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DR MARILYN CHALUPA
2205 N KNIGHTSBRIDGE AVE
MUNCIE IN 47304-2445

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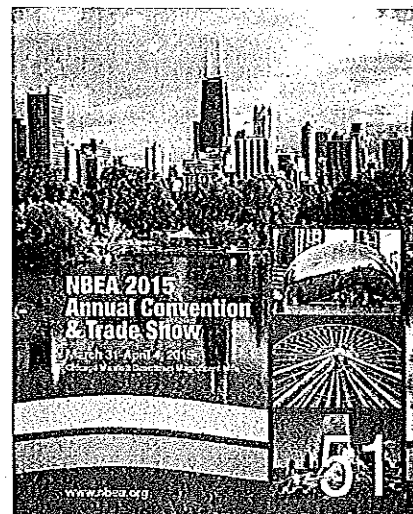
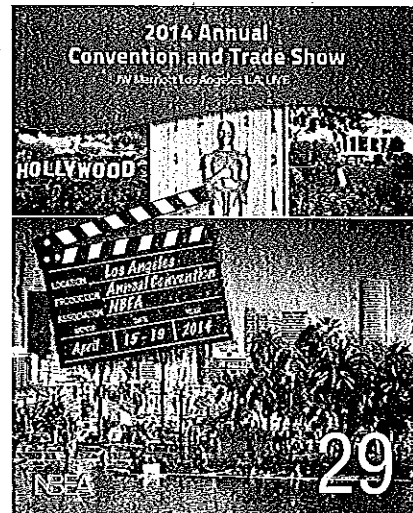
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Business Etiquette Communicates Volumes in the Workplace

BY MARILYN CHALUPA AND LISA LETSINGER

With Baby Boomers (ages 48–66), Gen-Xers (ages 36–47), and Gen-Yers and Millennials (ages 15–35) mixing in the workplace, one can imagine the various points of view represented! How should these employees treat each other, much less communicate with each other?

According to Bloch, a business etiquette coach, “these groups work differently” (“Why Etiquette Schools,” 2010). The key to navigating the current world of work etiquette lies in knowing with whom one is dealing and in finding a middle ground (Bruning, 2013). Millennials are used to walking, talking, texting, eating, and tweeting (yes, multitasking); they are often called the “Net Generation” and “iPod” people (Bloch, 2010). They see everyone as equal, as they all have the same access to information on the Web (“Why Etiquette Schools,” 2010). Therefore, Millennials may think addressing their superiors by their first name is acceptable, while Baby Boomers may think this practice is disrespectful.

Because of workplace generational differences, etiquette training is thriving. Bloch, founder of Etiquette Outreach, indicates a renewed interest in training etiquette instructors (“Why Etiquette Schools,” 2010). Enrollment has increased

and the age of enrollees has changed from the over-50-year-olds to 25- to 30-year-olds (“Why Etiquette Schools,” 2010). Although social etiquette is based on “gender and chivalry,” business etiquette is based on hierarchy (MacMillian, n.d.).

How can today’s business teachers capitalize on this newfound interest in business etiquette? Business teachers in high schools can incorporate etiquette instruction throughout business courses and/or in their business club(s). For example, business teachers can plan an etiquette dinner or a reception and invite local business people to interact with students. Students learn to dress appropriately for the event, introduce themselves to the business people, shake hands, and participate in conversation. During these events, students may also learn proper cell-phone etiquette in a business environment. Although cell phones are ubiquitous in our society, business teachers should introduce and discuss some common-sense guidelines (Schroeder, 2013; Wagner, 2013) for cell-phone use.

Business etiquette encompasses a variety of topics, including dining, appropriate attire, introductions and handshakes, and cell-phone and texting usage.

Millennials in the classroom today need to recognize the importance of business etiquette for workplace success and need to begin practicing those skills before graduating from high school. A simple *please*, *thank you*, or *excuse me*, as well as holding a door open for someone creates a positive image and demonstrates respect for people.

