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# Smart Etiquette Mantras Corporate Suc-

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## Introduction

The young girl of today. She is educated, ambitious, confident and raring to go. She has her life charted out. Her plans made and decisions taken. Career, marriage, family... she has her priorities sorted out. Her dreams and goals reach beyond the horizon. And get there she will.

This little book is a tribute to the young lady of today, stepping out in style to take on the world. The corporate world.

God speed, career girl.

# Enter, Corporate zone

## **Making it work - while**

Here you are, sitting on the window ledge painting your nails a bright lemon yellow... still wondering you should have stuck to the shocking pink. The deliveryman at the door rings the doorbell and changes your fate forever.

An interview card. Your first job interview. Even more exciting than your first date. You run to receive it and your life takes a turn. A right about turn. Child, you are about to enter adult zone now. It's an opportunity to grow up. To be some one. To become someone. To enter the corporate arena, you need to be equipped.

You have done well, choosing your field of study and your profession. Now put your best foot forward and make it worth your while.

## Make the first impression last

### **WILL A SUIT suit you?**

Or a simple dress... prim looking skirt and stiff starched blouse, or a dash of lace and frills? A sari? What kind? The perfect dress for an interview is one in which you are not self-conscious. You want to look your professional best.

Impeccably dressed in an appropriate ensemble, hair in place and face fresh and bright. No trinkets and clanking jewellery, no garish make-up. Subtle and neat. That's all. Arrive early. This will give you time to relax and settle down.

## Make the first impression last

When your turn comes, take a deep breath, step calmly forward and smile, to conquer.

Sit down when you are asked to with a polite smile and thank you. Look the panelists in the eye when you answer.

Keep your hands folded on your lap. Never fidget.

Listen, answer and do not hesitate to ask a few questions too. It will show your employers that you have taken the trouble to do some homework.

## Humour

If humour comes naturally to you let it flow. Wit is a winner. Shake hands firmly when you leave. Leave with a smile of confidence. No questioning nervous glances backwards.

You've made the grade! CARD NUMBER TWO has arrived. You have been selected for your very first job. What a major change! The way you take on your first job affects the rest of your career. You do not get a second chance to make a good first impression

## Start off on the right foot

And make sure you waltz right through. The initial impression makes a big difference. Your first day at office is like an audition. You will need to prove yourself.

The impression you make will give you positive references wherever you go. A good track record will affect your growth and promotions

Mistakes are inevitable. Do not be afraid of making mistakes. Assume responsibility in spite of it. Never shirk duties for fear of failure. Learn from mistakes, pick yourself up and move on.

Never blame others - the tendency to show that the mistake was someone else's is never ever appreciated. It shows a lack of integrity accountability.

Learn political correctness - in speech, action and attitude. You are now a responsible adult. You should know the appropriate thing to say or do.

More than anything enjoy your work. Your office will become a second home and your co-workers will become a new set of friends.

## Keeping time and Laying the foundation

YOU DO WANT to march ahead. So, mark time; keep time... And it's not left - right; it's right - right all the way.

You are expected to be punctual at work. It's not a favour you are doing anyone by "getting there on time". It would help to arrive a few minutes ahead of time, settle down and start your work on time.

Arriving "on time", taking half an hour of "personal time" then starting off may sound very clever. It isn't. It's downright wrong. Punctuality deserves respect. Try it and you will be respected too.

Similarly, walking out on the dot - regardless of what is done or undone - is most unbecoming. Closure is important. Wrap up what you are on, think of the continuity for the next day and then leave.

## Make sense of absence

HEARD OF THE man who applied for sick leave to watch a match, just because he was entitled to it? Absence from work should make sense. Use privileges carefully. You may be entitled to a certain number of days off. But do use your discretion in availing of these. Make sure your work doesn't suffer.

In genuine situations however, do inform ahead of time and avail of your permissions to be absent. In emergency situations, call or have someone responsible call.

Plan long vacations ahead of time, seek permission well ahead and organise your work accordingly. Availing of leave is like using a free left turn at the traffic signals - It's a free left turn, so are you entitled to run over someone who is in the way?

Frequent absences from work will establish one major fact ... you are not indispensable. You can be replaced. Take too much "leave" and soon, you'll take leave!

## Sharing workspace

Don't grate on the senses Telephone voice - keep your voice low when you are on the phone. Keep your ears "plugged" when others are on the phone.

Never repeat or "use" accidentally overheard conversations. Keep personal conversations to the minimum and out of hearing of others.

Slurping, tapping of pens and tinkle of trinkets can also be distracting.

Smells - Very strong perfumes and colognes can be offensive. Foods with strong odours are best avoided.

