

## Chapter One: Understanding Etiquette

Before we look at etiquette rules across multiple business-related scenarios, it's best to level off everyone on what etiquette means. We would also look at the many ways business etiquette can improve a company or an organization's bottom line.

### Etiquette Defined

Josy Roberts, author of '*Business Etiquette Your Questions and Answers*', defines etiquette as 'conventional rules of polite behaviour.' They are guidelines on how to behave befitting good manners while in the company of other people. They show sensitivity to the needs and feelings of the person or people that you are with.

Etiquette covers most aspects of social interactions, including self-presentation, communication, courtesy, and hospitality. Business etiquette, in particular, covers expectations in the interactions between co-workers, the company and their clients, as well as the company and their stakeholders.

Etiquette guidelines are many and can be quite complicated. In this book we will focus on basic etiquette guidelines for situations typically found in most business settings.

## The Importance of Business Etiquette

Etiquette can help businesses improve the following areas:

- **Branding:** Everything we do will reflect on our company and our products. By acting professionally, we send the message that our business is credible and trustworthy. Personalized care may very well be your edge against the competition.
- **Customer Care:** The best way to show customers that their patronage is valued is to treat them with respect and consideration. This in turn can inspire customer loyalty and positive feedback.
- **Employee Engagement:** Good manners will help improve morale and confidence between employees and team members.
- **Team Synergy:** Good manners will help establish smooth working relationships within a team, which contributes to greater productivity.

## Chapter Two: Networking for Success

When you're networking, it is important to make the most of the first meeting. In this Chapter, we'll discuss how to create an effective introduction, make a good impression, minimize nervousness, use business cards effectively, and remember names.

### Creating an Effective Introduction

Three steps to introducing yourself effectively:

1. Project warmth and confidence.

Many people size you up even before you say a word, which is why it's important to mind your body language. When you introduce yourself, stand up straight, relax, and establish eye contact.

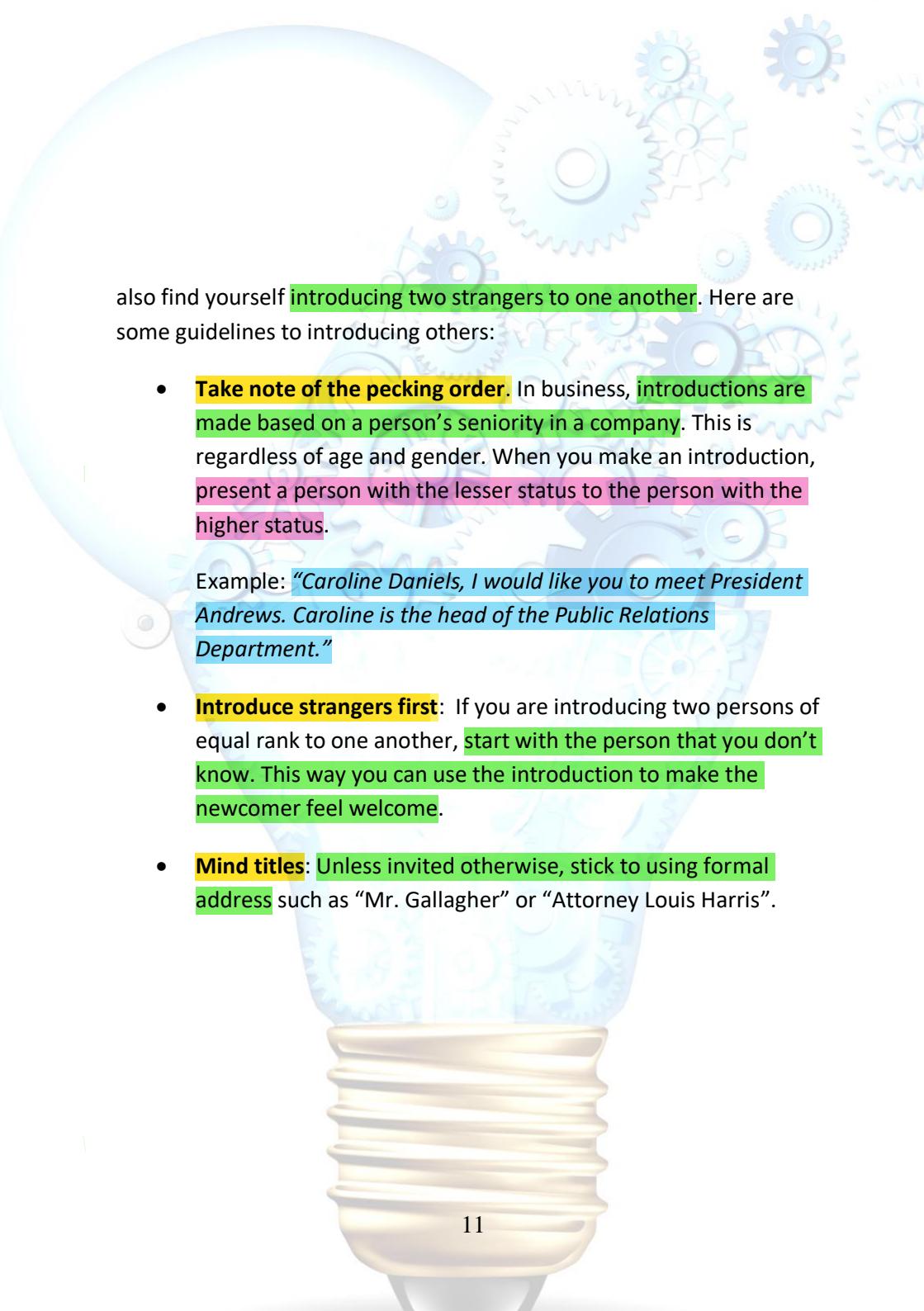
2. State your first name and your last name. Depending on the situation, you may also state your affiliation or your position in the company.

