Business Etiquette

Building a polished, credible professional reputation requires more than the acquisition of responsibilities, subject expertise, and a strong work ethic. Professional development and career growth require a keen awareness and consistent practice of professional etiquette. Mastery of appropriate business protocol often makes the critical difference in making favorable first impressions, effective networking and job searching, and career advancement.

Take time to learn and practice basic business etiquette and understand cross-cultural and organizational norms for appropriate behavior. Review the following resources and visit with a CCS career counselor to discuss appropriate business etiquette both during and after your job search.

General Business Etiquette & Professional Communication

Greetings/Introductions

- Demonstrate interest and enthusiasm with a smile and confident, friendly body language.
- Extend your arm and offer a firm handshake using direct eye contact, and clearly state your full name.
- Always stand when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Unless directed otherwise, introduce someone by using their title and last name.
- When introducing people, always introduce the lower-ranked person to the higher-ranked one.
- Visit the following Web sites for more information:
  - 10 Ways to Make a Positive Impression when Greeting People
  - Greeting People at a Networking Event
  - Etiquette in Business Introductions

Emails

- Use appropriate salutations and formal tone and language.
- Use the subject field to identify your specific purpose and/or content.
- Keep messages brief and succinct and error-free (use spell-check), and focus on one subject per email.
- Reply to all messages in a timely manner, and use discretion when using the “Reply All” feature.
- If you need extra time before answering an email, send a message indicating that you are collecting the necessary information and will get back to them within a specified timeframe.
- Learn more at the following Web sites:
  - 10 Rules for Professional Email Etiquette
  - 12 Tips for Better Email Etiquette
Business Meetings
- Arrive promptly and prepared, with pen and paper and any pertinent information that will contribute to a productive meeting.
- Silence electronic ringers/alerts, etc. and use your laptop or phone only if they are relevant to the meeting.
- Greet everyone with a smile, and make appropriate introductions.
- Stay engaged—demonstrate attentive listening skills, and avoid sideline conversations.
- Learn more here:
  - Meeting Manners

Telephone
- Ensure that you have a professional voicemail message on your cell and landline phones.
- Prepare in advance for scheduled business telephone calls, and have all necessary information nearby.
- Speak clearly and slowly, and never chew gum or eat. In addition, minimize noisy distractions/interruptions.
- Do not use the speakerphone without permission; introduce all participants on conference calls.
- Leave professional voicemail messages that state your name, purpose of call, and contact information.
- Learn more here:
  - Proper Business Telephone Etiquette
  - 8 Telephone Etiquette Tips

Thank-You Notes
- Send thank-you notes promptly anytime a business contact extends a favor or offers generous time and effort to assist you.
- Use appropriate salutations, full names/titles, and formal tone and language.
- Be sincere, brief, and succinct; strive to convey genuine appreciation and share specific information about how the individual and/or experience impacted you.
- Notes may be emailed or mailed, and often both are recommended after job interviews. In some industries, a hand-written note is much-appreciated, although be aware of receipt time delays. Ideally, thank-you notes should be sent within 24-48 hours.
- Learn more here:
  - Job Search and Thank-You Letters (page 11)
  - Structuring a Business Thank-You Note
  - Sample Career Thank-You Letters

Computer/Telephone/Other Technology Usage
- Do not use business telephones, computers, or other office equipment for personal use.
- Give your work telephone number to close family members as an emergency number only.
- Leave your personal cell phone off during the day, and use it for personal calls and texts during your lunch break.
- If you listen to a radio or stream music, keep it low or wear a headset.
- Use good judgment when posting on social networking sites; your online presence impacts your professional reputation and the reputation of your employer.
- Visit the following Web sites for more information:
  - Using Cell Phones at Work
  - Proper Internet Use at Work

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Cross-Cultural Differences

- Awareness of cultural differences in the workplace is becoming increasingly important as companies employ highly diverse work teams and the global economy expands.
- Work to embrace diversity and avoid misunderstandings by learning about differences in values, verbal and nonverbal communication, work styles, and social rules and boundaries.
- Support your international colleagues by taking time to get to know them and introducing them to their new surroundings, people, and company and/or cultural norms.
- Practice humility and keen observational skills if you are the foreigner trying to navigate a different culture and educate yourself about basic differences.
- Learn more here:
  - Tips for Successful Cross-Cultural Communication
  - Understanding Cultural Gaps for Business Travelers
  - Working on Common Cross-Cultural Communication Challenges