## Sty or style

Mouth fresheners and sprays are breath savers ...no, not gum. Never put up offensive posters.

Dress to match the culture of your workplace. While it doesn't look good to stand out like a decorated Christmas tree, it certainly doesn't become you to play unhappy Cinderella either.

YOUR OFFICE HAS been decorated by a professional. It speaks "ambience". It oozes taste and culture. What else does it ooze...? Remember...your office is a beautiful combination of sacred personal space and delicate common space. Tread carefully.

Use of another's desktop, even for a while, is taboo. Picking up stationery from wherever...whenever...will win you foes aplenty.

Dirty coffee mugs on tables and common areas reek of poor taste and work culture. Visible crumbs and spills need immediate attention. Janitor service may exist but a hand in keeping your surroundings clean is necessary. Leaving copiers and printers on after use, strewing paper and displaying the products of your bargain shopping must be avoided. The list is endless... Use common courtesy as the key to shared spaces.

## Keep the desktop holy?

Keep the desktop holy? NOT WHOLLY CORRECT.

While a few personal pictures and a deity may be acceptable, do not convert your desktop into a veritable altar. Respect the sentiments of those sharing your workspace. See that your sentiments do not cause hurt or come into conflict with others.

Try vase of flowers instead. Apart from the minimum memorabilia and sacred pictures, flowers create a peaceful and cheerful atmosphere for all.

## Get professional

To curtsy, courtesy or just be curt.  
Politeness pays.

THE DAYS OF yes men and women bobbing and curtsying to curry favour with the bosses are a thing of the past. Respect for one's superiors is essential, but never gush and grovel to win attention or importance.

While there is no need to fall over backwards to please, it is important to be courteous at all times. To the boss, your co-workers, customers and all. Politeness has never gone out of fashion. It never will. Make courtesy a way of life.

Learn the art of being curt too. Surprised? Sometimes, unwanted advances, telephone calls and visitors ruin your office hours. They are a nuisance. Never prolong conversation in an attempt to make such people understand. They never will. Be firm and polite and close the issue. Yes. Be curt.

## Pecking order

CONTRARY TO BELIEFS that the new millennium has ushered in an era of mandated equality, there does exist in any organisation, a very definite hierarchy. However subtle this may be, it would be best to honour it.

Even if your boss insists on being on first name terms, always use a title in the presence of others. Take instructions with grace, give instructions gracefully. Work in a spirit of harmony with your team.

When your friend or acquaintance is an official visitor, do not get familiar and establish your connection with the “guest of the day”. Be formal and friendly. While it helps to acknowledge seniority, it certainly doesn’t help to throw your weight around subordinate staff. Strike a balance. A pleasant work atmosphere is a productive work atmosphere.

## Black magic words

CERTAIN WORDS ARE taboo in an office. They are toxic. Avoid them.

Can't: "You can't expect us to do that!" Why not? Put your inability across positively - but do think of a solution before you write off a problem. Try, "It may not be easy, but let's try it first..."

Busy: You are entitled to be busy. But too busy to do your designated work? Certainly not. Maybe, "Let me finish what I am doing, and then I ..."

Bore: If your work is boring, move. Don't keep whining about it and spoil the work atmosphere for others.

Isn't: "This isn't my work". Job profiles are never so compartmentalised that they cannot include other odd jobs that might crop up. Go along. Things need to get done and everybody gets a turn to pitch in.

Fear: Never approach a project with fear. Fear paralyses. Nervousness or anxiety may be inevitable. Raw fear stills.

## No know-how

IT IS A wise girl who tries to leave all negativity out of her dealings. But unless you draw the line somewhere, there is no way that you can take on all that is thrust in your direction.

Know when to say no. More importantly, how to say no. Your co-worker tends to slack a bit and the entire department suffers. She would like you to help her out - you are sorely tempted to get the job done. Think. Is she unwell? Overloaded, or, in anyway eligible to fall short of her assigned work? If so ...fine; but never make it a habit.

If not, just say that you have plenty to do with your time and politely move away. Saying no to your superiors is slightly trickier. If you feel you cannot get something done, Ask for time or revised schedules. Do not refuse assignments or responsibilities. Explain the reason why they cannot be handled right away.

## Don't go green

COMPETITIVENESS IS NOT the same as jealousy. When the job you covet goes to another and you are ready to hunch up and howl - stop right there. Your turn for promotion will come soon.

Never look for catty reasons for the move. Be happy for your colleague, extend your hand and wish her luck with a sincere smile. This is not just for the sake of appearances.