Every business classroom should have an etiquette book and a list of URLs for Web sites that have etiquette information for employment seeking and working with others. Additionally, business teachers should use the numerous YouTube videos and Web sites available on the subject to help them prepare such units of activities for student practice and reinforcement. Students enjoy seeking sources to evaluate to determine if the source meets the objectives to be accomplished. Having students seek and review YouTube videos that pertain to any of the business etiquette objectives is a great way for them to interact and think critically about the value of the source. Each of the four topics—dining, appropriate attire, introductions and handshakes, and cell-phone and texting usage can be developed into teaching units; ideas for each are addressed below.

Dining

Dining etiquette training should make one feel relaxed, not uncomfortable, so one can concentrate on the purpose of the meal, whether it be a scholarship interview, job interview, wedding, or meeting with future in-laws. The author facilitated an “immersive” project called “Dining 9 to 5” for a class of college students to develop workplace dining etiquette objectives, lesson plans, activities, and resources with videotaped vignettes for high school students. The topics included place settings, ordering, beverage, napkin use, passing items, soup/salad/bread, entrée, and dessert. Additional vignettes included appropriate attire, greeting, conversation/communication, and a taped evaluation vignette in which students identify correct and incorrect behavior/conversation.

The overall objectives for the project were for students to accomplish the following:

- Identify the five locations of the dinner napkin throughout the meal
- Demonstrate the proper use of the dinner napkin
- Demonstrate the proper placement of the beverage glasses
- Demonstrate proper passing of food, seasonings, and other center-table items
- Demonstrate American and Continental use of utensils while eating
- Arrange a place setting properly
- Demonstrate the proper use of the dessert utensils and explain their placement on the table
- Explain appropriate attire for work
- Identify appropriate and inappropriate topics for conversation at the dinner table and when it is appropriate to talk business
- Explain appropriate use of cell phones and texting while dining

A local high school business teacher used the project’s materials to arrange

a dinner with a professional “Dos and Don’ts Style Show” (fall) and “Etiquette Mocktail Party” (spring) to which community members and business people were invited to mingle with students so they could practice their etiquette. The ratio was 4–6 students to 1 business/community member. The students introduced themselves and the business/community members asked them various questions to try to get to know the students. Both the students and the guests enjoyed practicing proper dinner/reception etiquette.

The purpose of the two events was to prepare students for professional dinner and/or reception-type events they might attend for receiving scholarships, a “mix and mingle” for Greek organization membership, a dinner or luncheon for an interview, or even a wedding dinner/reception. Whatever the event, students need to be prepared through education in proper and professional etiquette.

The Business Club sponsor worked with the club members to prepare them for the events by making business cards, learning the proper way to shake hands and introduce themselves, preparing an “elevator speech” (10–30 seconds about themselves), and dressing in professional business attire. The club organized the Dos and Don’ts Style Show in partnership with Alpha Kappa Psi, a professional business fraternity. Volunteers from both organizations provided models and clothing for what and what not to wear for four categories: business professional, business casual, casual, and business tech. The activity was a win/win for both organizations.

Teaching proper etiquette on eating and drinking at a reception was addressed during the spring cocktail party; teachers and administrators from the local high school were the servers passing trays of drinks and hot and cold hors d’oeuvres. Students and guests gave feedback. Students commented on how much they learned and could not wait to go to another event to “put it to work!” Business/community members always praised the events and gave suggestions

for improvement. They also saw the significance of hosting the events for the students.

The “Dining 9 to 5” immersive project was developed and tested using students in Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) classes, which used the project materials to help their students acquire workplace social skills. All these materials are available at <http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/careercenter/prep/etiquette/dining9to5>. Individual lesson objectives, materials, activities, and instructor notes were also prepared on each topic. The following list identifies some valuable resources used in the dining unit; many YouTube videos are available that students can view and most colleges have some information on their Web site.

