

Outclass the Competition

by Bonnie K. Hagemann

Distinguish yourself from the competition with Etiquette and Protocol Intelligence. In today's intense competition and mega-faceted business world, the difference in the possibility of avoiding the pink slip, achieving success, or securing the sell or promotion, is often a very fine line. To "Outclass the Competition" we must adopt the skills and tools required to set us apart and move us closer to achieving our goals.

Technical skills and knowledge account for only 15% of the reason you got your job, the reason you keep your job and only 15% of any advancement in your job. Eighty-five percent of your job success is connected to your people skills. This is based on research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Stanford Research Institute.

What is Etiquette and Protocol Intelligence? Etiquette and Protocol Intelligence is defined as the ability to learn and apply appropriate behavior. Everyone in a business setting feels uneasy at times. This is normal. An uncomfortable time for many is a new-environment networking meeting. This discomfort shows itself in costly first-impression damaging faux pas. Stumbling through introductions, barging into groups, answering a cell phone, eating before others have been seated, and indiscreetly passing out business cards will sabotage many business and social opportunities.

Executive etiquette is one of the hottest topics in 2001 as research shows a subtle return to conservatism in the workplace. Professionals everywhere are seeking assistance through courses, books, training, and personal coaches to increase their skills and interpersonal persuasion. Most people have climbed the corporate ladder based on their skills and knowledge and expertise, only to find that the higher they rise, the more people they have to manage. The more people they have to manage, the more their interpersonal issues surface.

Make these etiquette intelligence tips a part of your professional character to set you apart and give you the social and business edge:

1. Make a plan before your next meeting or networking function. Whom do you want to meet and what do you want to accomplish?
2. Greet your host with a handshake when arriving and again before departing.
3. Do not rush to the bar or buffet when entering a networking meeting.
4. Carry business cards in your pocket out of sight but convenient for distributing.
5. Approach individuals or groups of three or more and wait for a break in conversation to introduce yourself.
6. Acknowledge the whole group with eye contact and restate their names when introducing yourself to a group.
7. Excuse yourself as you leave each person or group and move on to the next contact.



Executive Development Associates

8. Turn off your cell phone or put it on vibrate and do not use it during the event except in an emergency.
9. Keep the conversation positive and on business topics.
10. Always write a hand-written note thanking your host, preferably within 24 hours of the event.

In business today the professional who desires a new position, more recognition, upward mobility within their organization or more business opportunities must pay particular attention to interpersonal details. Outclassing the competition is a learned skill. With the correct instruction and a little practice, anyone can appear confident and graceful even in the most sophisticated environments.

For more information or questions contact [Bonnie K. Hagemann](#), CEO of Executive Development Associates. Bonnie is a Corporate Etiquette and Protocol Consultant trained and certified by The Protocol School of Washington®.

© 2001 Franklin Fullerman. All rights reserved.

