Workplace Etiquette

Top Ten Tips for Every Employee and Intern

- Be accountable and responsible
- Be timely and truthful
- Use technology only for business during work
- Never gossip or become part of the rumor mill
- Don't violate others' personal and private space
- Know when to comment, when to listen
- Give what’s needed (extra energy and effort) when needed
- Respect decisions made by the boss
- Show up – be there in the moment
- Stay positive – leave your moods at home

Professionalism Includes Being a Good Conversationalist

- Ask open-ended questions. Start with “What,” “How” and “Why.”
- Be a good listener
- Read all sections of at least one newspaper a day (USA Today can be your Cliff Notes for current events) or one good news magazine a week
- Observe what is going on around you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Topics that Work</th>
<th>Topics to Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Your health or others’ health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>Controversial issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common experiences</td>
<td>Cost of items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current events</td>
<td>Topics of a sexual nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Personal misfortunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>Gossip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Stories of questionable taste or dirty jokes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>Salary or performance information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Shows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Rules on Using Technology in the Workplace

- Learn your company’s policy regarding the use of electronic devices in the workplace.
- Understand that your company has the right to monitor your use of e-mail and may terminate you if you do not adhere to its policies.
- Beware of a false sense of security before sending an e-mail. Ask yourself if you would mind if your message was sent to the world. Remember you have no control where your message goes after you click send.
- Certain web sites can be off-limits; understand what these are. If you accidently log onto one of them immediately report it to your information security officer or IT department.
- Downloading of some programs can be prohibited (RealPlayer, freeware, shareware, games, and so on); find out what these are.
- It is often against company policy to use office technology for commercial or personal use. Set up a separate e-mail address for these purposes.
- If policies prohibit the personal use of the Internet during work hours, limit your use to breaks, lunch hours, or from your own home.
- If company guidelines permit a “reasonable use” for personal reasons, let your friends and family know of this restriction and ask them to respect this privilege.

10 Tips for Office E-mail

- Carefully read e-mail and answer all questions, to avoid going back and forth.
- Avoid sending confidential information via e-mail—make a phone call or ask to discuss sensitive issues in person.
- Don’t use text message abbreviations (such as “BTW”) unless it is widely used within your organization.
- Avoid “casual speak” or slang; use abbreviations and emoticons wisely.
- Include a brief greeting that is appropriate for status of sender ("Hey Lori" may be fine for a friend but not for a supervisor). Also include a closing ("Thanks," or "Best Wishes, John").
- Watch the tone—remember no body language can be interpreted, only your words.
- Use spell check and read message for errors before sending. Use proper spelling and grammar.
- Respond promptly; if you cannot respond at the time, indicate that you will do so later.
- Use proper color, fonts, layout, and formatting (those that fit with your work environment).
- If you e-mail back and forth three times, and the problem is not resolved, pick up the phone.

Employers’ Top E-mail Pet Peeves in the Professional Setting

- MESSAGES IN ALL CAPS
- messages in all lower case
- Incorrect punctuation
- Responding messages that don’t answer the question
- Writing the Great American Novel (e-mails that are too long)
- Sending unnecessarily large attachments
- Forwarding non-work related jokes or chain e-mails
- Discussing personally sensitive issues
- Forwarding offensive or off-color jokes or attachments
- Not using the subject line—or not changing it to agree with the topic
Suggestions for using cell phones and listening to music in the workplace

- Use may be restricted to breaks-check your company policies
- Select a ringtone that is appropriate for your work environment
- When talking on a cell phone talk in a normal tone of voice
- Record a professional greeting
- Turn the phone off during meetings; even a vibrating cell phone can be distracting
- Do not text during a meeting unless it relates to the topic at hand
- Check the messaging for spelling and grammar before sending
- Keep music on a low volume, and check to make sure the volume does not reach your neighbors
- Turn off music when talking with co-workers, supervisors, or on the phone
- Think twice before taking photos with your phone camera; doing so may be against company policy

Resources

Do It Right! The New Book of Business Etiquette, by Valerie Sokolosky

Help! Was that a Career Limiting Move?, by Pamela J. Holland and Marjorie Brody
NACE Journal, 2009