Dining/Receptions

- Take time to learn basic social and dining etiquette, as many important career-related activities are conducted over meals and receptions. Dining etiquette varies considerably from country to country, so be aware of key cultural differences (see resources below for additional information).
- Be gracious at all times, and remember that eating/drinking is not the primary purpose; making productive connections with people is the main objective.
- Introduce yourself to others, and initiate or contribute to socially appropriate conversations (avoid controversial or deeply personal topics).
- Mind your table manners: Use appropriate utensils and dishware, and don’t begin eating until everyone is served (see video below for more detailed instructions).
- Order mid-priced entrées, and avoid items that might prove messy.
- Limit your intake of alcohol to one serving. It is always perfectly okay to choose non-alcoholic beverages. Do not drink alcohol if your host is abstaining.
- Visit the following Web sites:
  - Basic Dining Etiquette – United States (video series)
  - International Dining Etiquette

Dress

- Keep in mind that first impressions are often made based on appearance; prepare in advance so that you stand out for all of the RIGHT reasons.
- Ensure that you are dressed appropriately for the occasion; know the difference between business formal, business casual, and casual attire (see resources below and consult CCS with any questions).
- Error on the side of being more formal than being too casual.
- Make every effort to appear polished (wear well-fitted clothing that is cleaned and pressed, along with shined shoes) and well-groomed (including face, hair, fingernails, teeth, breath).
- Be conservative with make-up, jewelry, perfume/cologne, and other accessories.
- Visit the following Web sites for more information:
  - Dress for Success for the Job Interview – Women
  - Dress for Success for the Job Interview – Men
  - How to Dress Professionally – Business Dress Code Basics
  - Dressing Etiquette – What Is Business Casual?
**Job Seeking & Networking**

- Networking is always about developing relationships. It is important that you approach contacts as an information-seeker, not a job-seeker. Although learning about opportunities and securing a job or internship might be your end goal, necessary relationship-building steps must come first. Take time to learn and practice these steps (see resources below), and the success of your networking efforts will increase significantly.

- Guidelines for reaching out to potential networking contacts from Aaron Salls (McIntire ’10):
  - Even if you’re asking for only 15-20 minutes to chat, you’re asking for a favor; make it easy for the other person to say yes.
  - Keep emails relatively brief. Share how you found their contact information, why you’re reaching out, and a few proposed times to connect. Always work around your contact’s schedule, as the other person is doing you a favor.
  - Know why you want to have a conversation with the business contact, and have intelligent questions prepared (do not wing it!). Do your research to get a basic level of understanding under your belt so you can have a more interesting conversation around specifics. Do your research on your contact via a quick Google search / LinkedIn search to learn a little about his or her current role, career history, and current location. Little things matter.
  - Always close the loop—send thank-you notes, and ping them a few weeks later to let them know how the conversation helped you, etc. Find reasons to continue the conversations if it makes sense.

- See the following resources:
  - CCS Networking Page
  - Job Hunting Etiquette Tips
  - Business Etiquette for Corporate Events
  - Networking – The Art of the Follow-Up (CCS guide with several sample emails)
  - Networking & Informational Interviewing

**Relationship-Building & Workplace Conduct**

- Demonstrating professional behavior in the workplace is critical if you want to enjoy productive and rewarding relationships with your supervisor, colleagues, and clients. Adopting a professional demeanor is also essential if you want to advance your career.

- Arrive to work on time with a positive attitude, and make a point to learn the spoken and unspoken rules of the company culture.

- Be a team player. Help colleagues meet their goals whenever feasible, and share credit for accomplishments, ideas, and contributions.

- Make time for informal small talk, participate enthusiastically in company events and activities, and be sure to show genuine interest in the well-being of the organization and its employees.

- Visit the following Web sites:
  - 10 Ways to Build Better Business Relationships
  - Workplace Etiquette – Four Ways to Show Courtesy to Coworkers
  - Professionalism – How to Conduct Yourself at Work