Example: "*Hello. I'm Jill Smith. I'm the Quality Control Officer.*"

3. When the other person has given their name, repeat it in acknowledgment.

*"It's nice to meet you, Mr. Andrews."* or *"It's nice to meet you, Joseph."* Repeating their name is an acknowledgment that you heard their introduction.

When you are networking is not just about presenting yourself. You may



also find yourself introducing two strangers to one another. Here are some guidelines to introducing others:

- **Take note of the pecking order.** In business, introductions are made based on a person's seniority in a company. This is regardless of age and gender. When you make an introduction, present a person with the lesser status to the person with the higher status.

Example: *"Caroline Daniels, I would like you to meet President Andrews. Caroline is the head of the Public Relations Department."*

- **Introduce strangers first:** If you are introducing two persons of equal rank to one another, start with the person that you don't know. This way you can use the introduction to make the newcomer feel welcome.
- **Mind titles:** Unless invited otherwise, stick to using formal address such as "Mr. Gallagher" or "Attorney Louis Harris".

## Making a Great First Impression

If you want to make a good impression, know that you need to project 3 C's:

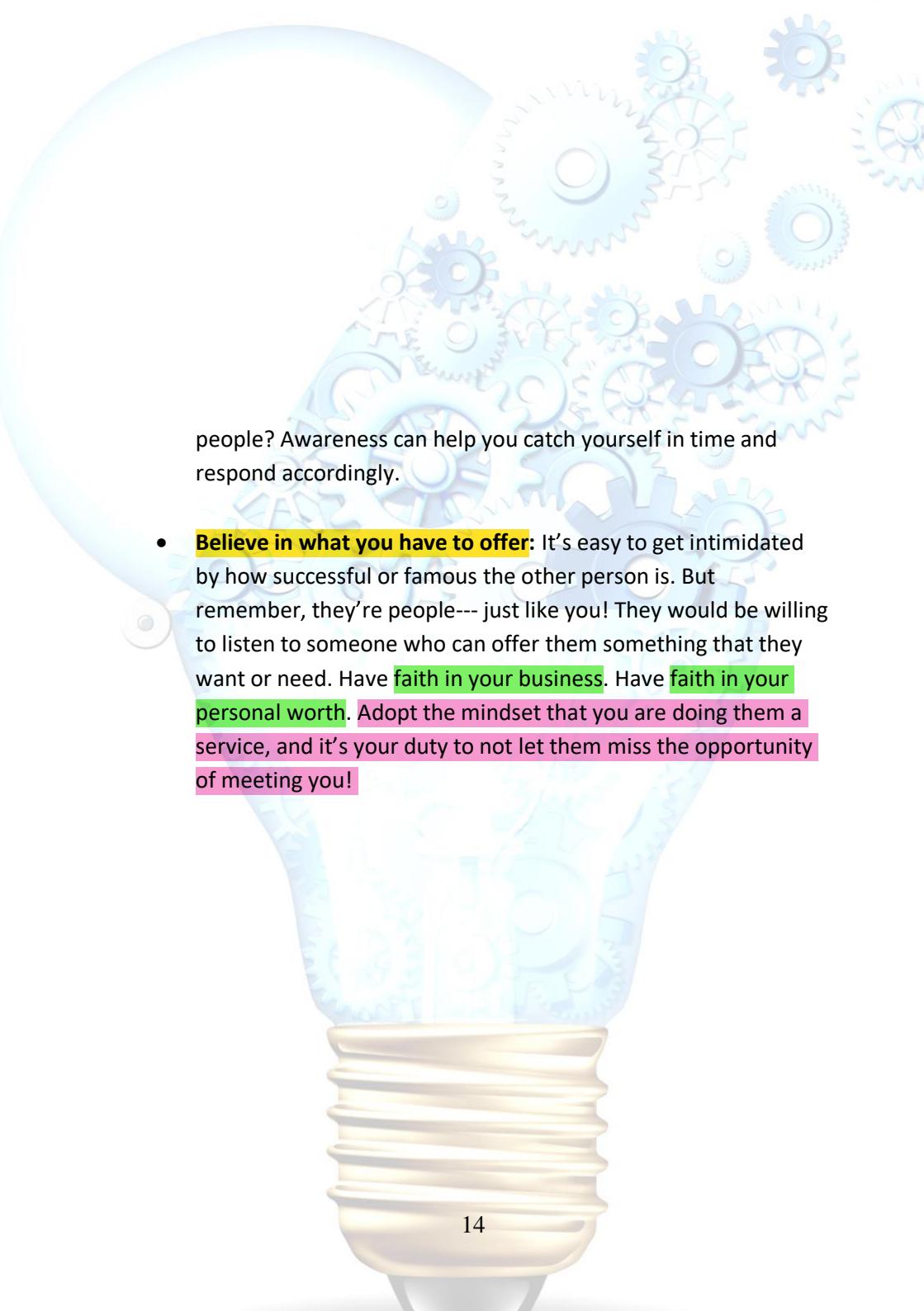
- **Confidence**
  - Having a straight but relaxed posture. Hold your head high and steady. Don't slouch or slump.
  - Moving in a natural, unaffected manner.
  - Maintaining eye contact with the people you are talking to.
- **Competence**
  - Exhibiting knowledge of your craft. Know your way around the agenda. Being prepared for the meeting. Bring supportive materials to emphasize your points.
  - Answer questions in a clear and professional manner, avoiding the use of slang or technical jargon.
  - Asking relevant questions.
- **Credibility**
  - Arriving on time.
  - Being presentable (well-groomed and mindful of dress codes).
  - Keeping true to your word.

## Minimizing Nervousness

Meeting people can be anxiety-provoking. The need to impress another person can be a lot of pressure.

Here are some ways to minimize nervousness while in a social situation:

