, but with real people. Also, consider what and how you write. Because the internet doesn't forget anything! A screenshot or a copy of your messages is quickly made and still exists even if you delete your messages afterward.

3. Present your best side online

Communication on the internet comes with a certain anonymity that does not exist in real life when you are talking to someone face to face. Often this anonymity leads to a lower inhibition threshold for many users and they behave rudely online if, for example, you disagree with them. Make sure that you show your best side online. Remain friendly and respectful, even if you disagree. Good netiquette is characterized by respect, politeness and professionalism.

A tip: You should generally refrain from writing messages or individual words entirely in capital letters – even if you want to give these sections more expression. After all, capital letters on the internet mean shouting and are generally considered impolite.

4. Read first, then ask

Do you have a question about something? Then take the time to carefully read the answers in the previous discussion posts first. There is a good chance that someone has already answered your question. If you write an answer similar to someone else's, it shows the other chat participants that you have paid little attention to the conversation so far.

Remember that conversations online can happen very quickly. It is therefore important to gather all the information before responding or asking questions.

5. Netiquette: Pay attention to grammar and punctuation

Take time to read through your answers again. Check them for grammar, punctuation and correct spelling. It can be very frustrating for the other person if they have to decipher poorly written sentences in order grasp the meaning behind them. In addition, faulty grammar distracts from the goal of your message.

Grammar, spelling and punctuation become especially important when composing emails or other correspondence that you submit to colleagues or superiors. If you have a weakness in grammar and spelling, don't be discouraged. Use spelling aids before you send messages.

Another tip: When composing emails, always remember to use the appropriate salutation and parting formula as well. These are also part of netiquette.

6. Respect the privacy of others

This rule should be followed not only in everyday use of online communication, but also at work. Do not simply forward information that has been sent to you without first obtaining permission from the original sender. When sending private emails to multiple recipients, use BCC (blind carbon copy) instead of CC (carbon copy). Many people do not like their names and email addresses being passed on to people they do not know themselves.

This rule on the internet also applies to uploading and sharing photos or videos that show other people. Before circulating such private files, be sure to check with the people concerned before doing so.

Last but not least: Respect the privacy of others and do not sign up for newsletters, forums or the like with someone else's name or email address.

7. Respect the time and bandwidth of others

We live in a much faster world than our parents or grandparents are used to. Information can be sent to different people around the world in a matter of seconds – and without much effort. Nevertheless, the bandwidth, that is to say the information capacity of wires and channels, is limited. It is similar with humans. Think of this limited receptivity of information when you send messages to your friends, colleagues or superiors.

Do you get to the point quickly enough in your emails? Are your arguments formulated correctly and clearly recognizable? No one wants to waste time unnecessarily on an email whose core message is only at the end of the email. That consumes time and effort, and is simply annoying. Also, consider who really needs to be on the list of recipients. After all, respect for other people's time and bandwidth is also part of netiquette.

8. Forgive the mistakes of others

Everyone who goes online to forums and networks was once a beginner. As in any other field, you can make mistakes as a beginner. In online communication, these can be a lack of etiquette or manners.

Often these are spelling mistakes, superfluous questions or answers that are too long. With this in mind, it's important to forgive your counterparts' mistakes. If they are only minor mistakes, it is best not to react to them at all. In the event of a major error, for example a wrong quote, messages written only in capital letters or missing grammar and punctuation, then it is best to point it out to the person in a private message.

A tip: Sarcasm in written form is not always recognizable to everyone on the internet. It is therefore better to remain objective. If you still want to express sarcasm among friends or close colleagues, use emojis such as smileys or GIFs. Carefully chosen, emojis can reinforce your message.

9. Netiquette: Don't abuse your power

On the internet, as in real life, some people have more power than others. Moderators in a forum, experts in companies or system administrators. If you have more power than others, you do not have the right to exploit this power.

Don't spy on colleagues or chat participants just because you have the technical means to do so. For example, system administrators should never read private emails or find out about the salary structure in the company.

10. Help *keep flame wars* under control

Flame *wars* are messages that contain aggressive personal criticism or attacks on a person. In group chats, heated discussions often degenerate into so-called *flame wars*. If you get into such a discussion, you should stay out of it. Always remember that you should treat others as you would like to be treated. Profanity is not part of netiquette.

Also remember that insults and threats on the internet can have legal consequences for you. For this reason, do not be tempted to make such comments, even in heated discussions. Instead, demonstrate exemplary conduct on the internet.

11. Know where you are in cyberspace

Netiquette is interpreted differently in different places on the internet. For example, it is perfectly normal to spread gossip in a TV discussion group. However, if you do this in a serious discussion group, you will quickly make yourself unpopular. It is therefore important that you know where you are on the internet.

This also means that if you are in a new area that is unfamiliar to you, you need to look around and learn the ropes. Get an idea of how other people in this area of cyberspace communicate with each other and adapt to them.

12. Hate speech and netiquette

So-called hate speech on the internet is an increasing problem, especially in social media. It is often found in offensive comments under photos or posts. However, time and again there are coordinated actions by specific actors who join forces for the sole purpose of spreading hate comments. Not infrequently, social or religious fringe groups, foreigners or black people become victims of such actions.

What can you do against *hate speech*? If you come across such statements on the internet, you should report them to the provider of the website. Often you will find the option to report a post directly underneath it on social media. The providers are legally obliged to delete content which is evidently illegal within 24 hours.

In addition, you can actively approach the spreaders of *hate speech* and try to invalidate their statements and subsequently educate the perpetrators. It is advisable to ask for the alleged "facts" and take a clear position against hate. Steer the discussion in a more positive direction. However, under no circumstances should you react with hate or insults. You could also be held accountable for this.

Netiquette: Safety rules for children

The internet is an enrichment for everyone – in everyday life, at school and at work. However, it brings with it some risks and downsides, such as the dark net. Talk to your child and explain the possible risks of the internet. Respect your child's privacy and explain the following rules for children on the internet:

1. Children on the internet: Do not give out personal information

In these times of social media, identity theft and social engineering, keeping personal information secret is essential! Under no circumstances should your child share passwords or personal information such as their name, address or telephone number online. The name of the school or clubs should also be kept secret.

2. Use a neutral nickname

Make sure that your child uses a neutral nickname in chat rooms. This should under no circumstances reveal your child's identity. In addition, a neutral nickname ensures that other people do not feel insulted or ridiculed.

3. Netiquette and bots/troll posts

So-called bots are computer programs that usually automatically follow up on a task without requiring any interaction with humans. In social media channels, bots often post comments or even their own posts.

They often spam in forums or in the comments under posts. This is annoying and time-consuming, as these responses have to be identified and removed. Bots are therefore not part of netiquette and should be avoided if at all possible.

4. Rules for children on the internet: Do not trust chat participants

Your child should always approach strangers with a healthy skepticism. You never know who is really hiding behind the funny profile name and picture. For example, your child should never meet a stranger just because they got along well in a chat conversation. It could be an adult with bad intentions.

Similarly, you should explain to your child that they should not add strangers as friends on social media such as Facebook or Instagram. Your child should also not simply open emails and other messages and download attachments. In doing so, your child could accidentally download a Trojan or other malware.

5. Fairness first: Do not exclude anyone

If your child is communicating in a private group, they should refrain from making insider jokes that not everyone in the group will understand. It is better to send a private message to this person. Other chat participants should not feel excluded. Netiquette includes values such as tolerance, respect and helpfulness. This also means that only the language used by everyone should be used.

In a school group chat, your child should always make sure that all chat members are on the same level, for example during a review or presentation. When your child is explaining a topic that may not be clear to everyone, it is a good idea to answer questions about the topic.

6. Netiquette for children: Keep it short and clear

Posts, answers and even questions should be kept as short and clear as possible. No one wants to read an unnecessary amount of text that does not contribute to answering the issue.

Cumbersome language and repetitions only clog up chats and forums; in addition, spelling mistakes can make it more difficult to read and understand what is being said. Forwarding chain letters also has no place in respectful online communication.

7. Netiquette and online learning (tips for pupils)

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, most teaching in schools was done online. So-called homeschooling – teaching from home – was a new challenge that pupils, teachers and parents had to overcome together. Here are some tips for teaching from home:

- Children should support one another, for example by responding to classmates' questions on a chat thread.
- Instruct your children not to digitally record or take screenshots of lessons without first getting the teacher's permission.
- A polite and respectful tone is an absolute must in homeschooling.

- Passwords and credentials given by the school must not be passed on by children to third parties under any circumstances.
- Children should be ready a few minutes before class starts in order to start on time. Teaching materials should be ready and the camera for the video conference should always be switched on. You should also make sure that your child dresses as they would appear at school.
- Pupils should speak up if they have any questions or comments. Afterwards, they should mute their microphone again so as not to disturb the lesson with any background noise.

8. Trust your child

Last but not least, the most important rule for children's use of the internet: Trust your child. After all, you cannot permanently look over their shoulder, whether your child is learning via computer, smartphone or tablet. Your child learns best through their own experiences. Trust in your offspring's abilities, and refrain from constantly monitoring their internet activities. It is usually enough to know that your child can ask you for help if the worst happens.

Let’s Sum Up

Internet etiquette, or "netiquette," is a set of guidelines for respectful and responsible behavior online. With the internet's vast reach, interactions can easily affect a broad audience, so it’s essential to communicate thoughtfully and kindly. Practicing good netiquette involves respecting others' opinions even in disagreements, avoiding offensive language, and being mindful of cultural sensitivities. Refraining from spamming or over-posting, respecting privacy, and avoiding the use of all caps—often seen as "shouting"—help maintain a courteous environment. Additionally, it’s crucial to fact-check before sharing information to prevent the spread of misinformation. Being considerate online builds positive relationships, fosters productive discussions, and contributes to a respectful digital community.

Self Assessment Question

1. What are all the etiquettes available in the digi world?
2. Explain the golden rules for cell phone etiquette
3. Write about the importance of Social media etiquette
4. Elaborate the do's and dont's of Telephone Etiquette
5. What are all the key point to keep in mind while making the call?
6. Explain about the elements of telephone etiquette
7. How did you master the telephone courtesy
8. Brief out the terms: Transferring the calls, Call on Hold, Voicemail Handling
9. How did you end the conversation?
10. Write about the handling methods for rude or impatient customers
11. Write a note on Internet/ Email Etiquette
12. What method we are using now a days as a example of Online Chat Etiquette?

UNIT- IV

BUSINESS ATTIRE & PROFESSIONALISM

Unit Summary

Objectives

1. To analyse business attire in various workplace
2. To successfully handle multi-cultural challenges
3. To find out the courtesies for the physically challenged persons.

Business Attire

Business attire is what you wear to work — whether that's on a work Zoom call or for an in-office meeting. This attire will vary depending on where and for whom you work. For example, you might wear more formal clothes if you're a lawyer meeting with clients at a law firm. On the other hand, if you're working for a laid-back social media company, the dress code might be more casual.

Business Professional

Business professional is a formal dress code commonly found in more traditional workplace settings. Industries such as banking, accounting, law, government and finance typically require business professional dress in the workplace. Business professional clothing might also be appropriate for job fairs or networking events where you know the attire to be more formal.

When attending an interview, unless you're aware of strict formal attire requirements, you should commonly err toward the side of business casual. Typically the most appropriate outfit for an interview is one step more formal than what the workforce at that company wears. For example, if the dress at a certain company is casual, your interview clothing should be smart casual or business casual

Dress Code

Dress codes vary by company and industry, but they generally reflect the company's culture and image. A dress code is a set of rules that specify what clothing is appropriate for a particular occasion or group of people. Dress codes can be found in many places, including schools, offices, and restaurants. They can also apply to specific events.

Dress codes are based on social norms and perceptions, and can vary based on the occasion, circumstances, and purpose. They can also be symbolic of social ideas, such as cultural identity, social class, attitude towards comfort, and political or religious affiliations.

Britannica Dictionary definition of DRESS CODE. [count] : a set of rules about what clothing may and may not be worn at a school, office, restaurant, etc

Types Of Business Attire

Below is an outline of the most common types of business attire:

1. Casual

Casual business attire is informal clothing worn not only in most business settings but also in many settings outside of work. You might wear casual clothing if you work in an informal office where others wear things like T-shirts, jeans and open-toed shoes. You should avoid wearing casual dress with clients and in interviews, even if the office is casual overall.

Casual Attire

Image Description

Examples of casual attire: Casual dress includes items like T-shirts, button-down shirts, blouses and sweaters on top. Bottoms might include jeans, khakis, linen pants, cropped pants or shorts. Casual shoes can include sneakers, loafers, low heels or sandals.

Related: Understanding a Casual Dress Code (Plus Tips and Examples)

2. Smart Casual

Smart casual is another form of casual business attire with a stylish twist. You might include more trendy pieces of clothing if dressing in smart casual. This type of business attire is appropriate for more flexible offices including informal settings.

You might also choose to wear smart casual in an interview for a more informal office. This way, you fit in with their informal dress code while still maintaining a clean, professional look that communicates that you care about your appearance.

Smart Casual

Image Description

Examples of smart casual attire: Smart casual might include items like blazers, sports jackets, ties, button-down shirts, collared shirts, dresses, sweaters, trousers, khakis, skirts, blouses, heels, flats, dress shoes, clean sneakers, jewelry, belts and scarves.

3. Business Casual

Business casual is a common form of dress worn in many offices. While many classic business staples are used in business casual wear, there are casual elements included like khakis.

Business casual is appropriate for many interviews, client meetings and office settings. Because it is not very casual and also not very formal, this is usually an appropriate way to dress if you’re unsure about the setting.

Business Casual

Image Description

Examples of business casual attire: Examples of business casual clothing include pencil skirts, slacks, khakis, trousers, blouses, collared shirts, button-down shirts, sport coats, blazers and sweaters. Accessorize with jackets, ties, simple jewelry and belts. Shoes can include flats, lifestyle sneakers (with leather or canvas), Oxfords, loafers, mules, boots or heels.

4. Business Professional

Business professional is a traditional form of attire used in more conservative settings or companies with strict dress codes. You might wear business professional in industries like finance, government or law. Business professional clothes should be well-fitted and may be tailored to fit you specifically.

Business Professional

Image Description

Examples of business professional attire: When dressing business professional, you can wear tidy dresses, slacks, skirts, slacks, dark-colored suits and ties. Business professional tops include neat button-down shirts or blouses with a blazer. Business professional shoes include heels, loafers or flats. You can accessorize with minimal jewelry and belts.

5. Business Formal

Business formal is reserved for the most formal settings such as award ceremonies, special dinners, benefits or other important evening events. Business formal is similar to "black tie," but should be reserved to maintain professionalism.

Business Formal

Image Description

Examples of business formal attire: Business formal includes a dark pants suit, dark suit and tie, a black suit with a light button-down shirt, skirt suit or suit dress. In some cases, a long evening dress may be appropriate. Shoe options include formal flats, heels, Oxfords or loafers. Accessorize with jewelry, belts, a tie clip, or small cuff links.