While it may be true that your boss is watching your reaction, it is the fair and correct thing to do too. Your colleague deserves her happiness. Don't detract from it with sulks and unpleasant comments. A secure and efficient worker never grudges another's success. Envy and jealousy among co-workers ruins the workplace for all.

## To cower or crow

**YOU'VE BEEN PROMOTED.** When your good news is not-so-good for others... What do you do? When do you tell your friends who are still plodding through 'dull Jill Jobs'? Tell them immediately. To hide your news would be condescending.

How you convey your enthusiasm is important. Don't go overboard; don't try contrived comfort like, "I really don't deserve this, but..." Never underestimate good friends and colleagues by assuming that they will grudge you your happiness...expect the best from people.

Once the announcement is made, get on with life and work as before. Replay techniques are bound to jar on co-workers' nerves. Accept compliments with grace and humility and move on.

## The grapevine

THOSE WHO LOVE gossip firmly believe that they are never the subject of it. Not true at all. While intra-office information like transfers and promotions are harmless and may be useful to aspirants for these positions, malicious gossip is taboo.

Back-stabbing and petty talk is not only unpleasant, it is in poor taste. Never participate in conversations that promote negative remarks, malicious personal comments and rumours.

Move away with, “ I prefer not to get too personal...” or “I really like so and so...” This will put a swift end to unpleasant conversations. You may be called a snob. Never mind. When people assess you for your values, they will respect your attitude. And trust you for it.

## Playing politics

JUST AS GOSSIPING is gross, playing politics is no better. Very often, even against your nature or good sense, you may get dragged into a controversy at work. Very quickly pull free and vanish from the site. Creating trouble in the workplace must be absolutely avoided. Whether you like it or not, there will be a few co-workers who like to create trouble for others and themselves. cool and calm while maintaining a safe distance from them. Ruffling their feathers may not be such a good idea either. Find the middle path and strike a balance.

## Haunt after the jaunt

THE OFFICE PICNIC or party can be real fun. That's when everybody forgets who's who at work and has a good time. This is a wonderful thing to do. It breaks the ice, thaws cold wars, bonds relationships and everybody is glowing with the warmth of companionship.

This is the time of give and take. From thoughts, opinions and recipes to feelings, emotions and yes, confidences. Creeeak! Did you hear that? That was the thin ice cracking and creaking, ready to cave in. Watch your steps girl, the buddy of today is the boss on Monday. Be friendly by all means. But do stop short of soul-baring at office get-togethers. Simply because you need to get together again under different circumstances very soon. And we don't want you hot under your white collar, do we?

## When the hat comes round

TIME COMES, IN every office, when the collection box goes round for a cause. Social service or just a fun event. Co-workers' birthdays, transfers, promotions, celebrations of every kind. When this happens all the time, what do you do? While giving is a personal gesture and depends on your mood and purse at that moment, there are certain occasions that cannot be avoided.

Go along with your team. Contribute only what is expected. Never try to prove that you are one up by making unnecessarily large contributions. On the other hand, when you really are not in a position to pay up, have the grace and honesty to admit it to the person making the collection. Offer to make good later and may be your team-mates will pitch in for the time being.

## Getting tech-savvy

WITHOUT BASIC SKILLS and manners, communication, however hi-tech it may be, can kill business, relationships and professional image. Business calls should be well planned and brief. Everybody's time is at a premium. Identify yourself at the outset. Ask for the person or department that you need to contact. Reintroduce yourself when you are put through. Politely and quickly come to the point. If you are unable to make contact, leave your number or follow up later.

Never express irritation or exasperation by words or sounds over the phone. Modern instruments are so sensitive that, sighs, undertones and swear words are picked up easily. Watch out.

## Getting personal

PERSONAL CALLS AND personal callers at work should be an exception, not the rule. Although they are not entirely avoidable, personal calls should be kept to the bare minimum.

When you do get or make calls, restrict your time on the line. You may be blocking a great opportunity for your organisation when you hold up the lines. Personal visitors, again, though not entirely avoidable, can be dealt with as quickly and politely as possible. Meet visitors in common areas.

While you may want to show off your work area, your co-workers may be uncomfortable when they are included in the survey. Make your own boundaries and stay within them.

## Electronic manic communication

SPEAKERPHONES...ARE a mini public address system. Watch out! Most people hate talking to someone using a speakerphone. Use it only to continue the conversation while doing something directly related to that call, and then only after you've asked for permission.

When you send a FAX, always include a covering letter stating the total number of pages, the date, who it is to, who it is from and your telephone and fax number in case there are problems with the transmission. Never tie up others' lines or waste their paper by sending an unsolicited FAX unless it is urgent. And never send a bio-data by FAX unless it was requested.

