

Workplace Etiquette

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Last week's article looked at workplace habits that make you appear amateur and one of the highlighted areas was that of poor etiquette. Etiquette is the practices and forms prescribed by social convention or by authority; the codes governing correct behavior or forms of conduct as prescribed in polite society. When your etiquette is lacking it makes you less approachable and others around you uncomfortable. Below are a few tips to help you to be a better colleague, supervisor and professional.

SOUND

1. **Monitor the volume of your conversations.** Be sensitive to how loudly you may be speaking. Do you notice that people down the hall comment on your conversations? That might indicate your voice is too loud. Consider closing your office door and lowering your voice whenever speaking in person or on the telephone.
2. **Keep personal telephone conversations—and emails—brief and at a minimum.** Be ever mindful that others are nearby and that this is a place of business. Do not use the company telephone, fax, or email, for any inappropriate and personal matters.
3. **In some workplaces, privacy is difficult to find.** If you overhear a private conversation, practice selective hearing. Avoid the urge to be "helpful" in areas best left to the other person to handle on their own. Your best bet for being treated as a professional at work is to keep all workplace conversations professional.
4. **Sharing professional information is wonderful, gossiping is not.** Only discuss personnel matters directly with specific individuals, superiors, and management.

SCENT

5. **Be sensitive to scents and smells surrounding you.** Save cologne and perfume for social occasions, and ask if fresh flowers and potpourri bother

co-workers before installing them in your space.

6. **When eating at your desk or in shared areas, avoid foods with strong smells and aromas that will travel throughout the office.** As great as French fries, Chinese food, and Indian food are, smelling them together in the same room and office can become unpleasant. Dispose of empty food containers and other items where they won't contribute negatively to the office atmosphere.

SIGHT

7. **Keep your personal workspace clean and neat at all times.** Generally, less is better when it comes to office and cubicle decor. Use discretion when displaying personal items such as family photos and mementos so as not to overdo, clutter, and obstruct your work area.
8. **Use shared areas with respect and courtesy.** Workplace kitchens can be the biggest source of co-worker tension. If you expect everyone you work with to clean up after themselves, model that behavior yourself. Wash and return all kitchen items to their proper place, clean spills, and wipe countertops and tables as needed. Help maintain supplies as needed. When leaving food items in a shared refrigerator, mark all items with your name and date. Remove all items at the end of your work week and toss or recycle empty containers.
9. **Restrooms run a close second to kitchens as annoyance spots.** After use, wipe the countertop and sink of any spilled water or soap. Be sure the toilet is clean for the next user. Notify the proper attendant if supplies are low or out, and of any plumbing problems.
10. **Maintain all shared items in "like new" condition and return borrowed supplies.** Leave the photocopier in working condition and be sure to take back that borrowed stapler with at least a few staples left inside. If a machine stalls or jams, take time to undo the jam or to alert the proper person to attend to it. We all expect and want to be able to use items and equipment when needed.