

Encore TeleSolutions Business Etiquette Guide



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Email Etiquette



Good email etiquette is like an electronic dress code. Would you conduct a sales presentation with wrinkled clothes and yesterday's soup on your tie or blouse? Not only do we need to be concerned with our outward appearance, we need to use courtesy and clear communication with each interaction we have. Today's effective business person needs to include all the components of professionalism in every message sent. We need to put some thought into each message we craft, and like any other interaction we have, ask ourselves a few questions about how we wish to be perceived by others.

Is email the right media for the message you want to send?

Email is great for outlining more complicated ideas and can be retrieved later for reference. When replying to an email, separate your responses from the original message and be sure to include relevant keywords in your subject line. We can search our inbox or sent items using keywords or read a succession of replies to recall a conversation. It is helpful to use only one email account for work and keep all messages in one place. Email is not suitable for delivering bad news or saying no.

Try to respond to all your emails in a timely manner. If your email is emotionally charged, walk away from the computer and wait to reply. Typing in UPPERCASE could be considered yelling. Keep attachments small as they could cause your emails to end up in the junk folder or not be delivered at all. Be cautious about sending personal information as the confidentiality of e-mail can never be guaranteed.

Is your email concise?

The less emails you send, the more likely they are to be read! Re-read your email before you send it to ensure it is clear and understandable and send a new email for each topic you want to be addressed. If your email is too long, the reader may not read the entire email and miss critical information.



When composing an email, state your name because your e-mail address may not be clear enough. Use a professional greeting and sign off and be courteous; use please and thank you. Keep your signature short and limit it to something you're prepared to have anyone read. Be sure to use the spelling and grammar check before you hit send.

Does everyone need to be part of this conversation?

Use care when replying to all. If you leave long lists of email addresses in the to: or cc: fields, you may be sending others' addresses to people they don't want it shared with. Use bcc:, but use it with care; sending bcc: copies to others as a way of talking behind someone's back is inconsiderate.

Texting Etiquette



Next in our series of blogs on etiquette on the internet or netiquette, we will discuss etiquette for text messages or SMS (Short Message Service). Text messaging has become very popular among cell phone users as it is good for sending details that might be understood more easily and quickly in writing. It is a great mode of communication for saving time and money.

It is often faster to type out a short message and hit send than making a voice call and using airtime. It is likely people will get the message sooner than if you were sending email since many people bring their cell phones with them where ever they go. One may not get to their computer to check email for several hours or even until the next day depending on the nature of their business.

Here are some tips for thinking about your next text message and how it can impact your business:

- * Don't get upset if you don't get a reply. Before you text someone and get frustrated at the lack of a response, be sure that they're familiar with how to use the service and they are not away from their cell phone.
- * Don't SMS while you're driving or having a face-to-face conversation with someone.

- * If you send too many text messages in a short period of time, ask yourself whether you are imposing on the other person.
- * It is almost never appropriate to conduct important conversations about critical work issues via text message.
- * It is acceptable to respond to a text message with a phone call, an e-mail message, or any other form of communication. The recipient is free to choose the medium of the response, or even whether to respond at all.
- * Avoid lingo and abbreviations that the recipient might not understand
- * Let the recipient know who you are if they don't have your phone number.
- * Don't send texts when you are with someone or during a meeting. This tells the people you are with that they are less important than who you are texting.



Telephone Etiquette



So your company has spent considerable time and effort building an advertising campaign to get potential customers to contact your business. Your telephone number is clearly positioned where the reader can find it in all of your ads. You may have even purchased a toll-free number or a number that spells your company's name or tagline alphanumerically.

Now wouldn't all this effort be wasted if your company's receptionist answered the phone: "Whatya want"?

How we answer a telephone call can make a huge difference for our business. Use good telephone etiquette to give callers a better experience and leave a more positive impression of your business.

Tips for Telephone Etiquette

Always be courteous. When answering the phone, identify yourself and your organization with a well enunciated and cheerful voice. There is nothing worse than hearing someone answer with a swift slurry of words that are indistinguishable. "Sorry who am I speaking with"?