## Mobile menace

SO YOU THINK you are ready to go places. You acquire a mobile companion. Careful, girl. This lovely gadget needs to be handled right. Lest you become a pest. Cellular phones are emergency tools ideal in areas where phones are not found on every street corner. Use them to notify someone you're running late or when you're working on a deal that could explode in your face without immediate and constant communication. Don't use them as a status symbol or as a cure for loneliness.

The cell savvy user is careful to speak in hushed tones, knowing that a mobile phone has a sensitive microphone capable of picking up a soft voice. She also sets the ring tone at a low level with a tune that is soft, gentle and not annoying. uses the vibrator mode in places of worship, hospitals or meetings where ringing sound would prove disturbing to other people. She tries to gain as little phone attention as possible. The goal is to communicate effectively without anybody else noticing or caring. The cell savvy user thinks about when to turn the phone on or off. There are many situations where it would be rude if a phone rang, interrupting the transaction at hand. Now, who are you? The cell savvy gal or just a mobile menace?

## Netiquette

WHO DOESN'T LOVE e-mail? It's convenient, fast, and easy to use. Plus, it's a great way to network and keep up with business and personal acquaintances. If you're new to e-mail you may be unaware of the nuances associated with e-mail. For example, did you know that typing in ALL CAPS is perceived as shouting and sending attachments by e-mail is generally a no-no? To help you avoid the embarrassment of breaching e-mail etiquette, follow these simple tips.

### **Just tips, no toes**

#### **Be professional**

WHEN WRITING E-MAIL for business, be as professional and polite as you would if you were writing a regular letter. In other words, just because this medium seems informal, doesn't mean that it is. E-mail is a quick, informal way of sending a message as long as you retain the same boundaries of propriety you would use if dealing with the person face-to-face. If, for instance, you always address the CEO by surname in person, don't switch to the first name when sending an e-mail.

Don't use all uppercase or lowercase letters. For instance, in e-mail, people are often lazy and don't bother using uppercase letters or proper grammar. Avoid this practice if you want to make good impression. Use "emoticons" sparingly, if at all. That includes the smiley faces, frowns, and winks. Address the person as you would in a business letter. Once you see how other person addresses you, you can adjust your style if necessary.

**D o n ' t f o r g e t t o f o r m a t**  
NOTHING IS WORSE than misspelled words, poor grammar, or cutesy fonts and colours in a professional e-mail message. It's easy to make sure that all correspondence is spelled properly - just turn on the 'spell check' feature in your e-mail application so that it automatically reviews every piece of mail you send out.

### **Watch out for attachments**

ONE OF THE easiest ways to receive or send a virus is within an e-mail attachment.

The only time you should open an attachment is if it's something you are expecting from a trusted source, and even then, you should always check for a virus first before opening it. Similarly, you should only send attachments that the recipient is expecting and are free of virus. Sending large attachment to an unsuspecting person is considered bad form.

### **A KISS**

NO. NOT THAT. Just 'Keep It Short and Simple'.

E-mail is a great medium for short, concise writing. It's not the place to go into a 10-paragraph diatribe over a project's mismanagement or colleague's behaviour. Keep in mind that once you get a reputation for long-winded e-mails, it will be difficult to lose it.

### **Make it meaningful**

A PROMPT (within 24-hour) response is the norm for e-mails. Sending a note that says “Thanks” or “I agree,” is fine. Otherwise, you are better off not sending a note at all, unless you have something more meaningful to add.

### **Don't be forward!**

NO, WE'RE NOT talking about an overt glance. This is about forwarding e-mails such as jokes, chain letters, or spams (advertisements or blatant commercial promotions). After all, who has the time for that sort of thing in today's work world? You'll probably discover that most seasoned e-mail users avoid frivolous e-mail like the plague. It's worth following their lead. It's a cyber world from now on. Get virtual.

## Corporate correctness

SOME ELEMENTS of business etiquette have military origins. They are based on hierarchy and power. Chivalry is not the priority and the little lady doesn't get to be coddled. Equality is the name of the game. And the stepping stone to fame and fortune. So, the career girl will need to gear up to get beyond the glass ceiling. She must now grow up some more. Into a polished professional.

## The name of the game

FIRST, INTRODUCTIONS. Introductions are one of the most important aspects of our daily life, but few people know how to make them properly.

### Getting to know you

#### INTRODUCTIONS PROJECT INFORMATION.

Besides the obvious elements of name, title, and affiliation, an introduction conveys a level of respect and reflects how the person making the introduction views the other person's status.