- **Be informed:** If possible, take time to research about the people you're going to meet; their work, values, and preferences. Knowing what is expected from you can prepare you adequately. Nervousness is amplified by going into a situation blind.
- **Practice! Practice! Practice:** Networking is a skill, which means that you can develop it with practice. Practice your introduction in front of a mirror and note what you need to improve. You can also practice with peers. Get feedback from others about the kind of impression you give. Try to meet as many people as you can! The more you do it, the easier it gets!
- **Learn relaxation techniques:** There are many activities that can help relax a nervous person. These activities include:
  - Meditation
  - Self-talk
  - Visualization
  - Breathing exercises
  - Listening to music.
- **Identify your triggers:** If nervousness is a real problem for you, it is recommended that you identify what triggers your nervousness. Is it lack of confidence? Is it fear of authoritative



people? Awareness can help you catch yourself in time and respond accordingly.

- **Believe in what you have to offer:** It's easy to get intimidated by how successful or famous the other person is. But remember, they're people--- just like you! They would be willing to listen to someone who can offer them something that they want or need. Have **faith in your business**. Have **faith in your personal worth**. Adopt the mindset that you are doing them a service, and it's your duty to not let them miss the opportunity of meeting you!

## Remembering Names

Remembering names may be difficult for some people, but it's not impossible. It's a skill: something that you can improve with constant application.

Here are some ways to remember names:

- **Repeat:** When someone is introduced to you, repeat their name. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Mark." This can help reinforce your memory of the name. You may also introduce them to someone else so that you can **create an opportunity to use their name.**
- **Use mental imagery:** We think in pictures, therefore associating an image with a name can help in assisting recall.