Don't eat or drink during a telephone conversation and focus on the person at the other end of the telephone, not someone else in the room. Use a note pad to write a message so as not to interrupt others' telephone conversations.

If you are taking a message, it is always a good habit to repeat the information back to verify that you have taken down the information correctly. Only promise to deliver the message; you can't guarantee that someone else will return a call.



Always ask if the other party if they are able to hold. Getting put on hold without warning can be very frustrating. This also is true for speakerphone, always ask permission. Also with speakerphone, you never know who may be listening in so some people may have a preference not to use speakerphone at all.

Everyone and anyone working for the company must be prepared to field any and every caller's needs. If an employee doesn't know the answer they can ask someone else at their organization for help.

If you are making a cold call to someone with a gender-neutral name, such as Pat or Chris, try to find out their gender before making the call. Calling a man she or trying to avoid gender-specific language in a conversation can be awkward.

Tips for Teleconferencing

- * Take a trial run and make sure you know how to use the teleconferencing software/service in advance of the meeting.
- * Take turns talking and leave pauses to allow for delayed responses due to any lag in the connection.
- * Just like any other communication media, focus on the people in the meeting and don't text or email unless it is relevant to the meeting.



Face-To-Face Etiquette

This is the fourth installment in our blog series on business etiquette. There are so many tips for face-to-face communication that it would be difficult to compile all of them in a single blog. This has to do with how rich a communication medium face-to-face communication is. With a face-to-face communication, we not only rely on what someone is saying but also the non-verbal cues. In contrast an SMS text message is very short and straight forward with only character symbols from a keypad. All of these factors affect how we perceive a message and the more factors a communication medium can convey, the richer it is. The richest communication medium is face-to-face meetings followed by telephone, email and texting.



Richness of the communication medium is not the only thing that needs to be considered. Other considerations for face-to-face communications are tradition and culture. For example, it is a long standing tradition in the Western world that men wear a business suit and tie. An example of a cultural consideration is how in places like Canada and the U.S., an audience may applaud your business presentation with a few whistles if you have made a great impression. On the other hand, if you hear whistles in many parts of Europe, you had better run because someone might start throwing food. Do your research if you have a business opportunity that may require cross-cultural sensitivity.

Introductions

When addressing people face to face, stand up, establish eye contact and smile. Shake hands with your right hand and try to match the firmness of the other person's handshake. When greeting someone, repeat his or her name. If you forget someone's name, be honest and ask them to repeat it. Keep in mind that in business, rank and status is more important than gender and age.



Verbal Communication

Every encounter offers a chance to impress the other person. Keep in mind that:

- * Someone who talks too much may be seen as nervous or insensitive.
- * Someone who ignores others could be considered snobbish.
- * Someone who only discusses work may come across as limited.

Non-Verbal Communication

Body language communicates more than just what is said. Gestures, facial expressions, posture and physical contact are also powerful forms of communication. Maintain eye contact and avoid distracting mannerisms such as fidgeting, playing with hair, tapping feet or chewing gum.

Personal Space

People have an invisible bubble of space around them that is a form of personal territory. The size of the space expands or contracts depending on level of intimacy, situation, and cultural background. About two feet is acceptable for business interactions in Canada.



Work Events

- * Arrive early giving yourself time to check your appearance in the washroom mirror.
- * Bring business cards with you.
- * Set your cell phone to silent.
- * Place your nametag on the right side.
- * Approach people standing alone or gradually ease into a larger group. Avoid breaking into groups of two as these are usually more personal or intense discussions.

Work Events (Continued)

- * Avoid sensitive conversations, controversial issues and negative comments.
- * Avoid perfume.
- * Avoid allergy foods or foods with strong odours.
- * Hold your plate in right hand and eat and hold your drink in your left hand.
- * Watch your consumption as you don't want to give the impression that you are a glutton or a drunk.
- * Ask open-ended questions.
- * Thank you notes are always appreciated.

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