Mastering the art of introduction will help put you and the people you are introducing at ease.

The most important point about introductions is to make them. Failing to do so causes embarrassment and discomfort.

If given a choice, most people would prefer you to make the introduction incorrectly, even if you forgot their name, rather than stand there unacknowledged and disregarded.

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### **Honour the hierarchy**

In the business arena, the person of lesser importance, is introduced to the person of greater importance. The client or customer is more important than anyone in your organisation, even if the client or customer holds a lesser title than the executive in your firm. So... It will be "Mr. Executive, meet Mr. Client" and not vice versa!

## Gender benders

Introduce non-official person an official. Whenever introducing anyone from the press, include that in your introduction to warn the person, especially a public official, that the conversation may be on record. Introduce a junior executive to a senior executive.

The Nuances: As you say each of the individuals' names, look at him or her. In this way, you focus attention on them and make them feel important while appearing to be in control. Including some information that might start the conversation going is always a good idea.

NO ONE SHOULD be given special treatment in the business arena because of gender. Everyone should be treated equally well. The most important person in the hierarchy of any company is the client. Persons of lesser importance are introduced to persons of greater importance, regardless of gender. Doors are held for persons more senior in rank, regardless of gender.

## Responding right

THE WAY YOU respond to someone else's introduction is just as important as making the introduction.

“How do you do?” followed by the person's name is the customary response to a formal introduction. Refrain from the use of first names.

Whoever is closest to the elevator doors exits first. At business functions neither men nor women are helped with their chairs unless they need it. THE WAY YOU respond to someone else's introduction is just as important as making the introduction. “How do you do?” followed by the person's name is the customary response to a formal introduction. Refrain from the use of first names.

Rise to the occasion: Always stand for introductions. Everyone should rise to greet newcomers. In an office, always rise and come around from behind the desk to greet visitors.

## Remembering Names

If you forget someone's name when making an introduction, try putting the other person at ease rather than concentrating on your own embarrassment. Be straightforward yet tactful in admitting your memory lapse.

By saying, "I've forgotten your name," you may imply that the person wasn't worth remembering. "My memory seems to be malfunctioning", seems less insulting. Profuse apologies only make everyone uncomfortable. The sooner you forget about it, the sooner everyone else will...and the happier everyone will be.

## Give us a hand

At any business meal, always introduce yourself to the people sitting next to you to open the way for conversation. Not introducing yourself can cost you valuable business leads because few people want to deal with someone who comes across as aloof.

THE ACCEPTED PHYSICAL greeting to accompany introductions is the handshake. So, let's take a moment to learn to shake hands like a business person. Social etiquette decrees that the woman be the one to extend her hand first. You will still find the occasional lady executive who is taken aback if the man extends his hand. In the business arena, it doesn't matter who extends the hand first, but the one who does take control of the situation, takes matters in hand if you will!

Handshakes are the only acceptable physical contact for men and women in the business world. They are the universally accepted business greeting. And...you are judged by the quality of your handshake. So, reach out right.

## Casting the net

### **Winning contacts**

YOU ARE WHO you know. Careful! Name-dropping is not what we are talking about now. It's authentic connections. Take the trouble of making more and more contacts wherever you go. Get to know the people your family and friends know. Be aware of who is who in your chosen field of work. Attend meetings and parties whenever you get an opportunity. Make new friends and stay in touch with them.

Using people is not what this is about. It's knowing the right people. A well-connected person is an asset to any organisation. Shying away from gatherings, not bothering to file away business cards, forgetting names and faces ...these are not what a girl who wants to get ahead would do. So don't.

## The official visit

IT IS RUDE not to greet people when you first enter an office, whether you're the secretary or the CEO. When you call on someone, you are the guest in that person's office, and when they call on you, you are the host. First, a guest is punctual and does not pay surprise visits. Guests also do not make themselves more comfortable in someone else's office.

They don't take over space by spreading papers, briefcase or handbag all over the host's desk. Guests also do not overstay their welcome. When your scheduled time is up, don't assume the host's schedule is so flexible it can accommodate you for another hour. Reschedule if you need more time. The host's responsibility is to greet the guest and to make the visitor feel comfortable. Get up and come around from the desk to shake hands with the person. Indicate where you would like the person to sit.

The host leads the visitor through the visit. When the meeting is over, the host is responsible for bringing the meeting to a close, summarising what covered and what action is to be taken. Then the host escorts the visitor to the elevator or out of the office. Never leave visitors to find their own way. Not only is it rude, it jeopardises security.

