

Don't Drop Manners When You Pick Up Cell Phone



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The rules have changed since the days of face-to-face meetings and deals being made over four-hour martini lunches. Today, mastering electronic etiquette -- from CrackBerrys to e-mail -- is how business gets done. No matter what form of e-communication you use, you're still on the front line, so best to bone up on your e-etiquette.

Cell Phones: Don't answer your cell phone when in a meeting, especially a client or new-business meeting.

Instead, keep your phone on mute (if you're expecting an "urgent" call). Excuse yourself (to take the call in the hallway) only if it's absolutely necessary.

Be considerate of others if you work in an open or cubicle area. Keep your ring volume on low and not programmed to music. Don't have "proprietary" conversations on your cell phone in public; you never know who is within earshot. Always use your library voice when you talk on your cell phone.

Land Phones: Smile when speaking. Your smile comes across in your tone of voice.

Use a standard business greeting like: "Good afternoon, The [Protocol School of Washington](#). This is Pamela Eyring."

Be well-versed in such options as call forwarding, three-way calling and conference calling. Use the "hold" button sparingly and ask permission first: "Mr. Doe, can I place you on hold?"

Voice Mail: When leaving a voice message get to the point quickly, speak slowly and leave your phone number (again) at the end of the message.

Your recorded message must be clear, concise and have your name, title and the name of your company. Make sure your voice-message menu includes an "urgent" function for important calls.

If you're going to be out of the office for a length of time, leave the name and extension of an alternative contact person on your voice message.

Return calls as soon as possible (within 24 hours is ideal), even if it's a brief "Hi Harry, I got your call, I look forward to speaking to you soon."

E-Mail: Program your e-mail to always check spelling and grammar. To ensure you don't misfire and hit the "send" button before attaching documents, get in the habit of attaching documents before filing in the "send to" box.

Before firing off an angry e-mail, consider that cyberspace is forever, and you never know who is on the bcc (blind carbon copy) list.

Consider all e-mail messages like old-fashioned internal or external memos and letters, which they are. Always reread an e-mail at least once before sending to make sure you've made your point clearly.

Don't overwrite. People are busy and only want the "need to know" information.

Keep e-mails "modulated" and professional by avoiding humor, exclamation marks and pictures of any kind.

Teleconferencing. Don't be shy about using teleconferencing, which saves everyone time and money.

When having a teleconferencing meeting, remind participants a few days before the call of the date, time, topic and duration of the e-meeting.

Send everyone participating in the call an agenda beforehand.

Take a roll call at the beginning of the call and let all the participants introduce themselves and explain their reason for participating. Have the participants identify themselves (again) when they speak.

If someone arrives late wait for an opportune time to introduce the person. If you're the late arriver, wait, apologize for being tardy and then introduce yourself.

Internet Newsgroups: Take time to learn about a newsgroup by visiting the site so you know what issues the group is discussing. Familiarize yourself with the newsgroup by reading their FAQs. Stick to the group's subject matter or you'll find yourself being flamed (i.e, ridiculed online for your lack of intelligence and understanding).

While most newsgroups tolerate moderate levels of self-promotion, avoid too much self-promotion or repeating the same message over and over.

The value of a newsgroup is that it provides access to expertise from a variety of sources, so by all means participate when you can.

Bottomline: Horray for technology, but don't forget that etiquette basics never go out of style; they just get reformatted. E-etiquette is much more than being correct and polite because that's the right thing to do. Correct e-etiquette is smart business.

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