



By Kaleen Barbera, Managing Partner

Spring is here, which often means getting rid of unnecessary clutter that surrounds us. From a professional standpoint, we can do a little 'spring cleaning' by evaluating things we do that work and things that don't. The best place to start is to look more closely at the basics. Many sports fanatics know that professionals work on the basics all time. A golfer knows that any hitch in his or her swing can mean all the difference, and to reduce the margin of error, the basic mechanics have to be perfect. When taken for granted, the whole golf game is compromised. Why then, in our professional lives, do we tend to get so far away from the very elementary basics that we need to continue our success?

Honing our skills in the areas of territory management, client development, and sales skills, etc. are all important. But what about basic etiquette? Given the constant changes in our culture, it's easy to forget how important manners are, especially in the business world. However, a critical statistic that I share often with my clients is that *over 60% of people will NOT consider a person's ideas/products/services when they've been treated with one or more incivility(bad manners)*. Unfortunately, incivilities run rampant around us. To avoid tipping the scales against you, here are just a few of the many basic civilities to keep in mind with phones, email, and meetings.

Cell phone etiquette: All the traveling I do still leaves me dumbfounded at the growing number of incivilities I witness when it comes to cell phone usage. We live on our cell phones and most of us wouldn't know what to do without them. However, our phones are not just tools

that benefit us, they can hurt the impression that we make on others. The following tips may seem logical, but based on feedback I get from professionals I work with, they are great reminders. **1)** Don't talk on your cell phone in a public place or in close quarters like on an airplane, unless it's either an emergency or done in a tone that is close to a whisper. I and about 20 other passengers were privy to a woman's incessant calls to her husband on a tarmac in Chicago while she reviewed dinner options. These situations are annoying for everyone. Keep your business to yourself. **2)** If you must talk on the phone, go to an area that provides some privacy or has enough noise to offset your voice. **3)** If you are in the middle of a text-a-thon, still think of those around you. Crossing the street, ordering in a restaurant, walking through halls in a place of business, and eating lunch with others are a few examples of things that should all be done text-free. **4)** Most importantly, don't have your phone on or in sight when you are with a client.

Email etiquette: There are an incredible number of do's and don'ts to cover in email and it is quickly becoming an area of focus in both our group training and one-on-one consultations. Here are a couple of quick tips at managing email: **1)** have a professional and personalized salutation. 'Hey', 'Hi there', or no salutation at all is not the way to start an email. A proper salutation can and will set the tone for an email. I see many professional 'stock' emails that do nothing to compel the recipient to engage or respond, primarily because the message fails to start off in a way that is personalized. **2)** Don't forget that your sign-off is just as important. It should show gratitude and include your name and title. 'Regards', 'Thank you', 'Sincerely', are most appropriate in a professional email. **3)** Make the purpose of your email clear, and keep it brief. While emails are expected to be longer than a text, few of us have the time or energy to read an extensive email that doesn't have a clear point and includes too much information. **4)** Make sure your emails are grammatically correct; you'll lose credibility otherwise.

Meeting etiquette: This is probably one of the greatest opportunities to display good manners, but unfortunately I hear constant complaints about the bad behavior of others' colleagues during meetings. Some things to remember: **1)** Don't interrupt. **2)** Speak up when you share an idea, keeping in mind those who are joining via phone. **3)** Don't use it as time to check your emails, catch up on breakfast/lunch (unless it's an actual part of the meeting), or write up your shopping list. Other people will notice you aren't engaged and it will diminish the overall outcome. Remember that if you are asked to join a meeting, your presence is important. If you aren't sure what is expected of you or what the purpose of the meeting is, find out in advance so you can participate accordingly.

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