## The Deal...play your cards right

### **Forearmed is ...everything**

Keeping people waiting, passing personal remarks, or commenting on dress and appearance, all often used as intimidating tactics, are in poor taste and must be avoided. Invite discussion, and be open to correction and persuasion.

If you find that you are caught unprepared, do not blunder your way through. Stop right there, buy time to come back with the facts and make a dignified retreat. Transparency and honesty are appreciated. Pretence definitely is not. When in doubt, use silence.

## Managing a meeting

MANAGING A SUCCESSFUL meeting actually begins well before the meeting itself, and involves the crucial management skills of communication, planning, leadership, motivation, and delegation. Define the purpose of the meeting. It can be frustrating to sit around with a group of colleagues wondering why the meeting was convened.

Because meetings can set the tone for project and impact morale, no meeting is better than a meeting without a clear purpose or agenda.

Designate a facilitator. The facilitator's role is to act as "referee," keeping the conversation on track and soliciting inputs from all attendees.

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When scheduling your meeting, allow attendees ample planning time. Clearly communicate the date, start and end time, and location of your meeting. If you are requesting that attendees come prepared to discuss an article, report, policy, etc., be sure to either distribute a copy of it or let them know specifically where they can find it. Draft agenda and distribute it before the meeting.

## Managing a meeting

The agenda should include the topic, amount of time to be spent on each item, its facilitator, and the type of discussion needed. Start the meeting on time. This demonstrates respect for attendees' busy schedules and shows them that you value their time.

Ask for a volunteer to take down the minutes of the meeting and make sure they are distributed to all attendees. Stick to the agenda. Do not add items if they arise during discussion unless you ask each attendee if they are willing and able to stay, should the meeting run over its allotted time.

Finally, the facilitator should recap the proceedings at the end of the meeting. Confirm the next meeting date, time and location if known, and all the tasks assigned to attendees. This will give attendees the sense that their time was well spent, motivating them to follow through with their responsibilities.

## Win Win all the way

EVERYONE IS INVOLVED in negotiations. If you have a need and must involve someone else in order to satisfy that need, then you have to negotiate.

Unless you create a win-win negotiating situation, everyone loses eventually. If you win and your customer loses, you will lose that customer. If your customer wins and you lose, you can go out of business.

Win-win is the only way! Win-Win negotiations offer an alternative traditional adversarial negotiation process creates winners and losers and often leaves of mistrust and broken business relationships. Nuances of negotiations SO, WHAT ARE the niceties and the nuances of negotiating? Trained Win-Win negotiators are assertive rather than aggressive, creative rather than antagonistic, even if the other person is not willing to cooperate. They focus on the issues involved and don't allow personalities to get in the way. Often people try to intimidate and overpower but they stay strong and are still courteous. If the party with whom they are negotiating resorts to personal attacks or makes outrageous demands, they maintain their decorum remain self-controlled. Win-Win negotiators keep cool under all circumstances.

## The business of entertaining

EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS are an important part of the corporate arena. Meeting and getting to know people is a game you'll be called to play often. Play by the rules...

### **Work on attitude**

Set out in a positive state of mind. Or stay home. There is no alternative if you want to succeed. When you walk into a room, walk with purpose. Enter the room with confidence, look around and find someone you want to meet. When you arrive, smile. It's the one signal understood by everyone.

First impressions are made, for the most part, within 5 seconds of meeting someone. Know who will be there and what business they represent. Do your homework and go. Decide what you want to gain from this event and go for it. Decide the number of contacts you want to make. Go for the quality of contacts rather than numbers. Never think male or female. Think professional.

Never park yourself at the food table. Get what you want, then circulate. Never offer a cold, wet handshake. Keep your drink in your left hand. Be discriminating in handing out your business card.

Here are some interesting numbers:

Words account for 10% of the initial impression. Vocal quality for 30%. Non-verbal perceptions of appearance and behaviour, a huge 60%!!

## Paying the price

THE RULE FOR paying the tab in business is clear. Whoever benefits from business association pays, regardless of gender.

So, whether you invite your client or your client invites you, you pay. If there is no clear beneficiary, the person who extends the invitation pays.

There are several ways to handle the check so it never becomes an issue. Ideally, try to avoid having the check brought to the table. The best time to clarify that you are the host, is when you extend the invitation by saying, “I’d like you to be my company’s guest at lunch on...” If your client has invited you to a private club, don’t offer to pay. Instead, reciprocate at a later date.

## Cocktail conversations

Listen before jumping into a conversation. Make eye contact with the speaker in the group, smile and listen until he includes you.

Introduce yourself only when there is a pause in the conversation. If you have something relevant to add to a group's conversation, you may join in and then introduce yourself afterwards. To initiate a conversation, you can talk about the situation, talk about yourself, or talk about the other person.

