

Business etiquette: Respect boundaries in the workplace



Forget elbows on the lunch table and yoga pants in the cubicle. A study has found that technology may be a leading cause of rudeness in the office. The Robert Half Technology study found that 64% of respondents said the increased usage of mobile devices has led to more breaches of workplace etiquette.

The Protocol School of Washington, bent on combatting rudeness on the job, established the first Friday of September as Bring Your Manners to Work Day. Pamela Eyring, the organization's president, says she hopes to remind employees how important etiquette is to doing business. Eyring is particularly concerned with technology etiquette—this means no texting during meetings and being aware of volume during cellphone conversations.

People tend to speak three times louder while on the phone, so when a person is on the phone, an average of 10 feet is considered a respectful distance. During a meal, set your phone to vibrate and be sure to wait until after it is over to check your messages.

Technology aside, Eyring also advises people to take care in how they come across to their co-workers. Your clothing reflects your co-workers and your company, so dress appropriately. That means no plunging necklines, sheer fabrics, muscle shirts, socks with sandals or bike shorts on the job.

Respecting your colleagues also means abstaining from “borrowing” from them, whether that means their office supplies or their lunches. Clean up the areas where you work, the kitchen where everyone microwaves their lunches and drinks coffee, and around the copy machine.

Eyring cautions workers not to gossip and to remember oversharing is something to avoid in workplace interactions. Workers should also make it a point to be prompt and punctual.

Above all, realize that your behavior affects the people around you, says Eyring. If you have a problem with someone, address the person directly. Don't take a page from their book if they're taking shortcuts or breaking company policy. Draw their attention to how everyone could benefit from a change in their behavior. If they refuse to alter their behavior, take it to a supervisor. And if they change what they're doing, be sure to thank them.

— Adapted from “[Modern Etiquette: Minding Your Manners in the Workplace](#),” Pamela Eyring, Reuters.