For example, after meeting Bill the plumber, imagine the word **Bill spelled with pipes**. If Jason Smith is marathon runner, imagine Jason running on a treadmill in a gym called Jason's. Or just imagine a person's name written on their forehead. Pick an imagery that works for you. The more striking or exaggerated your mental picture, the bigger are the chances of recall.

- **Put it on paper:** Write the name down as soon as you can. Or write their details on the business card they give you so that you would remember them the next time you see them around. (Just make sure you don't let the person see you writing on their business card.)
- **Use their name in creative sentences:** Mentally construct sentences that are fun and a bit frivolous, to make name recall less stressful. Alliterations, or repeating consonant sounds in succession, are a great way to remember names. For example, to remember Jane who sells kitchen ware, you can repeat in your head: *Jane makes jam and juice in January.*
- **Be genuinely interested:** Remembering names begin with attitude. If you are sincerely interested in a person, then they would make an impact on you. If you adapt the attitude that everyone is interesting, and are a potential ally in business, then remembering names would come as second nature.

## **Chapter Ten: International Etiquette**

Etiquette is heavily influenced by culture; each country and nation has their own set of rules for polite behaviour. When dealing with an international clientele, or when conducting business in a foreign country, it's best to be aware of local etiquette guidelines. In this Chapter we would discuss general rules in international etiquette, important points, and ways to prepare.

### **General Rules**

Etiqutte is heavily influenced by culture; what may be good manners in one country or to one nation may not be good manners in another. As most businesses today are operating with a global mindset, it pays always keep international etiquette in mind.

- Always take the time to research cross-cultural etiquette when dealing with a foreign client, or when conducting business in a foreign country.
- Awareness of international etiquette is important not just in face-to-face meetings but also in non-face-to-face encounters such as sending gifts, conversing over the phone or communicating online.

- Areas you need to look at include:
  - Religion
  - Dress Codes
  - Social Hierarchy
  - Rules on Meet and Greets
  - Use of titles and forms of address
  - Exchanging business cards
  - Valuing Time
  - Physical Space
  - Dealing with embarrassment
- When uncertain, err on the side of what you presume is conservatism. And be observant; check if people are becoming uncomfortable.
- Etiquette mishaps in international setting can range from merely embarrassing to potentially insulting to the other person. When you realize that you have committed a faux pas, apologize immediately and ask how you can make up for it.

## Important Points

Here are some important points when dealing with other cultures:

- Some cultures dress conservatively as the norm.

Americans tend to be more relaxed when it comes to dress codes, and even recommends dressing for comfort in certain fields and professions. People from other parts of the world are generally more conservative. The Japanese, for example, dress according to rank. Some Muslim nations find short dresses for women as offensive. If uncertain, err on the side of conservatism.

- Some cultures meet and greet people with a kiss, a hug, or a bow instead of a handshake.

A handshake for greeting is mostly universal. However, don't be surprised if you are occasionally met with a kiss, a hug, or a bow somewhere along the way.

- Stick to formal titles for business interactions unless invited otherwise.

Approach first names with caution when dealing with people from other cultures. Some cultures are very hierarchical, and with consider it disrespect to be addressed without their title. Some cultures never accept first names in the business setting, and this should be respected.

- Some cultures are less time-conscious than others.

Don't take it personally if someone from a more relaxed culture keeps you waiting or spends more of that commodity than you normally would in meetings or over meals. Stick to the rules of punctuality, but be understanding when your contact from another country seems unconcerned.

- Understand differences in perception of personal space.

Americans have a particular value for their own physical space and are uncomfortable when other people get in their realm. If the international visitor seems to want to be close, accept it. Backing away can send the wrong message.

## Preparation Tips

- It starts with being open-minded.
- Read up!

Possible resources:

- Publications put out by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and local embassies. They usually provide basic facts about demographics and business practices.
- The Economist Business Traveller's Guides have chapters designed to develop awareness with reviews of local etiquette and customs and the 'elusive psychological factors' that can make or break a deal.
- Slim volumes on Simple Etiquette by Paul Norbury Publications.
- Find informants, or experts with good local knowledge of both countries, and simply ask them to talk to you over a good lunch or dinner. If you live near a university or a centre of expertise on a particular country, it can also be helpful to seek guidance from experts who will probably be only too glad to be consulted and share their knowledge.

- For the really serious there is no better way than to spend at least two or three days traveling with at least two representatives selling your company's products or services. Use the time to absorb the atmosphere, methodologies, hospitalities, practices, and styles.
- Read a more specialized book on international etiquette if relating with international clients is a big part of your job description.