6. Gender-Neutral Professional Dress

There are several ways of dressing for the workplace and different degrees of formality that do not adhere to a gender binary.

You can dress gender-neutral elements up or down depending on the situation for which you're dressing. For casual dress, jeans, sweaters and shirts are all great options. For shoes, you might choose trendy sneakers, sandals or loafers.

For more formal forms of dress, you might choose slacks, trousers or neat chinos. Options for tops include sweaters, button-downs or shirts with cardigans. Shoes might include loafers, oxfords or stylish lace-up shoes.

Pantsuits are a great option for any formal setting. These can be paired with flat or slightly heeled oxfords or loafers.

Gender Neutral

Let's Sum Up

Business attire refers to a dress code that strikes a balance between professionalism and comfort, often referred to as "business casual." It is less formal than traditional business professional wear but still maintains a polished appearance suitable for the workplace. Men typically wear collared shirts, chinos, or dress pants, paired with loafers or dress shoes. Ties and blazers are optional, allowing for more flexibility. For women, business attire includes blouses, dress pants, knee-length skirts, or dresses, paired with flats or low heels. The overall look is neat, professional, and approachable, designed to be suitable for a variety of work environments without being overly formal. This dress code is common in office settings that encourage a relaxed yet professional atmosphere.

Check Your Progress

1. Define Business attire
2. How do the professional image and the business style differs
3. Write about the dress code in various professional

Guidelines For Business Professional Attire

Each office environment and company will differ, but here are some general guidelines to follow for men and women.

Men

- Dark-coloured or neutral suits
- Simple ties
- Light pastel, white, or cream button-down dress shirts
- Coloured socks are fine, but no white socks
- Leather shoes, such as an oxford or loafer
- Brown shoes with brown or dark olive, and navy blue suits. Black shoes with black or grey suits. Black suits go with black shoes. Grey suits usually go with black shoes.

Women

- A business suit is a good idea
- Oxford-style blouses that are not too low cut or billowy
- A professional dress that comes to the knee or lower. It should be so conservative that you would only wear it to the office
- Most business professional offices require hosiery
- Shoes with a closed-toed shoe and modest heel
- Jewelry and makeup should not be distracting

Business Attire Tips

When deciding how to dress for certain situations, there are a few things to consider:

- If you work in an office, pay close attention to the way people dress. While the office may be casual, you might notice that people in leadership positions dress slightly more formally. You may choose to dress similarly to the people who hold the position you would like to reach.

- If you're going to an interview, check the company's "About Us" page and social media profiles for clues about their culture. They might have pictures or videos about their offices where you can see how employees typically dress. If you're still unsure, ask your recruiter or another contact what they recommend you wear to be successful in the interview.
- If you're going to a business meeting, ask your colleagues who may know or have met with this same person about how their offices operate and how you can appear respectful and professional during your meeting with them.
- In any setting, avoid overly large or busy accessories, heels that are four inches or higher, and any clothing with profanity or possibly offensive imagery or phrases.
- You might use different styles of business attire for different settings or occasions. Pay attention to the dress code, if applicable. If not, look to other people's styles of dress or ask around if needed. Dressing appropriately can help you be seen as a professional employee who cares about your success in the role.

Importance Of Professional Attire

Professional attire contributes to several important elements of a business, including productivity, company image and employee morale. Here are a few examples of how a professional dress code can benefit the workplace:

- Makes a positive impression on people visiting the workplace
- Creates and maintains a cohesive professional image
- Fosters a sense of belonging among team members
- Boosts the confidence of employees
- Encourages fair treatment of employees by supervisors

Common Mistakes In Choosing The Business Attire

- While mistakes may arise when selecting clothes for work, there are plenty of easyways to avoid them. Here are some common mistakes alongside solutions you can use:

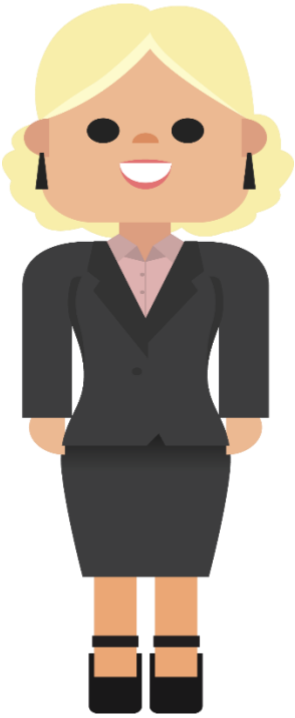
- Ill-fitting clothing: Taking measurements before ordering clothes online or purchasingcustom-made clothing can help avoid this.
- Stained or damaged clothing: Regular upkeep, such as frequently washing and repairingor replacing clothes, can prevent this.
- Worn-out footwear: Regularly cleaning and polishing footwear can help to restore theappearance of shoes.
- Improper grooming: Features such as hair and nails can be regularly cut, cleaned andstyled to ensure a well-groomed appearance.

Professional Image and Attire

Your professional image and visual presentation weighs heavily on an employer's impressionof you. It is important to note that different employers and environments will have differing expectations of formality when it comes to dress codes, for example, a construction company may be much more casual than a law office. As a general rule, focus on dressing one step abovewhat they would wear to work. This may involve researching the company beforehand or asking the person who has called to schedule the interview what the dress code is. Use the images below to help you to prepare.

- Avoid any clothing that is too tight, revealing, or uncomfortable.
- Have polished, clean shoes and avoid shoes that may be difficult to walk in.
- Choose solid colours and subtle patterns, avoid distracting patterns or bright colours.
- Avoid noisy or distracting jewellery, watches, and heavy makeup.
- Make sure your clothes are clean, ironed, and not wrinkly.
- Ensure you are well-groomed by having clean and neat hair.
- Be aware of scent-free policies.

Feminine Business Professional



TOP: Light coloured, collared blouse, tucked in SUIT: Typically two pieces in black, charcoal or navy

BOTTOMS: Skirts are not shorter than two fingers above the knee with minimal slits, pantsare wrinkle-free and fitted

ACCESSORIES: Minimal and conservative jewellery can be worn, avoid anything that's dangling or distracting.

SHOES: Matching, closed toe, polished shoes with a low to moderate heel

HAIR: Clean & neat

MAKEUP: Natural and conservative

HOSIERY Wear black or neutral hosiery with a skirt

NAILS: Neutral polished nails or none at all, avoid bold colours and remove if chipping

Feminine Business Casual

TOP: Tailored shirts, blouses or sweaters with a conservative neckline

BOTTOMS: Skirts are not shorter than two fingers above the knee with minimal slits, pants are wrinkle free and fitted. Khaki or other colours are appropriate

ACCESSORIES: Several pieces of jewellery can be worn, avoid being flashy. Belt shouldmatch shoes

SHOES: Matching, closed or opened toe, polished shoes with a low to moderate heel

HAIR: Clean & neat

MAKEUP: Natural and conservative

HOSIERY Wear black or neutral hosiery with a skirt

NAILS: Neutral polished nails or none at all, avoid bold colours and remove if chipping

Masculine Business Professional

TOP: A solid coloured, button up dress shirt, tucked in TIE: Conservative pattern or solid colour, hang to belt line

SUIT: Typically two to three piece suit in black, charcoal or navy

BOTTOMS: Wrinkle free and fitted pants that break just above your shoe

SOCKS: Dark colours that match attire

HAIR: Clean & neat

FACIAL HAIR: Neatly trimmed & well-groomed

ACCESSORIES: A belt that matches the colour of your shoesNAILS: : Trimmed and clean

SHOES: Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

Masculine Business Casual

TOP: Subtly coloured or patterned button up shirt, tucked in

TIE: Optional, conservative pattern or solid colour, hang to belt lineBOTTOMS: Dress pants, khaki or other coloured fitted pants

SOCKS: Colours that match attire

HAIR: Clean & neat

FACIAL HAIR: Neatly trimmed & well-groomed

ACCESSORIES: A belt that matches the colour of your shoesNAILS: : Trimmed and clean

SHOES: Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

Gender Neutral Business Professional

TOPS: Sweater, subtly coloured or patterned collared shirt, tucked inSUIT: Typically two to three piece suit in black, charcoal or navy

BOTTOMS: Wrinkle free and fitted pants that break just above your shoe

HAIR: Clean & neat

MAKEUP: Natural and conservative

FACIAL HAIR: Neatly trimmed & well-groomed

ACCESSORIES: A belt that matches the colour of your shoes

SOCKS: Colours that match attire

NAILS: : Trimmed and clean

SHOES: Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

TOPS: Sweater, subtly coloured or patterned collared shirt, tucked in

Gender Neutral Business Casual

TOPS: Sweater, sweater vest, subtly coloured or patterned button up shirt, tucked in

BOTTOMS: Dress pants, khaki or other coloured fitted pants

HAIR: Clean & neat

MAKEUP: Natural and conservative

FACIAL HAIR: Neatly trimmed & well-groomed

ACCESSORIES: A belt that matches the colour of your shoes

SOCKS: Colours that match attire

NAILS: : Trimmed and clean

SHOES: Black or brown, polished, closed toe shoes

How To Improve Your Professional Image

In every work-place there are similar unspoken rules when it comes to being professional.

From timeliness and staying organized to maintaining a business casual dress code, everycompany has a tone they set for their own professional image.

As you establish yourself at your place of work, or as you are looking for a new career, it'simportant to consistently keep up with and improve your own professional image.

Be intentional.

- A huge part of professionalism is being intentional in all you do.
- Work on being thoughtful and intentional about all you say and do in your office setting.
- If you have to think twice about something you're going to say to your co-worker, youshould probably keep it to yourself.
- If you're worried about the aftermath of a decision you have to make, be open and honest with your boss and run it by them.
- The more you choose to be intentional at work, the faster you will see improvement when it comes to your professional image.
- Intentionality will make it easier for you to discern in the workplace when is best to speak up, and when is best to probably stay quiet. As you make subtle changes to be more intentional at work, encourage those around you to do the same.

Establish The Perfect Attire.

- The way you present yourself when you walk into the office has a big impact on yourprofessional image.
- If you're someone who tends to take a little less time in the morning to prep your dailylook, consider putting some extra effort into your style.
- After your first day on the job it's easy to assess what the acceptable attire is

based onwhat your co-workers are wearing.

- Whether your office is more casual or requires a full suit and tie, establishing the perfectattire for work is a great way to boost your professional image.
- Don't be afraid to splurge on staple clothing items you know you'll be able to weardaily.
- If you'd like to save on your look, consider shopping at your local thrift store.
- Online consignment shops like thredUP are a great option as well as you can find affordable professional attire from name brands like Madewell for a better price.
- Wherever you choose to shop for your new look, have fun with making it your own. Being yourself with what you wear to the office will better establish a unique and fun professional image.

Always Go The Extra Mile.

- You've probably heard this before. But it's worth it and can do more for your professional image than anything else. While it may seem difficult at first, but it's actually easier than you might think.
- Whether you offer an extra hand for a company fundraiser, or stay a few minutes late to help with someone else's deadline, the little things will add up.
- Your professional image will improve leaps and bounds by simply doing a bit extra each and every day you enter the office.
- Taking time out of your day to help your co workers and your supervisor with things that aren't necessarily your responsibility will show how much you care about your joband the company as a whole.
- From working towards a promotion to simply wanting to establish yourself more in your role at work, going the extra mile is sure to improve your image as a professional.

Be Available.

- There are many things to be said about being as available as possible when it comes towhat you do for work.
- While it may feel as though you only need to keep up your professional image

when you’re in the office, technology has proven this is not the case nowadays. Computers and smartphones allow your boss to reach you at anytime, anywhere.

- Instead of being frustrated when your boss asks you to do some extra work from home,embrace the opportunity and be available.
- Those who value their job also value availability and will make the time to get the workdone. As you work towards being more available, you should see an improvement in your professional image as well.
- A good boss will value your willingness to be available when needed, and your discernment on when to say no to extra work as well.
- Find a professional balance between your free time and times when you know you canlend a hand.
- Your professional image at work is one that is shaped by many different factors. As youbegin to put these steps into practice to improve how you appear to both your boss andyour co-workers, ask yourself where you see the most room for improvement.
- Do you need to be more available, or do you simply need to put more effort into your appearance as you get ready for your day? Whatever changes you make, your professional image is bound to improve for the better in the long run.
- Looking for a new career as the first step to improving your professional image? We’rehiring. See our open jobs here.

Let's Sum Up

Appropriate business attire guidelines emphasize a balance between professionalism, comfort, and adherence to company culture. For both men and women, clothing should be neat, clean, and well-fitted, avoiding anything overly casual or flashy. Men should opt for collared shirts, dress pants or chinos, and closed-toe dress shoes, with the option to add a blazer or tie for a more formal touch. Women are encouraged to wear blouses, knee-length skirts, dress pants, or conservative dresses, paired with flats or low-heeled shoes. Both genders should avoid clothing that is too tight, short, or revealing. Accessories should be minimal and tasteful, avoiding loud patterns or excessive jewelry. In terms of colors, neutral or subdued tones are typically preferred, although some modern workplaces may allow for subtle personal expression. Overall, the key is to maintain a professional, polished appearance that reflects the standards of the organization while providing comfort for day-to-day tasks.

Check your Progress

1. Give some tips for selecting the business attire
2. Write about the importance of business attire and also the common mistakes in choosing the same
3. Explain the types of professional image
4. How do you improve your professional image

Grooming For Success

When it comes to professional life, nothing can beat the power of Self-grooming. Whether youare an HR professional or some labor supervisor, your personality shall emit a lot of qualities about you. Hence, you need to pay great attention to the need for and significance of gloomingin professional life.

No doubt qualifications and experience are crucial for every job but what makes you stand apart is how you carry yourself. It is also necessary if you want to grow in your career. So hereis a little essay on Importance of grooming.

Self Grooming

It is a noble act of holding up your body and taking care of yourself along with your appearance. self-Grooming is extremely important for career growth. It involves necessary daily activitieslike bathing, personal hygiene, and dressing. A smile is one of the essential things which can change the aura of the atmosphere.

Importance of Self - Grooming

Here are some points of 10 importance of self-grooming which would define the importance of grooming for career development. which will also be helpful for the benefits of personal grooming.

1. Develops Natural Abilities

When you follow the basic hygienic routine, your mind becomes more focused, and you bringout better results. To gain the frequency of betterment, your mind starts repeating that pattern,and hence they develop natural abilities.

2. Establishes Relationships

Self-Grooming makes your personality magnetic and charming. One gets to meet new people,create relationships and boost friendships. Learning amidst new people opens up various sources of information and inspiration which can be extremely beneficial for career development.

3. Makes You More Productive

If a person is the beholder of a pleasing personality, he would not just attract more people but would be happy from the inside. This would gradually bring up his work results and prove to be a productive element of his personality. Developed personality and self-grooming are crucialelements that determine the efficiency of the tasks completed.

4. Makes You Stand Out From Competitors

A well-groomed persona with a developed personality stands out from the crowd. Good dressing expresses professionalism and emits the vibes of positivity. The right hairstyle gives a refined look to your face. A person with professional attire stands out and looks more welcoming.