Avoid taboo topics. Don't blend; circulate. Always remember to close a conversation. Shake hands and take your leave. DON'T MAKE food and drink your focus. Social occasions, especially those that are business-related, are about people making connections. Concentrate on meeting people, and on getting into conversations. Remember to make eye contact while having a discussion. No one wants to talk with someone who is always scanning the room for a more important prospect. Remember to polish your conversational skills constantly.

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### **Party panache**

- **WHAT DO YOU** think of the cold clammy hand that is offered for a handshake?
- Or the executive who is juggling glass and napkin every time she is introduced?
- Don't fall prey to amateurish enthusiasm and come across as gauche.

However, party panaché is easily mastered. By learning a few simple rules and by practising some easy manoeuvring, you too, can handle crudites and cocktails with panaché.

### **Don't play into Murphy's hands**

- DON'T FILL YOUR plate to overflowing. People seldom notice you going back for seconds at large functions; they will notice the mountainous heap on your plate. And Murphy's Law says, you may soon meet the same people who noticed your plate.
- If refreshments are being served by waiters, all the better. Refuse if the foods are messy, dippy or drippy. Murphy's Law will ensure that the drip embarrasses you at the opportune moment!

### **Finger food finesse**

1. WHILE FOOD SERVED on toothpicks or cocktail sticks may keep your fingers clean, there is the problem of what to do with those sticks.
2. Don't litter and never ever put them back on the serving tray; it is unappetising to others and it's unhygienic. If no facility is available for disposal, wrap the toothpicks in a napkin and dispose them off later.
3. Crudites are dipped into the accompanying sauce only once.
4. Never, ever dip something that you have bitten, into the sauce.
5. Hold your cocktail napkin beneath the snack to catch any drops of sauce that may fall
6. Don't burn your tongue with hot snacks; it can be painful and embarrassing.
7. When an hors d'oeuvre tastes unpleasant, don't just spit it out.
8. Turn your back to the others before transferring it from your mouth to the cocktail napkin. Find a wastebasket to dispose it off immediately.

### **Enjoy! Party with panaché.**

You'll make a few conquests. And we mean business!

## Little things that matter most

### Write right

- WRITE THANK-YOU notes and by hand. It is a gesture that will be remembered.
- Short and sincere is a very effective style.

Writing business letters is a skill in which most professional people need some polishing. The casual meandering of a personal letter is not appreciated in business.

Let the person know you were really listening, by starting your letter with a specific reference to something the person said or did.

Make sure that the salutation and sign off match. The rule is, if you address someone by first name, you sign with your first name.

Anyway, your name should be typed in full under your signature in a business letter.

Business stationery is for business use; personal stationery is for personal use.

### Invitations and RSVPs...

A well thought out and well designed invitation is the best way to create a first impression. Never belittle the basics. It's the little things in life that are often the most pertinent.

The basic composition of every properly worded invitation, includes:

- Official or Corporate Symbol
- the Host Line
- the Request Line
- the Event Line
- the Date Line
- the Time Line
- the Location Line
- the City & State Line
- the Reply Request Line
- the Special Instruction Line as in dress codes or special occasions
- Is the card required for admittance
- Does the card admit one or two
- Any other necessary travel instructions

### **Responding to an Invitation:**

R.S.V.P. is the French abbreviation for “Répondez,s’il vous plaît” which, translated, means “Please reply”.

Nothing is more frustrating to an event planner than the sloppy attitude people have about responding to an invitation.

Even corporate events have to serve a useful function for people to invest the time to participate. The event has to be presented as special, and the invitees should feel special.

Little things do mean a lot. They mean success. And that’s a lot.

## Dress to conquer

### Style spells success

MODESTY NEVER GOES out of fashion. How you dress can make or break your career, for dressing speaks louder than words. And as for loud dressing, you might as well give up even before you take off. Researchers comment that what people think about us is decided within the first three minutes of a meeting. This makes dressing an important business tool.

- Dress to conquer
- DRESS SMARTLY AND neatly. Otherwise, sloppiness will show in your work as well.
- Business suits are becoming popular among Indian women.
- Choose colours like navy blue, beige, grey, cream or brown.
- Trousers/skirts with shirts/tops look good on the woman on the move!
- Avoid bindis while wearing western clothes...makes you look tacky!
- Salwar suit is a good choice - one that most Indian women prefer.
- Bright colours are out!
- A Cotton sari, well starched and neatly pinned, gives an elegant and
- businesslike look to a woman. Highly recommended!
- And there is nothing quite like the crepe or silk sari for official get-togethers.

