Small Business Management Essay, Research Paper

Business Etiquette:

As one?s career progresses, one develops skills called professional etiquette, which is not only respected but also expected. Professional etiquette builds leadership, quality, business, and careers. It refines skills needed for exceptional service. Whether one has been in the business for a while or just starting out, practicing professional business etiquette, will definitely be beneficial to a person and one?s small business.

Without proper business etiquette, one limits one?s potential, risks one?s image, and jeopardizes relationships that are fundamental to business success. Etiquette was formerly perceived as soft skills. However, business professionals have found that etiquette influences their success because it differentiates them in a competitive market and honors commitments to quality and excellence. Etiquette enables them to be confident with a variety of people from many cultures. Etiquette also modifies distracting and unacceptable behavior and develops admired conduct.

Why should one be concerned about etiquette issues in the business arenas of the 90s? Basically, the reason is that diversity, based on gender, cultural background, age, and degree of experience in today’s business, creates a clash of standards and behavioral expectation. Not only are these differences internationally a concern, but also a concern among the relationships of Americans. Finally, globalization has changed the way the world does business, demanding new levels of expertise in dealing with people.

Rude business etiquette is encountered daily in this country. Sometimes it is so common, people start to perceive it as normal behavior of the society. As stated before, proper business etiquette will get a person farther; just that extra step will lead one to better business and better relationships. One of the most observed behaviors in United States is telephone rudeness; for example, not returning telephone calls, taking calls in meetings, and not identifying oneself on the phone. The standard rule in business is to return routine phone calls within 24 hours and to apologize if the call is later. Return phone calls, fax, write a note or have the staff call, but do get back to people. It is an expected professional gesture to identify oneself when one places a call. State the name, the company or business represented to take people off the spot. Then state the nature of the calls. If one does not identify oneself, expect to be asked and do not take offense.

- When answering telephone calls, one is expected to make a connection promptly. This is more than a form of courtesy; prompt telephone service suggests to callers an efficient company. The appropriate telephone greeting conforms with the time of day and then the policy of the company; for example, “Good afternoon, The Smith Company,” or , “Good afternoon, Procter and Gamble.” Knowing that he/she has the right number, the caller merely has to ask for the individual he/she is calling. Anyone who has a visitor in his office should avoid making calls, unless they are pertinent to the business being discussed.

Interruptions are another complaint that are commonly observed as rude business etiquette. These rude interruptions are conversations, work, and telephone. Allow people to finish their sentences and their thoughts. Never presume to know what they will say or how they should say it. One can certainly interrupt people if they begin to ramble, discuss unrelated work incidents, or keep one from performing one?s necessary work. If someone else interrupts another in one?s presence, interrupt him or her to say, “Now, wait a minute, I want John to finish his thought.” Always remember people and their opinions deserve respectful consideration.

Inappropriate business appearance is also neglected in this society. Often people disregard the importance of appearance, but it does influence people’s perceptions. Excessive hairstyles, makeup, jewelry, and fragrance detract from the professional image, as do worn, spotted, or ill-fitting clothing. Dress not to distract, but to accomplish one?s professional goals. Clothing and visual image is a backdrop, not a feature, for one?s professionalism. Remember, professional appearance matters. To some, this may be the most obvious thing in the world; however, one would be surprised by the number of people arriving for work or client meetings dressed like a bike messenger. Certain dress is accepted in different organizations and in different part of United States. There are three rules about professional appearance that remain consistent:

1. If one wants the job, one must look the part

2. If one wants the promotion, one must look able to be promoted

3. If one wants to be respected, one must look respectable

People may have heard the saying, “If you want to move up, dress like the person two levels ahead of you.? People will command more respect if they dress professionally and are well groomed. If one dresses like a slouch, expect to be treated that way.

Many offices are moving toward casual Fridays. Casual dress generally means “nice” casual. Be comfortable, but remember one is still at work and is representing oneself and the organization. Appearance and norms vary among industries and around the country. It is the work that shows how creative one is, not how one dresses. Dress to honor the position one occupies, if not oneself.

Being consistently late and not honoring people?s time are also considered unprofessional etiquette. Most everyone forgives occasional lateness with a reasonable explanation, but everyone tires of the person who is consistently late for appointments, who starts meetings 15 minutes late, and who gives short notice for work to be done or meetings to attend. In the American culture, time is considered a commodity, if one is neglecting one?s client’s time, one is neglecting their finances. Time really is money and organizations spend it in different ways. Some expect an account for every moment others, may allow complete freedom, as long as the job is completed. Whichever way one runs one?s business make sure it works for both the business and the employees? needs.

Lack of appreciation is also overlooked in professional etiquette. Take time to show one?s appreciation towards one?s customers. It could be in the form of a thank-you note for a nice evening or even sending small gifts at Christmas time, conduct above and beyond favors, or support. Included in neglected appreciation is ignoring RSVP’s.

When one begins to practice proper business etiquette in one?s small business, if one only remembers one fact remember this, the customer is always right, no matter how wrong. Hold one?s composure and present oneself professionally; that will make all the difference in the long run.