5. Feel Extra-Confident

Well Groomed man shall feel more confident as he might have realized his potentials and abilities to the fullest. This can be the result of their awareness of their personality and appearance.

Confidence is something that can even let you swim across a volcano, and similar is the situation when it comes to career growth. When a person is confident, he would take up the scary moments into his own hands and would prevail and conquer. Confident men also have killer instincts and an insane level of self-control which lets them stand apart and perform better.

6. Radiate A Sense Of Self-Esteem

There would come a time when your abilities would come under question. That’s the time your personality shall vouch for you. If you are well-groomed and have a confident personality, youwon’t doubt your abilities for a second and present a strong front.

A well-dressed man shall present self-assurance and would reflect more assurance than the person who doesn’t care about his/her dressing.

7. They Augment Physical Attractiveness

We always prefer attractive things over unattractive ones. This applies to human relations as well. People tend to stay closer to the people who are better looking than those who dress shabbily. With a better physical appearance, one makes better impressions on the first go, andothers tend to keep that person in high regard. This goes a long way to getting a rewarding career.

8. Can Represent Their Organizations Well

People associate the names of organizations with specific people. They assess the goodwill ofthe firm through the goodwill of some people.

Hence it is imperative to have a nice image and personality for people can relate yourcompany's profile according to your profile.

The groomed people can be the best representatives of an organization for they are charming,look active, and are productive. The people would think the same for an organization.

9. Look And Appear More Mature.

Mature people are more likely to succeed in their work. They have an aura of self-respect and wisdom around them. People feel more comfortable and find themselves, problem solvers.

If a person has the right grooming, his appearance can bring out the maturity in a man who canfurther be beneficial for professional growth. Dressing well according to the trends makes onethe bearer of a healthy balance of maturity.

10. Changes The Way Of Thinking

How you carry yourself affects your thinking process a lot. If you have a pleasant personality,are confident about your appearance and dressing, you are more likely to have a sure and 'can-do attitude'.

Grooming can generate a mindset where a person starts believing in his intuitions and work according to the confident gut which most of the time comes out to be the game-changer.

Professionals who don't carry themselves neatly are more likely to have more insecurities and have low self-esteem.

Let's Sum Up

Grooming for success is about more than just looking polished—it's a reflection of professionalism, self-respect, and attention to detail. In any career or social setting, first impressions count, and well-groomed individuals project confidence and credibility. Proper grooming includes maintaining personal hygiene, dressing appropriately for the occasion, and paying attention to small details like neat hair, clean nails, and well-maintained attire. It signals that you take pride in yourself and your work, fostering trust and respect from colleagues, clients, and peers. Ultimately, grooming is a crucial element in creating a positive, lasting impact that can open doors to opportunities and success.

Check your Progress

1. Do you think that grooming will help in your success
2. Define self- grooming & write about its Importance

Cultural Diversity

Culture is what shapes us, it is the reason we have certain beliefs, influences how we behave and is what gives us our identity. Cultural diversity is the representation of different cultural and ethnic groups in society.

When talking about cultural diversity in the workplace, it is the inclusion of employees from different backgrounds, different races, different sexual orientations and different political views. The term cultural diversity encourages an environment of inclusion, with representatives from a range of various backgrounds that come together to work as a team.

It's easy to talk about the theory and definitions of cultural diversity, but when it comes to creating that within an organisation, it very much depends on the practices used during the hiring process.

Why Is Cultural Diversity Important?

We've touched on the idea of the benefits cultural diversity offers, but equality and diversity are something that hasn't just received lip service within the media. There's been extensive research into its positive effects and the importance of business inclusivity.

Ultimately, workplace diversity and inclusion allow businesses to build teams that bring different viewpoints and talents to the mix, increasing innovation and driving higher revenues.

Types Of Workplace Diversity

To get a deeper understanding of what cultural diversity looks like, you need to start with a rundown of different types of recognised workplace diversity.

We are all defined by characteristics that go beyond the basic HR capture forms. We could write an everlasting list with all the types of cultural diversity with this theory in mind.

In HR terms, there are a few primary types of diversity characteristics to bear in mind

Gender – women make up a bigger percentage of the workforce than ever before. But there is still a gap in terms of fair pay and the percentage of women in leadership roles.

Gender diversity build respect for all gender identities. This can enhance the interpersonal and communication skills within a workplace, which can also improve interactions with clients or customers.

Sex and gender can be used in the traditional sense of male and female employees. For example, you may sometimes hear the term "gender balance" used by companies trying to achieve a 50-50 balance between employees who identify as male and employees who identify as female. But, as gender is increasingly redefined, the term "gender diversity" may be more appropriate, since there are multiple variations in gender and sexual orientation.

Race And Ethnicity – (come from different cultures) as ethnic and racial identities evolve, standardised forms with ethnic groups fail to hit the mark. By opening the conversation with employees and candidates on race and ethnicity, this goes a step towards improving cultural diversity.

Race describes the physical characteristics that a person has that originate from their genetic background or geographic location. Having racial diversity can be very important in a workplace, as it can sometimes be the quickest way for a visitor or potential new hire to determine whether a workplace is diverse.

Cultural Diversity

This type of diversity is related to each person's ethnicity and it's usually the set of norms we get from the society we were raised in or our family's values. Having different cultures in the workplace is more common in multinational companies. Cultural diversity can be very valuable in a workplace, especially for businesses that work with clients or other companies in different countries.

When a workplace is culturally diverse, employees might also be more inclined to learn about other cultures on their own, which can show interest in and respect for their coworkers' identities.

LGBT – the LGBT community includes a complex range of people in terms of backgrounds, experiences and challenges. To work towards eliminating discrimination, careful attention needs to be paid towards a strategy as an LGBT employer.

Age diversity – both younger and older workers can be discriminated against in terms of preconceptions. Through steps like opening apprenticeships to all ages and providing cross-generation mentoring programmes, these prejudices can be addressed.

Age diversity means working with people of different ages and, most importantly, generations. For example, millennials, GenZers and GenXers can coexist in the same workplace.

Generation X follows, and they were born between 1965 and 1980. Next comes Generation Y (more commonly known as Millennials), born between roughly 1981 and 1994. The youngest generation in today's workforce is Gen Z, meaning Generation Z, who were born between 1995 and 2009.

This can introduce employees of all ages to new concepts that might help them improve their work.

Disability Diversity

There are various types of disabilities or chronic conditions included here, ranging from mental to physical. Companies often make reasonable accommodations to help people with disabilities integrate into the workplace, such as installing ramps for wheelchairs or providing mental health support. Some companies also adjust their hiring process to make sure it's inclusive. Mental health – focusing on mental health along with workplace wellness support can combat a variety of issues, from absenteeism to behavioural problems.

Neurodiversity – recognising and providing a supportive environment for those with neurological differences that include dyslexia, autism and Tourette's helps

• organisations to celebrate differences and the benefits they can offer in well-matched job types.

Thought style – different personalities and thought styles can enhance creativity if the individual and the role are well matched. In contrast, it can cause stress if ill-matched.

It's worth noting that this is by no means an exhaustive list. To be truly diverse, researching and considering other differences from marital status, to education, language and accents, all come into the mix.

Six Benefits Of Cultural Diversity In The Workplace

The benefits of diversity are long and varied. But here are our headline three benefits to fostering a culturally diverse policy in your organisation.

1. Cultural diversity helps develop and maximise skillsets

A culturally diverse workplace empowers people to develop their talents and skills. A range of ideas and expertise enables those to learn from a more diverse collection of colleagues.

It can also boost problem-solving capabilities and increase happiness and productivity. In an environment where all voices are heard, this spirit of innovation and encouragement to contribute can drive business success.

2. Cultural diversity improves the recruitment process

Surveys show that two-thirds of candidates cite diversity as an important consideration during a job hunt [9]. By developing a strategy for cultural diversity, you can broaden your appeal to prospective employees, and reach out to more high-level candidates across the globe.

3. Cultural diversity can help you to retain talent

Aside from attracting a broader talent pool in the first place, cultural diversity is the key to building the ideologies of respect between company and employee, and cooperation. In turn, this makes you a more attractive proposition to valuable candidates making you stand out in the marketplace.

4. Cultural diversity improves your teams creativity

Studies have shown the positive impact a culturally diverse workforce can have on a team and companies creativity. By bringing together people from different backgrounds you will see a more diverse series of solutions to issues and approaches to projects you might have.

A more diverse workforce allows you to bring new ways of thinking into the business that can be applied in many different ways. By listening to each employee's voice and way of thinking, a company will no longer be pigeon-holed in one direction.

A company that actively encourages diversity in the workplace will see more perspectives being discussed and more solutions being thought of than ever before. This can inspire employees to perform to the highest of their abilities.

5. Cultural diversity can help increase employee engagement

The best way to learn about other cultures and ethnicities is by talking to someone with that background. Research can only get you so far and has a far less personal touch. By communicating with someone with a different culture or background you not only gain first hand knowledge, you connect with someone directly.

Employees who engage with others about their background during lunches or out of hours drinks will feel better connected to a company, feel truly listened to and in turn engage further with their colleagues and the business.

Employee engagement helps build trust, starting from the very top and moving all the way down throughout the company. Engagement is always positive for the company, it can lead to greater motivation, collaboration and loyalty.

6. Cultural diversity will improve your company's reputation

A company that employs people from all different types of cultures and backgrounds will be considered a good employer. This reputation amongst employees will elevate a company's standing and attract more people to come and work there.

Your company's reputation amongst its customers is one of the most important things. Customer service and reputation can be greatly improved through a diverse workforce, with different employees being able to assist customers in a more personal way thanks to shared experiences and understanding.

Five Benefits Of Diversity In The Workplace

Diverse workplaces employ people who represent a wide range of ages, races, backgrounds, languages spoken, sexual orientations, abilities (physical and mental), gender identities and nationalities. By expanding your hiring practices to attract more candidates from diverse backgrounds, you can enhance the way your business functions and make your company more appealing to applicants. Here are five significant advantages of diversity in the workplace:

1. Better opportunities for creativity and problem-solving

A diverse workforce brings a wide variety of people with different experiences, skills, perspectives and insights together to solve problems. Diversity increases innovation, creativity and strategic thinking because teams of people who come from different backgrounds can draw upon their unique experiences and a wider range of knowledge to spark new, innovative ideas. You may also find that your employee relationships are stronger when coworkers can connect on a deeper level based on their backgrounds or shared experiences, improving workplace collaboration.

2. Smarter decision-making

Diverse groups of employees pull from a wider range of sources and experiences. That can help them make more educated decisions, leading to better results for your business. Diverse teams make better decisions than non-diverse teams up to 87% of the time, according to one study.

Teams that demonstrate diversity are proven to be smarter, more innovative and more socially aware, highlighting some of the many diversity benefits your business experiences when you expand your hiring practices. These individuals are known to process facts more carefully, which is a significant factor in making smarter, data-driven decisions.

3. An increase in profits and productivity

Ambitious professionals are often more attracted to inclusive companies. This can result in a more motivated, efficient workforce and increased productivity and profitability. According to an Indeed survey, 55% of job seekers say it is very or extremely important to work at a company that prioritizes diversity and inclusion.

Not only are diverse teams more productive, but diversity benefits also become apparent in your company's profitability. One study shows that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on their executive teams are 15% more likely to generate above-average profitability compared to companies in the bottom quartile whose executive teams are predominantly white males.

4. Reduced rates of employee turnover

One of the most significant advantages of diversity in the workplace is that employees often feel more comfortable and satisfied in inclusive environments. They also tend to be more loyal and are more inclined to stay longer at companies where their unique contributions are recognized and respected.

Overall, workplace equality can increase confidence and encourage employees to achieve their full potential. Diverse teams often have higher morale and are more productive, innovative and loyal to the organization.

5. Improved reputation for your business

When businesses promote diversity, they're perceived as more relatable, socially responsible and human by a greater number of people. This can improve your overall brand reputation, allowing you to attract new customers, partnerships and markets.

An Indeed survey shows that 17% of job seekers say inclusivity and diversity displayed in the hiring process is one of the top factors for helping them develop a feeling of positive connection or camaraderie with a company during the interview stage. Focusing on diversity in the workplace creates a positive cycle for your business where more diverse employees result in better company culture, allowing you to attract a more diverse pool of top performers when bringing in new applicants.

Let’s Sum Up

Cultural diversity refers to the variety of cultural differences that exist within a society, encompassing language, religion, traditions, values, and lifestyles. It is a source of richness that fosters creativity, innovation, and broader perspectives. In diverse environments, individuals are exposed to new ideas and ways of thinking, which can lead to greater problem-solving abilities and a deeper understanding of the world. Embracing cultural diversity promotes inclusion, reduces prejudice, and builds stronger communities where everyone feels valued. It also encourages global collaboration and empathy, vital in today’s interconnected world. Ultimately, cultural diversity strengthens society by celebrating both our shared humanity and our unique differences.

Check Your Progress

1. Why is cultural diversity important
2. Examine the types of workplace diversity
3. How the individual got benefited by adopting cultural diversity in the workplace

Gender Sensitivity

"Gender" is the phrase now commonly used to refer those methods in which a lifestyle reformulates what starts as a reality of characteristics. Fashion and clothing are intertwined with each other in creating a gendered-structure of society predicated on the outlook of clothed human body. In the last two centuries, the definitions of gender are becoming more and vaguer, reflecting the cultural uncertainty that surrounds the male and female roles. These roles provide to each the gender identity which is a social construct not only determined by biological sex. The stereotypical masculine or feminine qualifications are not personality characteristics of individual men and women but socially constructed representations of gender, on the basis of what society expects of each sex (Condor, 1987; and Lloyd & Duveen, 1993). These expectations organize the social gender identity, making a strong frame of reference within which boys and girls socialize and adults are redefined. Thus the term gender identity refers to the construction of this identity due to the interaction with the social environment but also due to the realization of a person that it exists as a man or a woman (Cox & Dittmar, 1995). There are significant cross-cultural differences regarding the relationship of sex and clothing. Also, clothing is the main instrument of the appearance of the body considering in the general sense that it includes anything that contributes to this configuration, like shoes, hairstyle, accessories and even cosmetics. Two major socio-cultural factors shaping gender are the dress and fashion. Roles of men and women have influenced clothing and garment and vice versa. The female dress has historically limited the social roles of women both physically and symbolically. In the 19th century, the dress of non-working woman, demonstrates the economic situation of her husband, who was the supplier of the family

Gender sensitivity in business attire is about fostering an inclusive environment where employees feel comfortable and respected regardless of their gender identity. Here are a few key points to consider for

Promoting Gender Sensitivity In Business Attire:

1. Inclusive Dress Codes

- Dress codes should be gender-neutral or flexible, allowing employees to choose attire that aligns with their gender identity.
- Avoid assigning specific clothing items (e.g., "women must wear skirts") and instead, describe the desired level of professionalism without enforcing gender-based expectations.