## Dress to conquer

### Work out a basic wardrobe

- YOUR CAREER WARDROBE can include both Indian as well as western clothes.
- If you can carry off the western, professional look, your basic wardrobe should have:
  - Two basic skirts (straight or flared)
  - One classic pair of trousers
  - Two solid-colour blouses
  - One pin-striped blouse
  - Two simple shirts
  - One cardigan
  - One all-weather coat
  - One solid-colour blazer
- Shoes and accessories like scarves, jewellery, belts, bags etc.
- In India, salwar suits or western suits would do.
- Try not to wear salwar suits with big dupattas. Handling it would be a major distraction.
- Saris are sure winners all the way. Crisp cottons and demure silks can see you through everyday - the routine workday and the special occasion.
- Wear good quality clothes.
- Wear sophisticated colours.
- Wear small prints.
- Carry a classic leather bag.
- Wear good quality simple jewellery.

## Dress to conquer

### **Definite “No-Nos”**

- Don't wear skirts with slits higher than the knees.
- Don't wear clinging and short skirts.
- Don't wear tight sweaters or skirts.
- Don't wear see-through, wrinkled or dirty clothes.
- Don't wear clothes that are fading.
- Don't wear large chunky jewellery.
- Don't wear scuffed shoes.
- Don't wear torn stockings.
- Don't wear clothes in need of repair.
- Don't wear deep necklines.
- Don't wear very high heels.

### **Things to remember while choosing the colours for your office attire:**

- You will look larger with light and bright colours.
- You will look smaller if you wear dark colours.

### **The career girl's crowning glory:**

- Hair should be well cut and should look healthy.
- Go for an elegant and easy to manage style.

## Dress to conquer

### Watch the war paint

- THE TRICK TO get that perfect professional look is balance. Try not to keep your face completely devoid of make-up, but never over-indulge.
- The final check list
- A black hand-bag
- A classic, no-nonsense, black handbag is a must. It should be big enough to carry basic belongings like your wallet, make-up kit, deodorant and some work related stuff.

### Basic blue jeans

Blue jeans are all-time essentials. Pick up a very light blue or a dark blue, basic fit jeans, so that it never goes out of fashion. Wear anything on top of it and it is sure to look great. Be it a kurta, a shirt or a T-shirt.

### Salwar suits

For all occasions - informal, formal or grand.

Equip yourself well; these garments are feminine, elegant and professional too.

### Black sandals

Black sandals go well with Western and Indian outfits. They could be heeled or flat according to your convenience.

And yes, a manicure and pedicure are a must too.

We won't elaborate on this, but do watch the lines on your lingerie. Let them not 'seam' apparent. Get innerwear with a good cut and finish.

## Jet, Set Go!

SO, YOU ARE flying high now. Take a tip or two before taking off for that important meeting or deal. Always be informed about travel plans, the location of the airport and other details. Arrive in time. A missed flight means a missed brownie point with your CEO.

Travel light. This is a business trip.

Dress as you would for work, not as you would on a holiday. You are representing your company's corporate image. Remember that.

Take all the necessary documents and agreements with you. Forgotten files and faxes will not enhance your image in anyway. On board, do not ask for souvenirs. It would be sensible to board after a light meal and wait until you are served. Be polite to co-passengers and crew.

Take off to a flying start and you could soar to great heights.

## Bidding adieu

AS YOU TAKE off, so must you land. Perhaps to take off again...

Corporate life too is as real as real life. Time may come when you feel a need to change your work situation. To grow and move on. Or perhaps even retire gracefully ...

The time will come when you need to bid adieu. To your workplace. And coworkers. You can finish with finesse too.

- If you have decided that enough is enough in any way, cheerfully or otherwise, then do act on your decision with dignity.
- Give in your notice according to your contractual commitments.
- Do not assign negative reasons, or use the opportunity to mudsling, or air petty grievances.
- If you are moving on to better prospects, then it's all the more reason to be gracious.
- Having handed in the papers, remember, you still have your commitments to fulfill till the day you leave.

## Bidding adieu

But...

- You are now not part of the set up. Accept it. Don't take it personally or react in childish ways.
- When your co-workers know that you are leaving, they will adapt themselves to the workplace without you ... almost right away.
- Don't get sensitive and leave bitterness in your wake.
- Make sure that you leave more than just a cleared desktop behind when you move on... leave a track record and memories of a dignified, diligent employee who can stride in again to say hello, without a qualm.

And with that, we bid you adieu too.

Good luck in your career...remember, finesse is not for all and sundry. It's for fine people who respect themselves and others.

People like you.