

Title:

Can You Afford What Rudeness Is Costing Your Business?

Word Count:

983

Summary:

Take a quick etiquette quiz and learn how much rudeness may be affecting your bottom line.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Have you ever thought about how much rudeness may be affecting your bottom line? What is the cost to your company when you or the people who represent you lack proper manners? Do you know how many clients are turned off by employees who would rather carry on a conversation with each other than with the person who came to purchase your service or product? Can you count the number of people who hang up and call someone else because the person who answered your phone put them on hold without asking permission? How does the client rate your professionalism when the employee who welcomes him to your office looks as if she is dressed for a day at the beach? Do your employees understand that it is more offensive then friendly to call the client by first name unless asked to do so? Are your employees treating each other with courtesy and respect? Do they honor the invisible walls of each other's cubicles? Do they work as a team and help each other or do they act like cast members on Survivor?

In today's fast-paced business world where too many people claim that they don't have time to be nice, it's easy to overlook the details that can help you grow your business, increase your profits and build long lasting client relationships.

Try taking this quick true/false quiz to test your own business etiquette expertise. Then run it by your employees.

1. Business etiquette is based on rank and hierarchy. True/False
2. If the information on your business card is incorrect, draw a line through it and write the correct information on the card. True/False
3. Business casual means dressing down one notch from business professional.

True/False

4. In today's relaxed business environment, it is not necessary to ask your clients' permission before using their first names. True/False
5. Callers do not mind holding for information as much as holding for a person. True/False
6. You don't have to smile or make eye contact with your customers unless you feel like it. True/False
7. Handwritten notes are out of place in the business world. True/False
8. A man should wait for a woman to put out her hand in business before offering his. True/False
9. When composing an e-mail message, complete the "To" line last. True/False
10. Small talk around the office is a waste of time. True/False
11. People can hear you eating, drinking and chewing over the phone. True/False
12. If you receive a call on your cell phone when you are with a client, look to see who is calling, but don't answer it. True/False

Answers:

1. True. In business, you always defer to the senior or highest ranking person, regardless of age or gender.
2. False. Handing out business cards with information that is outdated or crossed off is unprofessional. Have new cards printed immediately.
3. True. Business casual is not an excuse to wear your favorite old clothes to the office. It is still business, and everyone needs to look professional.
4. False. Don't assume because our work world has become more informal that you can call clients by their first name. Use their titles and last names until they ask you to do otherwise.
5. True. Clients will wait contentedly while you search for information, working on their behalf. However, if they have to wait more than thirty seconds for you to come to the phone, they begin to wonder how much you value them or want their business.
6. False. This is only true if you are planning a going-out-of-business sale. Every client deserves a genuine smile and eye contact.
7. False. Handwritten notes have become almost as extinct as the typewriter. You will stand out from your competition every time you send off a short note written in your own hand.
8. False. Every woman should be prepared to shake hands as soon as she meets someone in business. For either a man or woman to hesitate could indicate a lack of confidence.
9. True. You can send e-mail without inserting an attachment, without checking for grammar and punctuation and without a subject line; but you cannot send e-mail without an address. If you wait until you have carefully proofed your message and added all attachments before you complete the "To " line, you will

never be embarrassed or have to apologize for your mistakes.

10. False. Small talk carried on at the right time, in the right place and on the right subject is a great way to build relationships among co-workers.

11. True. Mouth noises are even louder over the phone. Just because your clients can't see you eating those potato chips doesn't mean they can't hear you munching on the other end of the line.

12. False. It is just as rude to pull out your phone to see who called as it is to have it on and take a call in front of a client. Turn your phone off and check your messages later in private.

If you had trouble with any of these questions, your employees will, too. If you want your employees to be at ease in business situations, to represent you well and help build your business, give them the information they need. If you haven't done basic business etiquette skills training lately, do it now. Don't let rude behavior cost you business.

Make sure that your employees know how to handle clients over the phone, that they understand the importance of being attentive and alert to clients' needs, that the value other people's time and that they can deal with difficult people and situations with grace.

No one is born with good manners. People have to be taught, and from time to time, they need to be reminded of what they already know.

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