2. Cultural Sensitivity

- Recognize that gender expression varies across cultures, and business attire should respect diverse traditions and practices.

- Allow room for traditional garments (e.g., hijabs, saris) while maintaining professional standards.

3. Non-binary and Transgender Inclusion

- Ensure policies explicitly include non-binary and transgender employees. Offer clear guidance that employees may dress according to their gender identity.
- Provide gender-neutral restroom and changing facilities to support this inclusion further.

4. Respect Personal Choices

- Employees should have the freedom to express their individuality within the bounds of professional attire without fear of judgment or bias.
- Managers and colleagues should be trained to avoid assumptions or comments about attire choices based on gender norms.

5. Training and Awareness

- Conduct sensitivity training for all employees to ensure understanding and acceptance of diverse gender identities and expressions.
- Regularly update policies and practices to stay aligned with evolving perspectives on gender sensitivity.

By ensuring that business attire policies are flexible, inclusive, and non-discriminatory, organizations can foster a more equitable workplace where all employees feel respected and empowered.

Let's Sum Up

Gender sensitivity is the recognition and respect for the different needs, roles, and experiences of all genders, promoting equality and fairness in every context. It involves understanding how social, cultural, and economic factors shape gender norms and influence individual opportunities. By fostering gender sensitivity, we challenge stereotypes, reduce discrimination, and create environments where everyone, regardless of gender, can thrive. It encourages equal participation and representation, ensuring that policies, workplaces, and social structures do not privilege one gender over another. Ultimately, gender sensitivity contributes to building more inclusive, equitable societies, where individuals are valued for their abilities and character, rather than limited by gender-based assumptions.

Social Media And Communication With Colleagues

When communicating with colleagues about business attire on social media, it's essential to maintain professionalism and sensitivity. Here are some key guidelines for navigating social media interactions on this topic:

1. Avoid Public Criticism or Comments

- Never use social media to critique a colleague's attire, whether directly or indirectly. Comments about someone's appearance, especially their clothing, can easily be misinterpreted or seen as inappropriate.
- Public shaming or gossip about dress codes or attire choices can damage workplace relationships and create a hostile environment.

2. Respect Privacy

- If discussing business attire on a social platform, ensure it's a private or company-approved group. Avoid tagging or posting photos of colleagues without their consent, especially if it involves comments about their clothing.
- Be mindful of privacy settings to prevent sensitive conversations from being shared with a wider, unintended audience.

3. Stay Professional in Personal Profiles

- While social media can be casual, maintaining a professional tone is crucial when discussing workplace topics like attire. Avoid using humor or memes that could be seen as mocking or inappropriate for a business context.
- Set clear boundaries between personal and professional life on social media to avoid any misunderstandings about workplace norms.

4. Promote Inclusivity and Sensitivity

- If discussing business attire in a company's internal social media platforms, focus on inclusivity and flexibility. Encourage discussions that are respectful of gender identity, cultural differences, and personal preferences.
- Use social media positively to highlight company values around inclusivity and diversity in business attire.

5. HR and Dress Code Discussions

- Any concerns or questions about a colleague's business attire should be addressed directly with HR, not shared on social media. These are sensitive topics best handled privately through proper channels.
- Companies can use internal platforms to post reminders or clarifications about dress codes, but the tone should always be neutral and non-judgmental.

By adhering to these guidelines, social media can remain a positive and professional space for communication about business attire, ensuring respect for all colleagues in the workplace.

Social media plays a crucial role in how professionals communicate with colleagues, even when they are in business attire, as it blends personal branding with formal interactions. Here's how these elements come together:

1. Professional Image on Social Media

- **Profile Pictures:** Business attire is often a part of professional identity. Profile pictures on platforms like LinkedIn, where professionalism is key, typically feature individuals in formal business wear. This portrays a polished, competent image.
- **Posts and Updates:** Posting while in business attire on platforms such as LinkedIn or even Instagram for professional purposes (e.g., conferences, presentations) communicates credibility, expertise, and confidence.

2. Formal vs. Informal Communication

- **Tone of Interaction:** While wearing business attire and engaging in social media communication, professionals often maintain a formal tone, especially on platforms like LinkedIn. This contrasts with more casual communication styles found on platforms like Twitter or Facebook.
- **Video Calls and Meetings:** Colleagues who are dressed in business attire

during virtual meetings on platforms like Zoom or Teams tend to communicate more formally. The attire reinforces professionalism, even in a digital environment.

3. Influence of Business Attire on Perception

- **Nonverbal Communication:** Wearing business attire in photos or video interactions adds to the perception of authority and competence. It can shape the way colleagues and connections view one's role and expertise in the workplace.
- **Consistency Across Platforms:** A consistent professional appearance, supported by business attire, helps in establishing a cohesive personal brand across social media platforms. This is essential for building trust with colleagues, clients, and employers.

Overall, the combination of social media use and business attire helps reinforce a professional brand, facilitating more structured and respected communication in both virtual and physical business environments.

Let’s Sum Up

Social media has transformed the way colleagues communicate, offering convenient platforms for quick, informal interactions, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Whether through messaging apps, professional networks like LinkedIn, or workplace-specific tools, social media enables teams to stay connected across distances and time zones. However, effective use of these platforms requires clear boundaries and professionalism. While social media can enhance team cohesion and creativity, it’s important to maintain respectful and appropriate communication, avoiding the blurring of personal and professional lines. Additionally, being mindful of privacy and organizational policies is crucial to prevent misunderstandings or conflicts. When used thoughtfully, social media can foster stronger, more collaborative relationships among colleagues

Check Your Progress

1. How the social media plays a role in communicating with colleagues
2. Write about the guidelines for navigating social media interactions

Preventing Sexual Harassment

Preventing sexual harassment in the workplace is essential for fostering a respectful, safe, and productive environment. Businesses have a responsibility to create and uphold policies that reflect respect, professionalism, and inclusivity. Business etiquette plays a key role in maintaining these standards. Below are detailed notes on how to prevent sexual harassment through appropriate business etiquette:

1. Clear Understanding of Sexual Harassment

- **Definition:** Sexual harassment includes unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, and any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This can be explicit or implicit and can create a hostile work environment.
- **Types of Harassment:**
    - **Quid Pro Quo:** Offering work benefits in exchange for sexual favors.
    - **Hostile Work Environment:** Creating a work atmosphere that is intimidating, hostile, or offensive due to inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature.

2. Respect Personal Boundaries

- **Physical Space:** Always respect personal space, particularly when in formal or casual meetings. Avoid unnecessary physical contact, such as unwelcome touching, hugging, or pats on the back.
- **Verbal Communication:** In conversation, avoid making comments that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive, no matter how benign they might seem. Even jokes or remarks that might be intended as compliments could be taken inappropriately.
- **Non-verbal Behavior:** Avoid suggestive body language, leering, or any facial expressions that could be interpreted as inappropriate or offensive.

3. Professional Communication

- **Business Etiquette in Conversation:** Maintain professional language and avoid discussing personal or inappropriate subjects in work-related settings. Topics related to appearance, dating, or private lives are best avoided.
- **Written Communication:** Be mindful in emails, messages, and texts. Sexual jokes, innuendos, or informal tone can easily be misinterpreted. Written communication lasts longer and could serve as documentation in cases of harassment.

4. Creating a Respectful Work Culture

- **Inclusivity and Sensitivity:** Promote an inclusive and sensitive work environment. This means being aware of how your actions and words might affect individuals from diverse backgrounds. Everyone should feel safe, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.
- **Avoid Favoritism:** Refrain from singling out colleagues or employees for attention that could be interpreted as inappropriate or preferential. Relationships that seem unequal or overly personal could lead to a perception of favoritism or harassment.

5. Appropriate Business Attire

- **Dress Code:** Maintain a professional dress code that promotes respect and equality. While individuals have freedom to choose their clothing, business attire should be appropriate for the work environment and should not contribute to an overly casual or sexualized atmosphere.
- **Attire Awareness:** In organizations where formal or business attire is required, it's important to ensure that attire isn't overly revealing or provocative, as this can sometimes blur professional boundaries and lead to uncomfortable situations.

6. Training and Awareness

- **Mandatory Training:** Provide regular sexual harassment prevention training for all employees. This should include recognizing inappropriate behavior, understanding reporting procedures, and knowing the consequences of harassment.

- **Leadership Role:** Leaders and managers should lead by example in upholding business etiquette standards. They should promote open communication and demonstrate zero tolerance for any form of harassment.
- **Reporting Channels:** Clear reporting mechanisms must be in place for employees who experience or witness harassment. This ensures that employees feel safe to report inappropriate behavior without fear of retaliation.

7. Confidentiality and Support

- **Privacy Respect:** Ensure that when someone comes forward with a harassment complaint, the situation is handled confidentially. Spreading rumors or discussing sensitive information can contribute to a hostile environment and harm the individual reporting harassment.
- **Supportive Response:** When a complaint is made, the response should be supportive, ensuring that the affected person feels heard and that appropriate actions are taken to address the issue.

8. Consequences for Inappropriate Behavior

- **Clear Consequences:** Ensure that there are well-defined consequences for anyone found engaging in sexual harassment. This includes warnings, mandatory training, or dismissal in severe cases.
- **Consistent Enforcement:** All policies should be enforced consistently. There should be no tolerance for double standards, whether the individual involved is in a senior or junior position.

9. Maintaining Professionalism During Social Events

- **Company Gatherings:** At work-related social events, maintain the same level of professionalism as in the office. Socializing in informal environments can sometimes blur boundaries, but inappropriate behavior should never be excused or tolerated.
- **Alcohol Consumption:** If alcohol is served at company events, remind employees to drink responsibly. Alcohol can lower inhibitions and increase the likelihood of inappropriate actions or comments.

10. Digital Conduct

- **Social Media Behavior:** Be mindful of how you communicate with colleagues on social media platforms. Avoid comments or posts that could be interpreted as inappropriate or that overstep professional boundaries.
- **Workplace Chat Tools:** Messaging on workplace tools like Slack or Teams should follow the same professional standards as face-to-face conversations. Even in casual chats, avoid making jokes or comments that could be interpreted as sexual or offensive.

Preventing sexual harassment in the workplace is not just about following a policy but about fostering a culture of mutual respect and professionalism. Business etiquette plays a key role in ensuring that professional boundaries are upheld, and employees feel safe and respected. Clear policies, consistent enforcement, and a focus on respectful communication help create a positive work environment where harassment is not tolerated.

Let's Sum Up

Preventing sexual harassment in relation to business attire involves fostering a workplace culture that prioritizes respect, professionalism, and clear boundaries. Business attire should be chosen based on appropriateness for the workplace, not as a basis for inappropriate comments or behavior. Employers play a key role by implementing and enforcing policies that outline expectations for professional conduct, ensuring all employees understand that harassment in any form is unacceptable, regardless of attire. Training programs can help raise awareness of unconscious biases and reinforce the importance of treating all colleagues with dignity. Ultimately, prevention hinges on creating an inclusive environment where people are judged on their abilities, not their appearance, and where respectful communication is the norm.

Disability Etiquette

Basic disability etiquette involves treating people with disabilities with respect. For example, speak to the person directly, not to the person accompanying them. Do not make assumptions about what they can or cannot do.

Disability etiquette means respectful ways to communicate with and about people with disabilities. To ensure a disability-inclusive workplace culture, employees need to understand the basics and have the opportunity to learn and refresh their knowledge.

The Basics

Ask Before You Help

Interact with the person as a person first! Just because someone has a disability, don't assume he or she needs help. Offer assistance only if the person appears to need it, and ask how you may help before you act.

Be Sensitive About Physical Contact

Some people with disabilities depend on their arms for balance. Grabbing them – even if your intention is to assist – could knock them off balance. Avoid patting a person on the head or touching his wheelchair, scooter or cane. People with disabilities consider their equipment part of their personal space.

Think Before You Speak

Always speak directly to the person with a disability, not to his companion, aide or sign language interpreter. Don't apologize if you use an expression such as "I gotta run" or "See you later" that relates to the person's disability. These expressions are part of everyday language and it is likely the apology will be more offensive than the expression.

Don't Make Assumptions

People with disabilities are the best judge of what they can or cannot do. Don't make decisions for them about participating in any activity.

People Who Use Wheelchairs or Have Mobility Impairments

- Offer to shake hands when greeting someone.
- Don't lean on or touch someone's wheelchair.
- Place yourself at eye level when in conversation.
- People who use canes, crutches or other assistive devices use arms for

balance. Refrain from touching them or moving an object around them unexpectedly.

People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

- Identify yourself and allow the rest of the group to do the same.
- Offer your elbow if someone needs to be guided; don't take his.
- Walk on the opposite side of a guide dog or cane.
- Give specific, non-visual directions.
- Orient people with visual impairments using numbers on the face of a clock.

People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Follow the person's cues to find out if she prefers sign language, gesturing, wr iting or speaking.
- Before speaking to a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, tap on her should er or wave your hand to get her attention.
- Use a normal tone, speak clearly and distinctly.
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences that the person doesn't understand.
- Use facial expression, body language and pantomime.
- If a sign language interpreter is present, speak directly to the person who is d eaf, not to the interpreter.
- Be prepared to write notes to communicate, if necessary.

People with Speech Disabilities

- Give the person your full attention and be patient.
- Don't interrupt or finish the person's sentences.
- If you are not sure whether you have understood, you can repeat for verificati on.
- If, after trying, you still cannot understand the person, ask him to write it down or to suggest another way of communicating.

People with Developmental Disabilities

- Speak to the person in clear sentences, using simple words and concrete con cepts.
- Rephrase comments or questions for better clarity.
- Stay focused on the person as he responds to you and be patient.

- Avoid talking about a person with a developmental disability when he is present.

General Do's and Don'ts

- Relax and enjoy getting to know your colleagues or guests as people and as professionals.
- Ask before you provide assistance.
- Do not assume that a person with an apparent disability needs assistance; offering assistance in broad terms such as "*Let me know if you need anything"* opens the door without assumptions of inability.
- Think in terms of 'Disability Pride' language using powerful words such as: wheelchair user as opposed to confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair person; person who is deaf or blind rather than deaf or blind people.

Individuals with Mobility Disabilities

- Do not touch a person's mobility equipment.
- Be considerate of possible pain, balance, or post-traumatic stress concerns during physical contact.

- When engaging in a conversation, select a location where you can engage comfortably and that reduces distance between you.

Individuals who are Blind or have Low Vision

Blind Person Sign

- Identify yourself when entering a conversation and announce when you leave.
- When serving as a sighted guide, offer your arm or shoulder rather than grabbing or pushing the individual.
- Describe the setting, environment, written material, and obstacles when serving as a human guide.
- Resist the temptation to pet or talk to a guide or service animal.

Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation.

- If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter; keep your eyes on the individual and not on the interpreter.
- Face the person and speak in normal tones.

Individuals who have Speech Disabilities

- If you do not understand what the person is saying, ask the person to repeat what they said and then repeat it back to ensure you understood.
- Do not speak for the person or attempt to finish their sentences.