- “Dining 9 to 5” immersive project link that has all the videos and lesson materials. <http://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/careercenter/prep/etiquette/dining9to5>
- *The Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette: A Guide to Contemporary Living* (Tuckman, & Dunman, 1995)
- Emily Post’s *The Etiquette Advantage in Business* (Post & Post, 2005)
- The “Don’t Gross Out the World” website includes dining etiquette from around the world (<http://www.gadling.com/2007/04/26/dont-gross-out-the-world-a-quiz-about-global-dining-culture>) or use this site: <http://gadling.com/2007/04/26/dont-gross-out-the-world-a-quiz-about-global-dining-culture>
- “Mannerly Moments: How to Eat European/Continental Style,” YouTube videos:
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fypq2qhRZnI>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXbQmvzyB4c>
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NOiaC3A1uw&list=PL4405DB7384EBC28E>

- Kwintessential.com will include some dining information for different countries: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html>

Appropriate Attire

Determining what is appropriate for professional, business casual, and casual is always a challenge. Although high school uniform appearance (dress code) in the public schools is a hot topic, a uniform appearance in the workplace is not. Image is important to the company, and an individual's appearance while at work says something about the company and the employee; the messages should be consistent. This vignette in the Dining 9 to 5 video focused on "nice casual," "business casual," and "business professional" attire for men and women.

Although men have a standard work uniform—the business suit—women have a few more challenges. For both genders, hair, fragrance, how much skin is exposed, body art and piercings, and jewelry should be addressed. Specifically for men, business teachers should discuss facial hair, nails, coordinating color of belt and shoes (polished). Specifically for women, make-up, length of skirt, style of shoes, sheer or skimpy tops, and a layered look should be discussed. As one moves up in the organization, note that those employees/executives have very little skin exposed. Consider how business professional and business casual may differ in organizations of different size, geographical location, and type of industry.

Business casual is more challenging for the younger generation of men and women as the definition of business casual can vary by professions and by geographical regions. Although khaki slacks and a nice polo shirt may be acceptable for men, the slacks should not have cargo pockets; for women, slacks and a top that is not sheer or low cut would be acceptable; shorts are definitely out unless one is on the golf course, and skorts must be an appropriate length (thighs are covered when sitting down). For the "nice casual" style,

students can dress up jeans; the jeans must not be faded, look very worn or washed out, or have tears in them. A belt is still necessary with a tucked-in shirt or a polo top. Capris may be acceptable for women with an appropriate top that is not sheer or with a low-cut neckline or skimpy shoulder straps.

As students enjoy searching for information and learning to make a decision without realizing that they are thinking critically, teachers can ask them to conduct searches using such terms as casual, business, or workplace attire to find appropriate links that fulfill learning objectives. Additional resources include the following:

- Dress for Success PPT, <http://bit.ly/1aR4ePj>
- Lesson Plan for Dress for Success, <http://cavitschools.com/filestore/DressforSuccess.pdf>
- YouTube videos
- Attire guide, <http://www.emilypost.com/everyday-manners/your-personal-image/69-attire-chart>
- Business attire and degrees of formality in attire, <http://humanresources.about.com/od/glossary/b/g/what-is-business-attire.htm>
- Dress for success link with additional sources, <http://www.nic.edu/modules/images/websites/15/file/Dress%20for%20Success%20Handout.pdf>
- John Malloy's *Dress for Success* books (still considered excellent resources and the link below is referenced to his column), <http://www.thedressforsuccesscolumn.com>

Introductions and Handshakes

Making introductions helps put guests at ease and allows them to get to know each other (Cuncic, 2012). Although many young people do not bother to make introductions, the practice is still necessary in the workplace. Standard protocol suggests introducing the most important person to

the least important person. As rank and status usually determine the most important person, not gender or age, one should introduce the lower-ranking individual to the higher-ranking individual (Belludi, 2007). However, a client is considered higher ranking than others in an organization, so an employee is introduced to a client (Cuncic, 2012).

Follow four steps to introduce people correctly. According to Belludi (2007), (1) state the name of the person to whom the introduction is being made (higher-ranking person); (2) then "I would like to introduce" or "please meet"; (3) followed by the name of the person being introduced (lower-ranking person); and (4) then some information about each person. For example, if one wishes to introduce one's boss Sally Jones to Jack Thompson in another department, you would say, "Sally Jones, please meet Jack Thompson from XXX Department." Then say something more about the individuals to help start a conversation.

Many people struggle to make introductions appropriately. By following these steps and with practice, introductions can become second-nature; however, remember that making introductions, however imperfectly, is more important than failing to make an introduction for fear of making a mistake.

