

1-Minute Strategies: Dec. '10

Received an invitation to a party at your boss's home? Yes, you do have to RSVP, attend, dress appropriately, mingle and send a thank-you note afterward, says Barbara Pachter, a leading expert in business etiquette and communications. And turn off your cell phone!

Make any decision-making group more effective by limiting membership to seven. Once you have more than seven in the group, each additional member reduces decision effectiveness by 10%, say the authors of *Decide & Deliver: 5 Steps to Breakthrough Performance in Your Organization*.

Using quotation marks around words for emphasis is equivalent to using air-quotes with your hands when you're speaking. *Example:* He "insisted" that I take a slice of cake. Using the quotes gives the sentence a comic effect. If you want to put real emphasis on a word, italicize or boldface it.

Keep your professionalism intact by remembering that you're always on stage. Most office spaces are built as open spaces, which means that most of us are visible during the workday. If you feel as though you might lose your cool, despite efforts to calm down, walk away. Vent in private.

Avoid this workplace faux pas: not understanding the business. "When you come right down to it, business is very simple. There are universal laws of business that apply, whether you sell fruit from a stand or are running a Fortune 500 company," writes Ram Charan, former CEO of Honeywell, in his book *What the CEO Wants You to Know*. Be aware of how your employer makes money.

Need a better way to manage bills? BillTracker is a \$1.99 iPhone app that alerts you to upcoming bills and lets you track paid bills. It also saves information like web sites and account numbers. Similar apps: Bill Pal and Bills On Your Table.

2 tips for giving praise from Gretchen Rubin, author of *The Happiness Project*: "Never offer praise and ask for a favor in the same conversation. It makes the praise seem like a set-up." And, "Look for something less obvious to praise—a more obscure accomplishment or quality that a person hasn't heard praised many times before."

Don't let the high cost of tuition keep you from going back to school. Higher education is expensive, but not as costly as you might think. The College Board recently reported that more than half the students at four-year schools pay tuition of between \$3,000 and \$6,000. Plus, 62% of full-time students receive grants.