Individuals who have Non-Apparent Disabilities

- Seek to understand their lived experience.

- Recognize that disclosing their disability comes with a risk and honor requested confidentiality.
- Engage in a dialogue to determine individual needs.
- Support accommodations.

Etiquette Tips For Disability

Disabilities are very common in the workplace. And there are many different kinds of disabilities, including visible and invisible ones. You may say something to a co-worker that's rude or hurtful without meaning to. This is true even if you mean well or if you have a difference or disability yourself.

Use these disability etiquette tips to respect people's differences and help make your workplace more inclusive.

1. Focus on the person, not the disability.

No two disabilities are the same. And no two people experience the same disability in the same way. That's why it's important to avoid making assumptions about what people can or can't do.

Focus on the person, not the disability. Don't make assumptions, like that your co-worker with dyslexia can't read the handouts. Each person is unique. Get to know them as individuals, and, over time, you'll learn their strengths and preferences.

If you're on the hiring team, focus on the essential functions of the job. Put aside any preconceived ideas you have about what the person is or isn't able to do. When interviewing candidates with disabilities, ask about their skills and experience, just like you would with anyone else.

2. Think about the language you use.

In general, it's best to use language that puts the person first instead of their disability. For example:

- Say "person with a disability," not "disabled person"
- Say "person with Down syndrome" rather than "a Down's person"
- Say "person who uses a wheelchair" instead of "wheelchair-bound person"

But keep in mind that some people prefer disability- or identity-first language. For example, they may prefer to say "I'm autistic" rather than "I'm a person with autism." Respect and use their preferred terms.

Also, avoid negative or victimizing language. Say that someone “has a disability,” not that they “suffer from” or “are afflicted with” it.

3. Ask before you help.

Don’t assume that just because someone has a disability, they need your help.

If someone with a disability seems like they could use help, it’s OK to offer it and then wait for a response. But make sure you have the go-ahead before you act. And don’t be surprised if the answer is “no.”

For example, when walking with a person who is blind or has low vision, you can offer your arm or elbow. But don’t take their arm or touch their body or assistive device unless they ask you to.

If a person accepts your offer, ask them what they need or how you can help. Once again, don’t assume you know the best way to help.

4. Think broadly about people’s personal space.

Mobility devices, such as wheelchairs or canes, are personal space for people with disabilities. Don’t move or touch these personal items. If it’s in your way, ask the person to move it. Or ask if you can move it and let the person know where it’s been placed.

The same goes for service animals. They’re always working. Don’t touch or pet them without permission.

5. Address the person directly, and ask for clarification if needed.

If you’re talking to someone who has a job coach, a sign language interpreter, or some other type of support person, address the individual with a disability directly. Speak to them, not to their companion.

If the person says something you don’t understand, ask them to repeat it. Or you can repeat what you heard and ask them to confirm you got it right. If you’re still having difficulty, you can ask the person to write their answer down.

Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification. But remember not to interrupt or to finish anyone’s sentences.

6. Don’t jump to conclusions.

Nothing erodes trust faster than making assumptions about why something isn’t going quite the way you think it should. Don’t jump to conclusions either that there *is* a problem or that you know *why* there’s a problem.

If you see a co-worker struggling, talk to them. Kindly say what you've noticed and ask if there's anything you can do to support them.

7. Don't let your fear of making a mistake limit someone else's opportunities.

It's OK to make mistakes. We're all human and we're all doing our best. But what's important is to learn from those mistakes. If a person with a disability gives you feedback or tells you their preferences, listen. And try to remember and use that information in your next interaction.

If you make a mistake, apologize and correct the behavior. But don't let your fear of making mistakes limit opportunities for people with disabilities.

For example, maybe a co-worker wants to invite a new person to lunch but doesn't know how to fit a wheelchair in their car. The solution isn't to avoid inviting the new person to lunch. The solution is to invite them to lunch and then figure out where to go and how to get there.

Let's Sum Up

Disability etiquette refers to respectful and thoughtful behaviors that ensure individuals with disabilities are treated with dignity and equality. It begins with recognizing people for their abilities, rather than focusing on their disabilities. When interacting with someone who has a disability, it's important to ask before offering help and respect their personal space, assistive devices, or service animals. Language matters too—using person-first language, such as "a person with a disability" instead of labelling someone by their condition, promotes respect. Avoid making assumptions about what someone can or cannot do, and ensure accessibility in communication and physical spaces.

Check Your Progress

1. Elaborate the basics about the disability etiquette
2. Explain the different disabilities and their nature
3. What are the general guidelines you follow with the disabled person as a courtesies.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Give some tips for selecting the business attire
2. Write about the importance of business attire and also the common mistakes in choosing the same
3. Explain the types of professional image
4. How do you improve your professional image
5. Do you think that grooming will help in your success
6. Define self- grooming & write about its Importance
7. Why is cultural diversity important
8. Examine the types of workplace diversity
9. How the individual got benefited by adopting cultural diversity in the
10. Explain how you promote gender sensitivity in the business attire
11. How the social media plays a role in communicating with colleagues
12. Write about the guidelines for navigating social media interactions
13. What is your opinion about the sexual harassment related with business attire
14. Elaborate the basics about the disability etiquette
15. Explain the different disabilities and their nature
16. What are the general guidelines you follow with the disabled person as a courtesy.

Activities

1. **Dress for Success Workshop**: Organize a workshop where participants learn about different levels of business attire—such as business formal, business casual, and smart casual. Include examples of what is appropriate and inappropriate for specific workplace environments.
2. **Mock Interview**: Host mock interview sessions where participants must dress in business attire. Afterward, offer feedback on their clothing choices and how it contributed to their overall presentation and professionalism.

3. **Fashion Show**: Conduct a "Business Attire Fashion Show" where employees or students model different styles of professional dress, showcasing how to dress for various occasions—meetings, conferences, casual Fridays, etc.
4. **Styling Challenge**: Create a challenge where participants must put together a professional outfit using a limited budget or specific items. This teaches creativity and resourcefulness in building a polished look.
5. **Business Attire Quiz**: Develop a quiz that tests knowledge on what is appropriate attire for different business settings, including scenarios that challenge participants to choose the best option for a given situation.
6. **Cultural Attire Awareness**: Discuss and showcase how business attire varies across cultures, promoting understanding and respect for diversity in global professional settings.

Case Study

Sexual Harassment and Business Attire in a Corporate Internship

Overview:

Sarah, a university student, recently started an internship at a large corporate firm as part of her business management course. During her internship, she encountered inappropriate comments from a senior colleague related to her business attire. This case study examines the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, particularly how it intersects with business attire, and highlights the importance of professional conduct and clear workplace policies.

The Incident:

Sarah was excited to begin her internship, eager to make a good impression. She took care to dress professionally, following the company's guidelines for business attire, which emphasized conservative, office-appropriate clothing. However, a senior manager, Mr. Adams, began making comments about her appearance, such as, "That dress looks really good on you, you should wear it more often," and "You look quite stunning in that suit today." These remarks were not related to her work or performance and made Sarah uncomfortable, but she initially brushed them off, unsure of how to respond as an intern.

Over time, the comments became more frequent and personal, including inappropriate jokes about her appearance. Sarah noticed that the comments made her self-conscious about her clothing choices, and she began to question whether her attire was drawing unwanted attention, even though she adhered strictly to the dress code.

The Response:

Feeling uneasy, Sarah confided in a fellow intern, who encouraged her to report the situation to the Human Resources (HR) department. HR took the complaint seriously and conducted an internal investigation, during which they discovered that Mr. Adams had made similar comments to other female colleagues in the past. The company's policy on sexual harassment clearly stated that all employees, regardless of seniority, were to refrain from making personal comments about colleagues' appearance, particularly those that could be perceived as sexual in nature.

HR met with Sarah to reassure her that the company valued her professionalism and that her attire had nothing to do with the inappropriate behavior she experienced. They emphasized that it was Mr. Adams' responsibility to maintain a respectful and professional demeanor, regardless of how colleagues were dressed. HR also initiated additional sexual harassment prevention training for all employees, reinforcing the message that harassment of any kind, including comments on appearance, would not be tolerated.

Outcome:

Following the investigation, Mr. Adams received a formal warning and was required to attend mandatory sensitivity and harassment training. The company reinforced its zero-tolerance policy on harassment in the workplace, ensuring that all employees were educated on appropriate workplace behavior and the importance of respecting personal boundaries.

Sarah was reassured by the company's response and continued her internship, feeling more confident that her concerns had been taken seriously. She completed her program successfully and gained valuable experience in the process. The company also used the incident as an opportunity to strengthen its internal policies on harassment and business etiquette, creating a safer and more respectful work environment for everyone.

Key Lessons:

1. **Business Attire Does Not Justify Harassment**: Regardless of what a colleague wears, comments that focus on their appearance and have sexual undertones are inappropriate and constitute harassment. In this case, Sarah's adherence to the business dress code was not a factor in the inappropriate behavior, and the responsibility lay entirely with Mr. Adams' conduct.
2. **The Importance of Reporting Harassment**: Sarah's decision to report the inappropriate behavior was crucial in preventing further issues. It allowed the company to address a recurring problem and take steps to prevent it from happening again. Students and employees should feel empowered to report harassment without fear of retaliation.
3. **The Role of HR in Addressing Sexual Harassment**: The HR department played a critical role in resolving the issue by taking Sarah's concerns seriously, investigating the matter thoroughly, and holding Mr. Adams accountable. This underscores the importance of clear reporting mechanisms and strong HR policies in maintaining a respectful workplace.
4. **Ongoing Training and Awareness**: The company responded by reinforcing its policies through additional training, emphasizing that harassment in any form would not be tolerated. Continuous education on workplace behavior and respect is essential for preventing future incidents.

Discussion Questions:

1. What steps could Sarah have taken to address the inappropriate comments before reporting to HR? Are there other ways to handle such situations?
2. How can companies ensure that their policies on harassment and business attire are clearly communicated to all employees?
3. What are the potential consequences of not reporting sexual harassment in the workplace? How might it affect both the individual and the company as a whole?
4. What role does leadership play in shaping a workplace culture that prevents harassment?

This case study encourages students to think critically about how sexual harassment can manifest in the workplace, especially in relation to business attire, and highlights the importance of proper reporting channels and a respectful, inclusive work environment.

UNIT 5

BUSINESS ETHICS

Unit Summary

Objective

- To explore core ethical principles and values relevant to business practices
- To assess and respond complex ethical issues in various business contexts
- To identify and analyze ethical dilemmas
- To demonstrating the importance of ethics in building sustainable and trustworthy business practices

Business Ethics

Ethics in the workplace - The challenge of business ethics - Creating an ethical compass Business ethics and advantages. Ethical Issues Conflict Management- Conflict resolution strategies - Choosing the appropriate gift in the business environment. Multi-cultural challenges: Multi-cultural etiquette. Example of cultural sensitivity. Cultural differences and their effect on business etiquette- on site projects-Cultural Highlight: China-Cultural Highlight: India.

Meaning of Business Ethics

Business ethics means both as written and unwritten codes of moral standards that are critical to the current activities and future aspirations of a business organisation. They can differ from one company to another because of differences in cultural perspectives, operational structures and strategic orientations. The guiding framework of business ethics exists at all levels of the organisation. It is all about having the wisdom to determine the difference between right actions and wrong decisions.

In simple terms, business ethics fundamentally denotes the organization's codes of corporate governance. It stipulates the morality standards and behavioral patterns expected of individuals and the business as a whole. These moral benchmarks can be perceived in terms of the microenvironment and macro environment of the business.

Ethics is a set of standard, or a code value system worked out from human reason and experience, by which free human actions are determined as ultimately right or wrong, good or evil. If an action agrees with these standards, it is ethical; if it does not agree, it is unethical.

Definition of Business Ethics

According to Kirk O. Hanson, a renowned ethics expert who also doubles as the Executive Director of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, "business ethics is the study of the standards of business behavior which promote human welfare and the good."

“Business Ethics’’ can be defined as the critical, structured examination of how people & institutions should behave in the world of commerce. In particular, it involves examining appropriate constraints on the pursuit of self – interest or (for firm).

"Business ethics' is defined by the IBE as 'the application of ethical values to business behavior'.

According to Kenneth Kernaghan is defined as "Ethics is concerned not only with distinguishing right from and good from but also with commitment to do what is right or what is good. The concept of ethics is inextricably linked to that of value, that is enduring belief that influence the choices we make from available means and ends."

According to R.E. Freeman, A.F. Stoner is defined as "Ethics broadly and simply is the study of how our decisions affect other people. It is also the study of people's rights and duties and of the rules that people apply in making decisions."

According to Wiley is defined as "Ethics reflects the character of the individual and more contemporarily, perhaps the character of the business firm, which is a collection of individuals".

According to Baumhart "Ethical standards are principles of ideals of human conduct".

Importance Of Ethics In Business

Business is not entity in the society, totally jettisoned from the main stream of society. It is only part and parcel of the society and its activities. As a matter of fact, all activities in the society have ethical bearing and we cannot dissociate business from ethical conduct. People of any profession, viz., Doctor, Lawyer, Engineer, Minster, Policeman or judge should have their professional ethics and conduct.

1. There are several stake holders in the business. They will be particularly interested in the behavior of the business organization. Naturally, they will expect a very high standard of morality and ethics in business.
2. A business firm thrives with the trust and goodwill of its employees. The firm is expected to maintain high moral standard, treating all the employees with equality, encouraging team and work culture with ethical practices.
3. Building the image of a business firm is an arduous task. This can be done only by upright and honest methods. An ethical organization commands not only trust, but also respect from all stakeholders. All stake holders gain a lot

by the ethical image of the business. The moral standard of workers, the ethical base built up by the company and the excellent and systematic service rendered by the organization, could not be even dreamt in the present day transport companies under nationalization.

4. Lack of ethical standards will result in deterioration of relationship between employees and employers which will in the due course lead to decline in productivity and escalation of costs.
5. Companies with high ethical standards command respect from the public, as well as government. India's well managed companies are published by 'Business India'. These companies have a brand value and accepted as leaders in the industry.
6. Ethical practices of the firms in the long – run bring enormous dividends, goodwill and appreciation of the public.

Introduction of Workplace Ethics

The management of ethics in the workplace holds tremendous benefits for everyone, benefits both moral -- and even practical. This is particularly true today when it is critical to understand and manage highly diverse values in the workplace. When at a time too many people still feel that business ethics is a topic for philosophy or is about shaming and blaming people. This unit aims to make the topic of business ethics very understandable and accessible.

The field of business ethics has traditionally been the domain of philosophers, academics and social critics. Consequently, much of today's literature about business ethics is not geared toward the practical needs of leaders and managers -- the people primarily responsible for managing ethics in the workplace. The most frequent forms of business ethics literature today typically include-

a) philosophical, which requires extensive orientation and analysis;
b) anthologies, which require much time, review and integration;
c) case studies, which require numerous cases, and much time and analyses to synthesize; and
d) extended stories about businesses "gone bad".