Handshakes are a necessary part of any business introduction. According to Amy MacMillian, handshakes are the only business greeting acceptable, regardless of gender. Students need to learn to have an appropriate grip (not too firm or too loose) and to look the person in the eyes and smile. The link below on hand-shaking etiquette also identifies how to decline a handshake and to explain tactfully why. If the situation requires name tags, put the name tag on the right side so when shaking hands, the eyes go up the arm to the face and thus see the name tag.

The following list provides online sources for additional information on introductions and handshakes. For more formal occasions, follow Emily Post's or Amy VanderBilt's books of etiquette.

- Etiquette tips for introducing men and women, <http://womeninbusiness.about.com/od/businessintroductionrules/a/savvyskills.htm>
- Emily Post's Etiquette Daily on making introductions, <http://www.etiquettedaily.com/2009/05/making-introductions-the-basics-for-a-good-introduction>
- How to make introductions like a gentleman, <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2010/08/10/how-to-make-introductions-like-a-gentleman>
- Ten tips on how to shake hands with confidence, <http://womeninbusiness.about.com/od/businessetiquette/tp/10-Tips-on-How-to-Shake-Hands.htm>
- Handshaking etiquette with a subordinate, <http://work.chron.com/handshaking-etiquette-subordinate-17163.html>
- Handshake etiquette tips by etiquette expert and industry leader, Diane Gottsman, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHUJA2t_NA

Cell-Phone and Texting Use

With all the technology available for communications, people are connected 24/7, 365 days a year. However, in some situations, one should not be available to receive or send calls or text messages. Although cell-phone use including texting is recognized as inappropriate during an interview or a business luncheon, many job opportunities have been lost because of cell-phone use during an interview (Davidson, 2013; Tolan, 2010). Many of today's students cannot imagine being without a cell phone, but they have not thought about the lack of privacy when talking in public places. Interrupting your face-to-face conversation with someone to talk to someone else without saying "excuse me, but I must relay a message to..." would be considered rude, and yet people do not think interrupting a conversation to take a phone call

or respond to a text message while expecting the other person to wait is rude. Some of the articles identified below make very interesting comments that can generate discussion about differences among generational points of view on what is considered being polite or rude. Teachers can develop a classroom or business club activity to have students create a cell-phone use policy for a fast-food restaurant, a hospital emergency room, or some other local business place. Students could also create their own video of good and bad etiquette guidelines.

Additional sources pertaining to cell-phone etiquette in the workplace and while dining may include the following:

- Dining etiquette, cell-phone etiquette, <http://baybusinesshelp.com/2013/02/20/mobile-phones-at-the-dinner-table-acceptable-or-etiquette-nightmare>
- "New York Etiquette Guide," http://www.etiquetteoutreach.com/blog_new-york-etiquette-guide/bid/72619/Unbreakable-Rules-of-Cell-Phone-Etiquette
- "Cell-Phone Etiquette: 15 Rules to Follow," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/26/cell-phone-etiquette-15-r_n_514927.html
- "How to Create a Cell-Phone Policy," <http://www.inc.com/guides/how-to-create-a-cell-phone-policy.html>
- Cell-phone etiquette: mobile office technology (dos and don'ts), <http://mobileoffice.about.com/od/usingyourphone/qt/celletiquette.htm>

Summary

To be successful in business, one must behave as a professional to be perceived as one. To make a good impression and have people put their trust in professionals requires business etiquette and an understanding of how to behave in various business settings. Although business etiquette has not changed much across the generations, business etiquette has had an increased

emphasis because of the different technology tools used to communicate and accomplish work by the different generations. Because technology allows workers to be isolated from their colleagues, they must display professionalism not only face to face but also through various communication channels. The Millennial generation is more challenged in demonstrating professionalism and respect because they grew up thinking everyone was considered an equal or at the same hierarchical level as they expect everyone to have the same access to information. They are more connected technologically and seek variety in the tasks assigned to them. With the right business etiquette skills ingrained, they have a greater chance of being accepted in the work place and thus eventually becoming a successful professional.

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Marilyn Chalupa is an associate professor in the Information Systems & Operations Management Department, Miller College of Business, Ball State University and can be reached at mchalupa@bsu.edu.
Lisa Letsinger is a high school business teacher at Muncie Central and can be reached at lletsinger@muncie.k12.in.us.

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