

BASIS POINTS

LITTLE THINGS THAT HELP YOUR BUSINESS GROW

Horizon Cash Management • Issue 9 • May 2008

Welcome to Basis Points! Each month, Basis Points provides you tips and techniques that we've gleaned from a variety of sources to help better your business life. This month's issue is themed, "Business Etiquette". We discuss why manners matter in the business world, and how the right behaviors can help you build the most successful relationships possible.

Three Big Business Blunders

While good manners can help build business relationships, major slip-ups can ruin them. Here are three all-too-common business *faux pas* that you'd be wise to avoid.

- **Being tardy.** Nothing is as rude (and threatening to a business relationship) as showing up late for an appointment. Remember, it's always better to be 15 minutes early than 10 minutes late.
- **Weak handshake.** Nothing is as off-putting as a weak handshake. Often undervalued as a contributor to one's overall business image, a handshake can signal either that you're confident and assured, or uncertain and timid. Develop a firm handshake, and remember: "you never get a second chance to make a first impression".
- **Failure to respond.** If a business associate (client, prospect, colleague) invites you to attend a meeting, get together for lunch or dinner, or asks for your viewpoint... make sure you reply promptly and courteously. Proper etiquette calls for you to check your calendar and get back to the host as quickly as possible (ideally, within 24 hours).

"Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy."

- Jacques Maritain

Etiquette Produces Advantage

Ann Marie Sabath, the founder of At Ease, Inc. (a New York-based firm that teaches business protocol) understands that politeness can be a genuine difference-maker in the workplace. Here are three tips to help you be on your 'best behavior' and earn respect in the process.

1 When to send a 'thank you' note? Anytime someone spends more than 15 minutes with you in-person, you should to send a written thank you. If the person spends more than 15 minutes with you on the phone, send them a follow-up email. *Remember: a verbal thank you is never as lasting nor as powerful as a written one.*

2 Add warmth to your correspondence. Whether crafting a formal letter or a quickie email, be sure to establish rapport with the recipient (e.g. "It was wonderful meeting you at last week's conference. I hope your return flight was pleasant.). *How you say things – being considerate, understanding, human – is every bit as important as what you say.*

3 Tune into others. Wear a smile. Make eye contact. Be vibrant. Your expressions not only reveal the confidence you have in yourself, but subtly encourage those with whom you meet to be equally upbeat and positive. *In the competitive marketplace, people prefer to do business with others they not only know, but like and trust.*

Source: "Business Etiquette in Brief: The Competitive Edge for Today's Professional", Ann Marie Sabath



Business Etiquette on the Global Stage

In 1962, Marshall McLuhan used the term, "global village" to describe the effect of then-new electronic technologies that allow people to communicate in real-time with others in different time zones and countries. Today, we find ourselves dealing – whether face-to-face, videoconference, email or phone – with people whose customs and cultures differ from our own. To make your next international interaction successful.

Do your homework. To impress foreign clients, have a basic familiarity with the customs and practices of the region. Learn 2-3 phrases in the native language. Acquaint yourself with the major news events.

How to exchange business cards. Treat business cards as you would the person. Cards are generally exchanged at the beginning or end of an initial meeting. Proper etiquette insists that the business card be presented so that the language is "face-up" to the recipient. When receiving a card, take a moment to read it and comment (if appropriate) before putting away. Never write on a business card in the presence of that person.

The importance of understanding. Whether the world comes to you or you go out to it, don't take offense when international visitors behave according to their norms instead of yours. Understand those differences in behavior and honor them with your actions.

Source: "Manners That Sell: Adding the Polish that Builds Profits", Lydia Ramsay; Pelican Publishing (2008)