This lack of practical information is not the fault of philosophers, academics or social critics. The problem is the outcome of insufficient involvement of leaders and managers in discussions and literature about business ethics. More leaders and managers should become more involved.

Meaning of Workplace Ethics

Workplace ethics are codes of conduct that influence the development of an ethical culture within the workplace. Going beyond what is considered legal in the area where the business operates, they inspire communication between employees, allow for respect to be extended to each person within the organization, and promote customer relationships that are based on honesty and integrity. While there are core elements that tend to define a work-based code of ethics, the specific expressions of these central values vary from one corporate setting to the next.

It is important to remember that workplace ethics are shaped by the following factor. Work place policy must be in harmony with all laws and regulations that are currently in force in the jurisdiction where the business operates. This helps to ensure that basic ethics preclude any pressure or coercion to engage in actions that are considered to be illegal, promote discriminationin the workplace, support unfair hiring and firing practices, or allow wages to be set that are below the minimum legal standards for the area.

Along with being shaped by laws and regulations, workplace ethics are also influenced by business ethics. Forexample, ethical business practices would include actions such as not using marketing materials or campaigns that mislead consumers. Workplace ethics would also involve establishing and operating support networks such as employees wellbeing programmes which in turn help the employees to be healthy and happy. Ethics of this type would also involve the conscious effort to cultivate a working environment where people want to come to work and be productive because of pride in what they do for a living.

While businesses tend to comply with laws and regulations not every company looks the need to develop workplace ethics that affirm the worth of employees and motivate them to be productive on their job. When a company chooses to do no more than what is required by local law, the chances of heavy employee turnover are much higher. In addition, it is easier for cliques to develop among certain groups of employees, a state that can often undermine productivity and cost the company a great deal in terms of time and revenue generation.

One of the tasks many business consultants face is helping clients assess the status of workplace ethics in their offices and manufacturing facilities, and then find ways to expand and enhance those ethics at all levels of the operation. Often, consultants can spot problems that are not immediately noticeable to managers and business owners, simply because the problems developed incrementally over an extended period of time. However, once the issues are identified and resolved, it will strengthen the company and the employees will be significantly happier.

Definition of Workplace Ethics

Companies use workplace ethics to govern employee behavior, regulate management's moral decisions and keep companies out of legal trouble. Some businesses clarify ethics in an official company code of ethics. Employees of companies with no official code can rely on personal ethics derived from universal codes. Workplace ethics is not meant only for corrupt employees, but workplace ethics guide all businesspeople who search for moral and professional direction.

According to Kirk O. Hanson, a renowned ethics expert who also doubles as the Executive Director of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, "business ethics is the study of the standards of business behaviour which promote human welfare and the good."

Business ethics manifests both as written and unwritten codes of moral standards that are critical to the current activities and future aspirations of a business organisation. They can differ from one company to another because of differences in cultural perspectives, operational structures and strategic orientations. The guiding framework of business ethics exists at all levels of the organisation. It is about having the wisdom to determine the difference between right actions and wrong decisions.

In simpler terms, business ethics fundamentally epitomises the organisation's codes of corporate governance. It stipulates the morality standards and behavioral patterns expected of individuals and the business as a whole. These moral benchmarks can be perceived in terms of the microenvironment and macro environment of the business.

Importance of Workplace Ethics

Our actions affect not only ourselves, but also those around us. Many of the professional decisions involve ethics. When we tell a lie, we can lose someone's trust and undermine our own integrity. If we use shoddy materials or workmanship on the job, we can jeopardize the safety of others.

Questions of morality and ethics can be found at all levels of society. Ethical behavior is equally important in the workplace as it is in our personal lives. Ethics is of great concern wherever business is conducted.

A successful business depends on the trust of various parties—employees, managers, executives, customers, suppliers, and even competitors. Six ethical terms form the foundation of trust upon which ethical business practice is built:

- Ethics
- Values
- Morals
- Integrity
- Character
- Laws

Ethics

Ethics refers to a set of rules that describes acceptable conduct in society. Ethics serve as a guide to moral daily living and helps us to judge that how our behavior can be justified. Ethics refers to society's sense of the right way of living our daily lives. It does this by establishing rules, principles, and values on which we can base our conduct. The important concepts that directly associated with ethics are truth, honesty, fairness, and equity.

While ethics is a societal concern, it is of critical importance to the professions that serve society. Because professionals such as physicians, attorneys, engineers, and property and facility managers provide services that affect our welfare. They develop professional codes of ethics that establish professional standards for behavior.

Examples of the types of standards found in professional codes of ethics include:

- An Lawyer or Doctor maintaining client-patient confidentiality

- An Accountant who do not use client information for personal gain

Values

Values are defined as the acts, customsthat institutions and group of people regard in a favorable manner. Statements of value typically contain words of approval, disapproval, and obligation. Some of these words might be good, bad, should, and should not. However, value judgments may not contain specific value words. "That is a lie" does not contain a particular word of disapproval, but the implication that a lie is wrong is understood.

Values are what really matter to us most—what we care about. For instance, family devotion, respect for the environment, and working hard for a day's pay are three values that can evoke a response in many people.

Morals

Morals are a set of rules or code of conduct on which society is based. Certain moral elements are universal, such as the laws forbidding homicide and the basic duties of doing good and furthering the well-being of others. With morals serving as the underpinning of society, there are four points that should be remembered, says philosopher Robert C. Solomon.

- Moral rules are important: In general, moral rules are rules that help society function in a civilised way.
- Morality consists of universal rules: They apply to everyone, everywhere, and are recognized by everyone as being necessary.
- Morals are objective: They will never consider personal preferences. For example,Right is right and wrong is wrong.
- Morality affects other people: Morality involves considering the well-being of others as reflected by the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Integrity

To have integrity is to be honest and sincere. Integrity is defined as adhering to a moral code in daily decision making. When people and businesses possess integrity, it means they can be trusted. On the other hand, companies that lack this quality and mislead customers with inferior products or false advertising will suffer the consequences later on.

Character

Ethics is not just how we think and act. It is also about character. Character drives what we do when no one is looking. Each person has the ability to build, change, or even destroy his or her own character Our character can be built through the way we live—by thinking good thoughts and performing good acts. Similarly, bad thoughts and behavior can destroy our character.

A person with good character has high morals and will act morally in all situations by choice and not by force. A person with character will honour his or her commitments. Character pertains to organizations, as well. A company with high character is worthy of trust and respect, acts honestly, and stands by its promises.

Laws

The law is a series of rules and regulations designed to express the needs of the people. Laws protect people from the most blatant and despicable affront to morality, such as murder, rape, and theft. Laws frequently provide us with a sense of right and wrong and guide our behaviour, but not always. While murder is against the law, the law does not always stop someone from killing another out of hatred, anger, or in defense of a personal philosophy.

Laws are instituted as notions of justice and tend to be specificand therefore different from society to society. Laws always have a strong connection to morality, ethics, and values. But, not all laws are ethical.

Laws have legalised slavery, segregation, sexism, and apartheid. Although these laws might have reflected society's values at the time they were enacted, they will never justify immoral behavior. Likewise in business, it is not unlawful to lie to a coworker or on a job application, but both are ethically wrong.

These six concepts—ethics, values, morals, integrity, character, and laws—form the foundation of trust upon which ethical business practice is built.

Ethical Challenges in the Workplace

We may think that once a person gets a job, he will do everything in the best interests of the company. But workplace ethics involve a tension between what people feel is right for them versus what's right for the workplace. We may know something about this conflict of interest, especially when the employer doesnot have a written policy about some of the more widespread infractions. When businesses do focus more on the importance of ethics, such as during an economic challenge when the competition for work is higher, there is a drop in misconduct and a rise in reporting misbehavior, according to a survey by the Ethics Resource Center. Businesses can use current ethical dilemmas to create

Fair Treatment

In a perfect world, everyone wants to be treated fairly. In fact, there are fewer ethical violations when people see integrity in the leadership, according to Walker Information Inc. When it feels like managers are best buddies with everyone but you, though, you'll start second- guessing performance reviews, discipline, compensation and what a win looks like. It doesn't help when people muddy the waters by dating co-workers or hiring family members, for seniority seems to become less about tenure and more about favoritism.

Trust

When you are sick of feeling like you don't know whom to trust, then become trustworthy and lead by example. Start by developing a reputation for meeting deadlines and not misusing the time you are paid for. Next, sort out the tension between personal morality and workplace loyalty. When your boss asks you to lie to cover for him, you'll ultimately choose between holding to the truth versus keeping the appearance of being a "team player." Even when you're trying to seal the deal with a tough client, don't tell "white lies" to sway their decisions.

Using Resources

Don't feel like you're paid what you're worth? Join the club, and don't expect to feel good about it. If your pay doesn't match your sense of entitlement, you'll be tempted to conduct personal business during working hours of the company to justify it. Tying up company phone lines, Internet, printer, copy machine and more for non-work purposes may feel legitimate at first–For example, taking a ream of paper home to print off a presentation; however, if you don't use it all, you will be tempted to justify keeping it since you used your own printer's ink on the report. A good rule of thumb is to keep work resources at work and avoid doing personal tasks or favours with them.

Harassment

Whether you are full time or part time employee, it's your right to feel safe all the time. Harassment at work, including bullying, peer pressure and sexual advances that make you feel uncomfortable, is a solvable problem if you're willing to hold your company accountable for it. Talk with your boss or HR department about official and anonymous channels for employees to report incidents. More than one in five employees who reported misconduct say that they experienced some form of retaliation, according to 2011 survey by the Ethics Resource Center. If you fear losing your job by reporting something committed against you or another person, the behaviour will likely continue, then that will make you to remain ethically torn.

Expenses

There's a good chance that you know when you're fudging an expense report. Even when your company clarifies which expenses are reimbursable and how they're tracked, you and your co-workers may look for the loophole to claim the doughnuts you bought when you gassed up the company car. Until the IRS audits your company, the short-term loss is typically felt in terms of profit. Develop standards that are above reproach by capping what you claim to only what you spent money on. If there ever is a profit, such as leftovers from a catered lunch, send the food home with someone else versus enjoying it yourself and potentially over-ordering again next time

Advantages and Disadvantages of Workplace Ethics

American history abounds with examples of discrimination against minorities and women, ranging from voting laws to admissions and hiring policies. To help rectify the historical inequalities suffered by women and minorities, President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson issued Executive Order 10925 and Executive Order 11246, which effectively mandate non-discriminatory policies in regards to race, religion, gender and country of origin. Many companies now employ affirmative action policies as part of their business models, but the practice remains controversial, as it creates advantages and disadvantages

Diversity

Affirmative action policies help to create a more diverse work environment. Diversity, in turn, provides business with two key advantages: First, they provide more adaptability in terms of problem solving by offering a wider array of possible solutions; and companies that embrace a multi-cultural employee roster are better positioned to serve multi-cultural communities, by overcoming language and cultural barriers.

Increased Opportunities

By maintaining affirmative action hiring policies, a business can expand its opportunities to include government contracts. The Executive Order put into place by President Lyndon B. Johnson specifies that businesses receiving government contracts must establish and maintain affirmative action policies. The availability of government contracts vary from administration to administration and federal budget to federal budget, but such contracts can prove a lucrative windfall for the businesses that win them.

Moral Commitment

Embracing affirmative action can provide businesses with a means of making a moral commitment to the ideal of justice or equal treatment for all. The advantage of such a moral stand within the workplace remains indirect. It can help to draw employees who share a belief in the principle of justice, which helps to foster a more tolerant work environment. It can also reassure employees who come from historically underrepresented groups that they will be able to get full consideration for any available promotions.

Reverse Discrimination

One major disadvantage of affirmative action in the workplace is the reality or perception of reverse discrimination. In essence, those opposed to affirmative action programs claim that the programs penalise those from the historically dominant group even when they possess the appropriate qualifications for a given job. While reverse discrimination remains exceedingly rare in practice, the accusation of reverse discrimination can generate a negative social backlash for a company, which may undermine its financial future. This kind of accusation can also potentially undercut the confidence of minority and women employees concerning their skill level.

Stigmatization

Affirmative action policies can potentially create a stigma that minorities and women obtain positions in a company based on gender, race or ethnicity, rather than through achievement and qualifications. In the workplace, this stigma can translate into questioning the competence of minority and women employees to do their jobs. The stigmatisation may also lead minority and women employees to question why an employer chose to hire them.

Let's Sum Up

Business ethics is a field that examines the moral principles guiding business practices and decisions. It involves the application of ethical values, such as honesty, integrity, fairness, and respect, in various business contexts. At its core, business ethics is about balancing the pursuit of profit with the responsibility to consider the impact of decisions on employees, customers, communities, and the environment. Companies that uphold strong ethical standards build trust with stakeholders, enhance their reputations, and contribute to a positive workplace culture. Moreover, ethical business practices are essential for long-term success, as they encourage transparency, accountability, and adherence to laws and regulations. Business ethics also address the social responsibilities of companies, emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices and ethical treatment of all stakeholders. In a rapidly changing world, maintaining ethical integrity not only helps companies avoid legal issues but also ensures that they contribute positively to society and foster a culture of trust and respect in the marketplace.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

1. Lead with a moral compass

Character matters. Being upstanding and of good character make a difference. This is why it is suggested that you hire for character and train for competency. People that want to do the right thing, do what it takes, and have fun along the way, have an attitude that makes for a positive environment and a real difference. Being authentic, true to yourself, and true to your values with consistent application says a lot about you.

2. Lead in ways that bring out the best in others

Bring out the best in others. All too often in a conflict or dispute being antagonistic and in a fighting spirit only entrenches positions. Unfortunately, in our society computer games, movies, and other social media tend to exploit revenge and antagonism as a viable alternative. Knowing this, it is especially important to emphasize the opposite with calm, caring, and concern. Antagonism also reduces listening and closes the mind to understanding. By taking an approach to bring the best out of the other side will certainly help your situation. Check your assumptions. Be curious. Suspend judgment. Ask questions to help the other side to open their mind to other ways of approaching the problem.

3. Lead with positive intent and impact

Attitude matters. When you lead with positive intent this can be received by others as helping. It shows an interest in trying to work together. Your coming with a positive attitude may help diffuse the situation and help move the parties move towards a more neutral perspective. This may very well enhance listening by the other party. By having a positive intent and staying focused on the task at hand this will help the other party take ownership of the issue, be accountable, and be responsible.

4. Lead for the greater good

Be a leader for the greater good. What may happen positively as a result of the parties working together for the greater good? Is it possible there are additional interests that have not even been considered or explored considering other stakeholders, additional contracts, long term implications, or other points of view? Focus on not just the impact on you or them, but additional benefits beyond just the two of you.

5. Stay competent

Since we are 98% emotional and 2% rational, focus on the problem. Be aware of your and their emotions. Avoid being tempted into negative emotions that take you away from the reason you are there. For example, in a divorce with child custody as an area of concern, keeping the parties focused on the best interests of the children can help avoid drama, and keep the parties working together in what otherwise may be a very contentious discussion.

