Projecting a Professional Image

Maintaining a professional image before, during, and after an interview can make the difference between getting and not getting a job.

“Be one step ahead, practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.”

- Kenitra Matheson, Director of Human Resources, Dellinger and Deese Services

MEETING NEW PEOPLE

Focus on your verbal and non-verbal behavior

- Use a firm, 3-4 second (but not overly strong) handshake.
- Typically the person with the highest authority will initiate the handshake, but anyone may.
- If you are introducing a client to someone in your organization, introduce the client name first.
- Make eye contact. It conveys you are trustworthy, shows your confidence, and lets the other person know you respect him or her.
- If you are seated when being introduced rise, smile, and extend your hand.
- Use your new acquaintance’s name when you speak directly to him or her. This will establish rapport and will help you remember them in the future.
- Be sensitive to those culturally different than you.
- If you are in another country, learn the appropriate etiquette before you go.

NAMETAG KNOWLEDGE

- A nametag should be worn on your right side, front shoulder area so that others see it clearly especially when shaking hands.
- If your nametag is on a cord worn around the neck, adjust the strap so that it can be seen easily and the person you are meeting will not have to look down.
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**TELEPHONE TALK**

- Always try to return a call the same day.
- Do not keep someone on hold more than 30 seconds.
- Always give your phone number if asking someone to return your call.
- When leaving a voicemail, make sure to speak clearly and say your name and number TWICE.
- Actively listen to the person on the other line...take notes!
- Turn off your cell phone during a class, interview, or event.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**REMEMBER - It is important to follow up meetings and interviews** (whether you have just met or known the person for a length of time) with written correspondence.

Write a follow-up letter or thank-you note within 48 hours (sooner if possible). The note can be handwritten or formal, but always follow these guidelines: women should be addressed as “Ms.”, if you do a formal (typed) letter, do not forget to sign your name, and always proofread for typos. **Check out the sample Thank You Note on page 30.**

**Email Etiquette-Specific Guidelines**

- **Never use all caps**
- **Never send negative messages via email. They are better reserved for discussion in person.**
- **Watch and re-read for typos.**
- **Make the subject line meaningful. For example, instead of “Important Information” write “Important Information re: New Employee Orientation.”**
- **Make sure the email signature clearly says who you are.**
- **Always include alternate ways to contact you.**
- **Be concise and to the point.**
- **Email is not private. Do not send anything you would not want others to read.**
- **Never use abbreviations like “u” or “4” instead of “you” or “for.”**

**SOCIAL EVENTS**

**RULE #1** - At a reception or social hour, if there are no tables, you should only have either food or a drink (not both) at any given time.

**RULE #2** - Hold a drink in your left hand so your right hand will be dry and ready to shake.

**RULE #3** - Hold food in your right hand and eat it with your left. When approached by another person you can put your food in your left hand as your right will be clean.

**RULE #4** - If tables are available, you can have food and drink together. Be prepared to stand if you are approached.

**RULE #5** - It is your responsibility to greet or introduce yourself to the host/hostess.

**RULE #6** - At an office party, keep in mind good behavior. These are the people you see and work with daily. Do not discuss business unless asked to do so by your boss. A party is a time to get to know more about your co-workers and improve office morale.
If you are going to a dinner, here are the basics everyone should know:

- Let the host take the lead, i.e. first bite, first sip.
- Ask for suggestions when ordering if you are unfamiliar with the menu. By asking, you will also be able to get a guideline for the host’s price range. It is customary to avoid the most expensive or least expensive item.
- Typically the person who initiates the meal will pay. Do not forget to say “thank you.”
- Avoid difficult or messy food like spaghetti.
- Do not order an alcoholic beverage. It may portray a negative image. At a cocktail hour, you may drink one or politely decline. At times, wine will be served with the meal. Sip it slowly throughout the meal.
- Do not spit out food in your napkin. Remove it the same way it went in, and place the discarded food on the side of your plate.
- Take small bites so you can carry on a conversation without delay because of chewing.
- When in doubt of what utensil to use or how to eat a certain food, watch your host or hostess.

PLACE SETTING

1. Napkin*
2. Salad Fork
3. Dinner Fork
4. Dessert Fork**
5. Bread & Butter plate
6. Dinner Plate
7. Dinner Knife
8. Teaspoon
9. Teaspoon**
10. Soup Spoon
11. Cocktail/Seafood Fork
12. Water goblet
13. Red Wine Glass
14. White Wine Glass
15. Coffee Cup and Saucer***

*Can also go on the dinner plate
**Can also be placed horizontally above the dinner plate
***May be brought out with dessert
Do not get overwhelmed with all the rules. If you forget or are unsure watch others around you and use common sense.