6. Model what you expect

You know how you would like to proceed given your interests. How would you like the other party to interact with you. Model what you want. Be conscious of your triggers. When you feel anger starting to surge, apply de-escalation techniques. In other words if you need to take a break. Walk away with a time out. Continue to model positive, professional behavior.

7. Build Trust

Building trust especially when it has been lost is difficult. Apologizing, and honestly trying to pick up new from today may not be fully accepted. This takes time. Actions speak louder than words. Focus on being straightforward with honesty and integrity. Be open and transparent with what you can share. Accept the other party without blame. Be responsible. Do what you say you are going to do timely.

8. Work towards mutually beneficial solutions

Explore interests with open ended questions asking the other party what they want to have happen? What would it take for them to feel satisfied? What can you do to help them? What are other concerns that need to be addressed. Knowing your own interests work with the other side to find amicable solutions that both sides can live with going forward.

9. Do good without harm

Do no harm. Do not do anything that will harm others directly or indirectly. Consider economic, social, and environmental impacts. Evaluate different impacts to maximize benefits and minimize pain. Above all, do not harm others. Pause and reflect on any possible solutions to make sure you have addressed these concerns.

10. Improve our global society planet

In addition, in today's world you have even greater concerns. Consider your impact on our society, global society, and our planet. This is increasingly a more significant issue. Historically, this may not even have been brought up as a concern. Today it is. Explore your needs and interests. In addition, explore the needs and interests of the other party. After that step back and take a look at the needs and interests of our global society and planet to make sure you are considering those concerns too.

CHOOSING RELEVANT AND APPROPRIATE CORPORATE GIFT

Choosing relevant and appropriate corporate gifts requires careful consideration to ensure that the gifts align with the recipients' preferences and the overall image of your company. Here are some steps to help you make the right choice:

1. **Understand Your Recipients:** Begin by understanding the preferences, interests, and demographics of the recipients. Consider factors like age, gender, cultural background, and their roles within the company.
2. **Reflect Your Brand:** The gifts you choose should be consistent with your company's values, culture, and branding. Avoid gifts that could be misinterpreted or clash with your brand identity.
3. **Quality Matters:** Invest in high-quality gifts. The quality of the gift reflects the value you place on the recipient's relationship and your commitment to excellence.
4. **Practicality:** Choose gifts that are practical and useful in a professional or personal setting. Items like desk accessories, tech gadgets, or high-quality notebooks tend to be well-received.
5. **Personalization:** Whenever possible, personalize the gifts with the recipient's name or a thoughtful message. This adds a personal touch and shows that you've put effort into the gift.
6. **Avoid Religious or Sensitive Items:** Be mindful of cultural and religious sensitivities. Steer clear of gifts that may inadvertently offend or make someone uncomfortable.

7. **Consider the Occasion:** If the gifts are for a specific occasion (e.g., holidays, company anniversary), consider how the gifts tie into the theme of the event.
8. **Gift Cards or Certificates:** If you're unsure about individual preferences, consider gift cards or certificates to popular stores or restaurants. This gives recipients the flexibility to choose something they genuinely like.
9. **Customization:** If you have a close relationship with the recipients, consider customized gifts that reflect shared experiences or inside jokes.
10. **Ethical and Sustainable Gifts:** In today's eco-conscious environment, consider gifts that align with sustainable practices and social responsibility.
11. **Keep it Neutral:** If you're gifting to a diverse group, opt for gifts that are neutral and unlikely to offend anyone.
12. **Value and Compliance:** Check company policies and guidelines regarding the value of gifts that can be given or received. Some companies have restrictions on gift values to avoid ethical concerns.
13. **Timing:** Consider the timing of the gift. Sending gifts during holidays, special occasions, or after successful projects can have a greater impact.
14. **Presentation:** Pay attention to the presentation of the gift. Thoughtful packaging can enhance the overall experience.
15. **Feedback:** If possible, gather feedback from a diverse group within your company before finalizing the gift choice. This can provide valuable insights and prevent potential missteps.

Let’s Sum Up

Conflict management in business is the process of addressing and resolving disputes in a way that minimizes negative outcomes and fosters a positive work environment. Conflicts in business can arise from various sources, such as differences in work styles, communication breakdowns, competition for resources, or misaligned goals. Effectively managing these conflicts is crucial, as unresolved issues can lead to decreased productivity, low morale, and even employee turnover. Good conflict management involves active listening, clear communication, and empathy to understand each party's perspective and find common ground. Leaders who prioritize conflict resolution help maintain a collaborative atmosphere where employees feel respected and valued, enhancing team cohesion and productivity. Additionally, successful conflict management often requires strategies like negotiation, mediation, or compromise to reach mutually beneficial solutions. By addressing conflicts constructively, businesses can transform potentially divisive situations into opportunities for growth, innovation, and strengthened relationships,

Cultural Sensitivity

Definition

The definition of **cultural sensitivity** is having an understanding of another person's set of beliefs or values that is attributed to the person's ethnic or racial background. In addition, an individual must be agreeable to modify their behavior to accommodate the other person's cultural beliefs.

Stages of Cultural Sensitivity

Stages of Cultural Sensitivity Milton Bennett developed a solid framework to understand the various stages of cultural sensitivity (or) as he calls it "intercultural sensitivity" that a person may experience.

• **Denial:** At this stage of cultural sensitivity, people don't recognize cultural differences and experiences. They believe their culture is the only "real" one and they tend to interact in homogenous groups and to stereotype everyone else. ¬ Example: People who say, "We are all the same and I don't understand why we have to learn about the different groups in the company.

• **Defense**: At the defense stage of cultural sensitivity, people recognize some differences, but see them as negative because they assume their culture is the most evolved, the best one. ¬ Example: People who say, "In Latin America you can't just get to the point and talk business. They want to tell you their life story. I don't understand why they can't just learn to be more direct and save everyone time."

Examples of Cultural Sensitivity

Medical Care

A doctor interacts with a patient from a different cultural background. The patient's cultural beliefs might influence their perception of illness and treatment. Without this concept, the doctor might also misinterpret the patient's symptoms or provide treatment that goes against the patient's cultural norms.

Business Negotiations

the multinational company is negotiating a deal with a partner from another country. Here the concepts help an individual to understand a partner by not adhering to local customs, traditions, or communication styles, leading to a breakdown in negotiations.

Educational Settings

A teacher has a diverse classroom with students from various cultural backgrounds. If the teacher doesn't take this into account, they might unintentionally create an environment that makes certain students uncomfortable or excluded, hindering their learning experience.

Public Services

A government agency launches a public health campaign targeting a minority community. If the campaign materials lack cultural sensitivity, they might also not resonate with the community, and important health information might not reach those who need it most.

Crisis Response

After a natural disaster, aid workers from one culture arrive to help a community with a different cultural background. , the aid workers understand the community's practices, beliefs, and needs, leading to ineffective assistance or even unintentional offence.

Media Representation

A media outlet publishes a story about a cultural festival. Henceforth, without this concept, they might misrepresent the event, overlook its significance, or use language that perpetuates stereotypes.

Social Etiquette

An individual attends a social gathering in a foreign country. , Henceforth engage in behaviours that are considered rude or offensive in that culture, damaging potential relationships.

Online Communication:

People from different cultures interact on social media platforms. cultural sensitivity, clears misunderstandings that can arise due to differences in language usage, humour, or the interpretation of emojis.

Travel and Tourism

A tourist visits a foreign country and doesn't research or respect local customs. This lack of cultural sensitivity can lead to disrespectful behaviour, cultural misunderstandings, and a negative impact on the local community's perception of tourists.

Religious Observance

A workplace schedules important meetings during a time that clashes with an employee's religious observance. Without cultural sensitivity, the employee might face a difficult choice between their religious obligations and their job responsibilities.

Cultural sensitivity is a concept that is utilized around the world to integrate minorities into various societies. The following are examples of cultural sensitivity moments throughout the world:

- In Canada, a healthcare professional receives a woman who is unable to speak the native language of the country. The doctor is required by law to provide an interpreter free of charge to explain the care being provided to the woman. In addition, all healthcare documents need to be translated into the native language of the woman.
- In the United States, a child presents to their school nurse with circular bruising all over their body. The patient is of Asian descent. In the United States, nurses are mandatory reporters and are legally obligated to report any signs of suspected child abuse. The culturally aware nurse understands that the ancient art of cupping is a common practice in Asian cultures. This practice uses suctioning in different parts of the body and will leave circular bruises. Instead

of calling protective services, the nurse discusses the procedure with the child to learn more about it.

Let's Sum Up

Cultural sensitivity is the awareness and respect for cultural differences, which is essential in today's globalized world. It involves recognizing that people from diverse backgrounds bring unique perspectives, values, and ways of communicating. In personal and professional settings, cultural sensitivity helps foster understanding, respect, and collaboration among individuals from various cultural identities. Practicing cultural sensitivity means listening actively, avoiding assumptions or stereotypes, and adapting one's behavior to be considerate of others' cultural norms and values. In the workplace, culturally sensitive environments are more inclusive, allowing employees to feel valued and understood, which can enhance teamwork, creativity, and overall performance. As interactions across cultures become increasingly common, developing cultural sensitivity is key to building positive relationships, preventing misunderstandings, and promoting harmony in diverse communities and workplaces

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN BUSINESS

Cultural differences in business refer to variations in customs, behaviors, and norms that affect how individuals and organizations run business activities in different parts of the world.It should come as no surprise that each conducts business differently according to their respective cultures.

When workplaces from around the world come together, these differences can have a significant impact on business practices, communication, and relationships. Below, we list 11 key cultural differences in business.

Communication Styles

Communication is key in any business. However, communication is inevitably affected by cultural norms. **Researchers** use the terms "high context" and "low context" to describe how culture can influence communication styles.

Direct vs. Indirect

In a **high-context culture**, communication is implicit, not direct. Here, a great deal of communication is achieved through **body language** and indirect allusions. Much of what is being communicated relies on the relationship and mutual understanding between the two people conversing.

On the other hand, in a low-context culture, communication is direct, clear, and explicit. People are more likely to tell you exactly what they need, when they need it, and how it needs to be done.

Verbal vs. Non-verbal

Part of working in a low-context culture is being more verbal. People expect each other to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings in words. However, the norms in high-context cultures dictate that people communicate in other ways, such as body language and facial expression.

Keep in mind that while someone in a high-context culture may say one thing, their hunched shoulders or closed posture may say another.

On the other hand, someone from a low-context culture not smiling doesn't mean they are unhappy. In that case, don't assume you know how they feel or what they are thinking unless they vocalize that feeling.

Hierarchical Structure

Some more traditional countries (for example, Japan, China, or Brazil) prefer that newer, younger employees treat older, more seasoned colleagues with deference. This is called a hierarchical structure, meaning that colleagues with more power should be treated a certain way by colleagues with less power.

Other countries, like the United States, place a high value on individualism and equality. These kinds of workplaces don't mind when less experienced employees speak their minds and share ideas. In fact, if you don't speak, higher-ups may perceive you to be less of a team player.

Negotiation Styles

There is a famous Japanese style of negotiation that values the power of silence (**haragei**). In some cultures, negotiation takes place quietly, with very little talking.

In others, negotiation is loud and seemingly combative. For others still, negotiation does not even take place in a boardroom, but over lunch or at a nightclub.

Approaches vary, from competitive and adversarial to cooperative and consensus-driven. If you're not attuned to how cultural differences in business affect negotiations, you could lose an important deal or offend key partners abroad.

Scheduling and Time Management

One study described how a Dutch woman in Argentina waited for clients to show up to an appointment, then gave up hope that they would arrive and left. Later, she found out that they showed up two hours late and expected her to be there.

Yet "arriving too late" to a meeting is one of Germany's **most commonly reported business nightmares**. Differences in norms around time and scheduling can cause major misunderstandings between intercultural business partners.

Business Etiquette

Traditionally, business etiquette in Asia dictated that you should accept a business card with two hands. As we work increasingly in a world of online business profiles and remote connections, business etiquette also evolves.

Lack of awareness about the proper business etiquette in another culture can offend your business partners without you even knowing it.

Work-life Balance

According to the **OECD Better Life Index**, only 3.3% of Canadians report working very long hours, compared to 14.1% of Israelis. It's evident that work-life balance can shift dramatically according to the culture around work.

In some cultures, it's perfectly acceptable to call or email a colleague past business hours. In others, it would be impolite to extend a meeting even fifteen minutes past the end of the work day.

Attitudes Towards Risk

In business, there will always be some level of economic risk. However, certain cultures are more risk-averse than others.

According to **Hofsteded's Cultural Framework**, Brazil, Japan, France, and Mexico are among the highest risk-averse countries.On the other hand, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom seldom avoid uncertainty.

Dress Code

What's appropriate in one culture may not be in another. In some cultures, it's acceptable to wear sandals and jeans to work, whereas certain cultures may require a suit, tie, or heels.

Whether you dress too formally or too casually, showing up in the wrong clothes can make a poor first impression.

Gift-Giving And Bribery

In the United States, gifts are appreciated but certainly not expected in a business context. In other cultures, however, such as China or Sweden, not bringing a gift to a business exchange is considered extremely rude.

In other cultures still, gift-giving may be seen as a form of bribery, which is punishable by jail. If you're thinking about **exchanging gifts**, tread lightly.

Decision-Making

In certain cultures, it's appropriate to defer to an authority, whereas other cultures equally weigh everyone's opinion. Be aware of the cultural context you're working in before jumping in or holding back.Depending on the context, your behavior may come across as presumptuous or, on the other hand, evasive.

Face And Saving Face

The concept of "**face**" in China and many other cultures refers to the idea that one must not be humiliated in front of others. Even if you don't mean to do so, talking about someone's mistake on a project in public might cause a person to "lose" face.

There are a variety of ways to ensure that your colleagues can save face, and each varies by culture.

HOW DO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AFFECT BUSINESS

In business, cultural differences can spark fantastic creativity, but they can also provoke misunderstandings and interpersonal conflicts.

Here are 15 domains where cultural differences can cause international colleagues to misinterpret each other's intentions.

Communication styles

Earlier in this article, we covered high-context and low-context cultures and their impact on communication. In business, when someone from a high-context culture (e.g., India, Japan, or the UK) interacts with someone from a low-context culture (e.g., Germany, the US, or Scandinavia), they might run into communication issues.

Here are some examples of how cultural differences in business affect communication:

- **hand gestures** (e.g., the thumbs-up gesture can be viewed as highly offensive in certain parts of the Middle East)
- head gestures (e.g., the Indian "**head wobble**" can be used in a variety of circumstances)
- the use of **idioms** and slang
- respect for **personal space**
- addressing people in the most appropriate way (e.g., by using their first name, surname, job title, or something else)
- **greeting people** with a handshake or other action
- maintaining **eye contact**

Relationship Building

Depending on the setting, business relationships may be built very differently. For example, in certain cultures, it is perfectly acceptable for colleagues to hug or kiss on the cheek, especially after they've known each other for a while.

However, in many Asian cultures, hugging is considered very intimate and, therefore, inappropriate for a professional setting.

When trying to connect with a colleague from another culture, think carefully about how your actions and behaviors may come across, especially if there is a difference in authority. Not being cognizant of how relationships are built in other cultures might cost you a key business partner.

Decision-Making

We've already discussed how decision-making can impact *who* makes the decisions, but did you know it can also influence *how* decisions are made?

Some cultures are more hierarchical than others, which may cause business operations to be very speedy (unilateral decision-making) or very slow (inefficient decision-making).

Time Management

Remember the example about the Dutch woman in Argentina? It's important to bear in mind these cultural differences when it comes to **scheduling and time management**.

Try not to assume that colleagues and partners from other countries will have the same ideas about time management as you. Otherwise, differences in punctuality can lead to frustrations and missed opportunities.

Work Ethic And Values

"Work ethic" has very different meanings depending on culture. In the United States, a good work ethic often means working all day, possibly taking a brief lunch, and being available to address problems at certain times outside work hours.

In other cultures, the clock stops for a **couple of hours at midday for lunch or a *siesta***. Misunderstanding around work ethic and values can impact productivity and perceptions about employee motivation, particularly misjudgments about laziness.

Legal And Ethical Standards

It's evident that legal standards vary from country to country. Best practice in every country is following the law. However, sometimes businesses can make assumptions about what is ethical based on the law.

This can lead to misunderstanding, personal offense, and downright suspicion. When making decisions and negotiating with partners abroad, be aware of underlying assumptions about right and wrong. Gaining awareness might help you in sticky situations.

Conflict Resolution

Speaking in a raised voice or with emotion might be misconstrued, **depending on the person's cultural context**. Moreover, in the United States, it's perfectly acceptable to bring in a mediator or lawyers if conflicts can't be solved between two parties.

In other cultures, a mediator may be seen as an offensive suggestion that your partner can't handle their own affairs.

Global Expansion Challenges

Want to expand your company into the global market? You'll need to navigate complex cultural nuances in order to manage each stage of your production.

If you're making a big investment in time and money, the importance of understanding cultural differences in business can't be underestimated.

Social And Environmental Responsibility

You may see your business as having a certain level of **social and environmental responsibility**, but your partner abroad may see it differently. Values around corporate responsibility can vary greatly, as some cultures may be more in tune with certain issues than others. This can, in turn, impact your ability to make joint decisions and prioritize certain business practices.

Intellectual Property And Data Privacy

More and more companies rely on online platforms to streamline work and store client data. Like any other area, cultural norms may affect attitudes toward intellectual property and data privacy. You may believe that discretion is implied. However, your partner abroad may not realize that you want to keep an idea or project under wraps.

DEAL WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

With all these cultural differences in business examples, you may be feeling overwhelmed. The good news is that there are many ways to address cultural differences in business.

No matter your industry or position, you can use these solutions to mitigate misunderstandings.

Cultural Awareness And Education

It's natural to think of our own culture as "normal," especially if it's all we've ever known. However, to succeed in international business, you must learn about how your own customs and practices are perceived elsewhere in the world. Does your culture have a reputation for bluntness, indirectness, reserve, or emotionality?

Think about how your cultural norms might conflict with the people you're meeting with so that you can proactively try to avoid clashes. During the interaction, tune into how your colleagues or clients are responding to your communication style.

That way, you can figure out how to effectively and productively interact with them. Dealing with cultural differences in business is not only about understanding other cultures but also understanding your own.

Cross-Cultural Training

Cultural differences may currently hinder your team or are likely to in the future due to planned expansion into other countries. Whether working with colleagues or dealing with customers, it's most likely time to invest in learning and development opportunities that improve your cross-cultural skills.

This Training Can Help in Several Important Ways:

- It addresses communication issues (as described above), including language barriers. For example, working with an experienced language teacher will help learners build grammar and fluency in a foreign language while advising your team on cultural issues that might impact communication.
- It teaches about etiquette and customs in other cultures.
- It reduces reliance on stereotypes by offering context and real-life examples

Cross-cultural awareness can also be increased at the workplace in many other less formal ways—for example, by celebrating important dates in the calendars of other countries and a variety of religions.

Adaptability

When dealing with cultural differences in international business, be adaptable. You may not want to do something in an unfamiliar way but try to stay open. Being flexible will create much warmer relationships with your partners abroad.

What's more, the new method might benefit your company in ways you didn't foresee. Successful businesses often need to adapt their products, services, and marketing strategies to get the most out of international business.

Respect And Empathy

Successful international businesswoman **Erin Meyer** advises all international teams "to watch more, listen more and speak less" when interacting with international colleagues.

Doing so will help you to identify moments in which you are making assumptions based on your own cultural norms. Moreover, you can more easily pick up on subtle cues that the person you are speaking with is trying to get across.

Effective Communication

With respect and empathy comes effective communication. It’s important to listen to the other person with their culture in mind. For example, if they are from a low-context culture, then don’t rely on body language cues.

Instead, listen closely to exactly what they are saying. In turn, try to adjust your tone, body language, and wording so that the other person can easily interpret your meaning.

Build Relationships

We tend to be more tolerant of people with whom we have good relationships, and business is no exception. When you already know someone, it’s much easier to right cultural wrongs. Spend time with your intercultural partners, bonding over common experiences. Even little things, such as drinking coffee, can help cement key professional connections.

Cultural Liaisons

Not sure if you can go it alone? Work with experts or cultural liaisons. These are trained professionals put in place to help you better understand your partners abroad and their communities. They might offer educational modules, workshops, experiences, and bonding activities to help foster cross-cultural understanding.

Local Partnerships

Building a solid rapport with local organizations shows that you care about your client or customer’s community. It also shows companies that you’re working with that you want their opinion to be heard as an equal partner.This can look like sourcing from local suppliers and giving away excess inventory to a charity in the area.

DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging)

In your domestic office and abroad, DEIB is incredibly important to bringing new ideas to the workplace. Prioritizing DEIB also helps colleagues practice cultural awareness and sensitivity with each other.

Addressing cultural differences in international business can start at home, with workshops and training for cross-cultural understanding.

Legal And Ethical Compliance

Ensure that your business practices adhere to local laws and ethical standards with a written agreement. That way, there is no ambiguity or misunderstanding about certain behaviors or practices.

One of the most effective ways to straighten out misunderstandings is by maintaining clear written rules before you begin working together.

Localization

Don't assume that just because you've experienced a certain culture in one locality of a country, you know all the others, too. It's culturally sensitive and best practice for businesses to educate themselves about regional differences.

That way, your business is making the most out of its presence in that particular area.

Negotiation And Conflict Resolution

Finding a compromise is generally important for business, and dealing with cultural differences in international business is no exception. Be open to negotiating on the other culture's terms.

You can always bring in an outside party for conflict resolution—just make sure the person is equally familiar with both cultures, or they might come across as unfairly biased.

Seek Feedback And Ask Questions

When in doubt, ask questions. Even if your question may seem obvious or blunt, take a stance of genuine curiosity. Even with language barriers and cultural differences, your colleagues abroad will appreciate your efforts.

If delivered thoughtfully, your feedback can also help intercultural partners be more sensitive to your culture, too.

Technology And Tools

With these strategies, businesses can overcome the challenges posed by cultural differences. In fact, businesses can use technology to leverage them as opportunities for growth.

For example, remote language training provides employees in a global market with a better ability to connect with one another and build stronger relationships.

Cultural Differences and Business Etiquette

Conduct Thorough Market Research

Businesses should thoroughly research the customs, values, and business etiquette of a new international market before entering it. This may entail researching market trends and consumer preferences as well as learning language, dialects, traditions, and social conventions. Businesses may create intelligent strategies to meet the particular needs of their overseas clients by acquiring a full awareness of the cultural environment.

Localize Your Website and Marketing Materials

To interact with overseas clients successfully, you must localize your website and marketing materials. This may entail adjusting marketing messages to resonate with the values and preferences of your target audience, using imagery that is culturally relevant, and translating content into the native tongue. Businesses should also think about providing localized payment and shipping choices as well as customer assistance in the local tongue.

Be Mindful of Cultural Sensitivities

Businesses must be aware of cultural sensitivity when communicating with clients from other countries and refrain from saying or doing anything that can be considered insulting or inappropriate. This may entail avoiding contentious subjects, employing inclusive language, and respecting regional traditions and customs.

Adapt Your Communication Style

Effective communication requires you to modify your communication style to fit the cultural norms and professional etiquette of your target market. This could entail altering the formality, tone, or directness of your communications in addition to being aware of non-verbal signs like body language and personal space.

Offer Culturally Relevant Products and Services

Businesses must make sure that their goods and services are culturally appropriate and satisfy their target market's demands and preferences if they want to succeed in global marketplaces. This could entail customizing a product's features, packaging, or even creating brand-new goods to meet the demands and tastes of clients in a particular market.

Foster Cross-Cultural Understanding Within Your Team

Fostering cross-cultural understanding within your team is crucial for navigating cultural variations and business protocol successfully. To help your team members acquire the abilities and information required to communicate with international clients successfully, provide cultural training and resources.

Cultural Highlight: China

Navigating the Nuances of Chinese Business Etiquette

In an era where global business dynamics are constantly evolving, understanding the subtleties of international business cultures is paramount. Among these, Chinese business culture stands out as particularly nuanced and vital for anyone looking to engage with the world's second-largest economy. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of Chinese business etiquette, offering insights to help you navigate these waters with finesse and confidence.

The Foundation of Relationships: Guanxi

Central to Chinese business culture is the concept of 'guanxi', a term that transcends mere networking or relationships. Guanxi is about building a network of mutually beneficial relationships which is crucial for business success in China. It involves a deep understanding of respect, trust, and reciprocal obligations. Foreign businesspersons should invest time in cultivating guanxi, as it can play a pivotal role in negotiations and business dealings.

Communication: A Subtle Art

Communication in Chinese business settings is often indirect and nuanced. It's vital to read between the lines and understand the importance of non-verbal cues. Direct confrontation or blunt opinions are generally avoided to maintain harmony and face, a concept known as 'mianzi'. Learning to communicate effectively within these parameters is key to successful interactions.

The Significance of Hierarchical Structures

Chinese businesses typically adhere to strict hierarchical structures, where seniority and age are highly respected. It's important to acknowledge and defer to higher-ranking individuals in meetings and discussions.

Negotiations: Patience and Persistence

Negotiations in Chinese business culture are often lengthy and may require several rounds of meetings. Patience and persistence are vital. Decisions are typically made by the highest authority in the company, so expect a slower decision-making process. It's also common for Chinese businessmen to seek consensus within their group before making a final decision.

Gift-Giving: A Cultural Nuance

Gift-giving is an integral part of Chinese business culture, symbolizing respect and goodwill. However, it is crucial to understand the nuances to avoid misunderstandings. Gifts should be modest and not overly extravagant, to avoid any implication of bribery. It's also advisable to present gifts to the entire team rather than individual members, to show respect to the group dynamic.

Business Entertainment: Beyond the Boardroom

Business in China often extends beyond the boardroom into social settings. Invitations to dinners or events should be accepted as they are considered part of the relationship-building process. During these occasions, it's important to observe proper etiquette, such as waiting for the host to start eating and being mindful of the importance of toasting.

Dress Code: Professional and Conservative

In Chinese business culture, the dress code tends to be formal and conservative. Men are expected to wear suits and ties, while women should opt for business suits or dresses that are not overly revealing. Understanding and adhering to this dress code shows respect for your Chinese counterparts and their cultural norms.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Indian Business Culture

"*Whatever you can rightly say about India, the opposite is also true*."- British economist Joan Robinson.

It can be rightly said that India contains several Indias within it. Although many companies view the country as a talent jargon, several challenges are still faced while doing business here. This section will explore your challenges and opportunities in the Indian workplace.

Challenges of the work culture in India

The 3 most basic and common challenges from the cultural perspective of the Indian workplace are:

1. Varying Demographics

In the Indian workplace, you'll encounter people from diverse backgrounds, with varying age groups, religions, languages, and regional cultures. This diversity can sometimes pose challenges in communication, understanding different perspectives, and finding common ground. It requires open-mindedness, empathy, and adaptability to work effectively with individuals from different demographic backgrounds.

2. Elastic Commitments

In an Indian workplace, commitments and deadlines can be more flexible and subject to change. This means that schedules may not always be set in stone, and things can sometimes feel unpredictable. It's important for you to communicate clearly to manage expectations and make sure everyone is on the same page.

3. Money-Centric Mindset

As the country is still developing, people focus on money and financial success. This can influence how decisions are made and the overall workplace environment. It's important for you to be aware of this mindset. Find a balance between financial goals and other important aspects, like personal growth, teamwork, and long-term sustainability.

Opportunities or Benefits of the Work Culture in India

Here are 3 important opportunities that the culture of India presents its workers and collaborators with:

1. Promotes Learning And Growth

You'll find many opportunities in India to learn and improve your skills. The culture values personal and professional development, so you'll have support and resources to keep growing. There are often ample opportunities for skill development, training programs, and career advancement.

2. Supports Teamwork And Collaboration

Indian workplaces often foster a sense of camaraderie and teamwork. Building strong relationships and collaborating with colleagues is encouraged, which can create a supportive and motivating work environment. This sense of community promotes collaboration, idea-sharing, and collective achievement.

3. Encourages Entrepreneurship

India has a vibrant entrepreneurial culture that celebrates innovation and risk-taking. If you have a creative idea or a business venture you want to pursue, the culture provides a fertile ground for entrepreneurial endeavors. There are supportive networks, government initiatives, and a growing startup ecosystem that can help you turn your ideas into reality and thrive as an entrepreneur.

Let's Sum Up

Cultural differences in business play a significant role in shaping interactions, negotiations, and overall work dynamics. These differences, stemming from varying values, communication styles, norms, and business etiquette, can impact everything from decision-making to team collaboration. For example, in some cultures, business communication is direct and to-the-point, while in others, indirect communication is valued to maintain harmony and avoid conflict. Likewise, attitudes toward hierarchy, risk, time management, and personal space vary widely across cultures, influencing leadership styles, negotiation strategies, and even meeting conduct. Understanding and respecting these cultural differences is essential in today's global business environment, as it helps prevent misunderstandings and fosters trust among international partners and colleagues. Businesses that embrace cultural awareness not only strengthen relationships but also enhance adaptability and creativity by integrating diverse perspectives. With sensitivity to cultural differences, companies are better positioned to navigate complex global markets and create a more inclusive and respectful workplace where all employees feel valued and empowered.

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain about the meaning and definition of Business Ethics
2. Write about the importance of Business Ethics
3. How could you differentiate Business Ethics and Workplace Ethics?
4. What are all the ethical challenges in workplace ethics?
5. Brief out the advantages and disadvantages of workplace ethics
6. Explain about the conflict resolution strategies
7. How do you choose the relevant appropriate corporate gift?
8. What are all the stages of cultural sensitivity?
9. Elaborate the term: cultural awareness
10. Can you explain how cultural difference relating with business etiquette
11. What factors determine the cultural changes in India & China?