

7 dos and don'ts of business etiquette in 2020

Today more than ever, you'll find that more relaxed business etiquette rules are acceptable. While once upon a time a suit and tie, uber professional communication and an ultra-polished look was the norm, today, casual attire is more acceptable along with nontraditional hair colors and piercings in places other than the ear lobe. What's with the shift in the company culture across America that is bringing about these new acceptable employee behaviors?

According to the global staffing firm [Accountemps](#), 91% of the senior managers surveyed stated that the company culture has relaxed over the past decade. This is primarily seen as a response to a change in cultural norms, along with the desire to cater to a younger group of employees who have grown up in a more relaxed environment.

Ultimately, there are still business etiquette rules to keep in mind, but these dos and don'ts might look a bit different than they did in 2010.

Do show your tattoos

Tattoos are no longer taboo according to over one-third of the companies surveyed by Accountemps. There was once a time when tattoos had to be covered, or you'd fear being judged as one who is unprofessional or unable to perform your job duties to a certain standard. Today, you'll see anyone from an office president to a school principal with a tattoo. The culture has shifted toward an understanding that showing a tattoo doesn't detract from your ability to perform your job well.

A study by [Ipsos](#) found that 30% of Americans have at least one tattoo, and that number grew by almost 10% in the last 10 years. As tattoos continue to grow in popularity, so will the percentage of people who view them as being acceptable in workplaces throughout the country.

Don't use foul language

Over half of senior managers still view using foul language as unacceptable business etiquette in the workplace. While some companies are relaxed in their language expectations, it's typically a good practice to find alternatives to the four-letter words you might drop in a more relaxed setting. This could change in the future, but it's better to be safe than sorry for now.

Do Wear More Casual Attire

Over the years, the attire expectations have taken a turn toward a more casual dress code. This doesn't mean you should show up to work in a hoodie, shorts, and flip flops, but wearing a pants suit and dress shoes isn't the only uniform for professionalism in 2020.

34% of senior managers at the companies surveyed by Accountemps found that casual dress is appropriate.

Many companies are using the opportunity to dress casually as an incentive for employees, and it is well accepted as a nice perk.

Employees are often more likely to consider a company if a more casual dress code is accepted, even if it's just on special occasions or a set day like casual Friday. According to an [international study](#) out of the UK, 61% of employees are more productive when their dress code is relaxed. So, this change in business etiquette is a win-win for employees and employers.

Don't display political signs or messages

Religion and politics are still two topics that generally aren't acceptable to discuss or express opinions about in the workplace. Politics can lead to very heated conversations, so it's often in the best interest of the company culture to keep these views and behind closed doors.

When considering this, you want to look at the bumper stickers you place on your car or the screen saver on your work computer. These are all ways that you might think to show your political affiliation or belief, but these political statements can easily lead to tension or feelings of being uncomfortable in the workplace.

Do showcase nontraditional hair colors and piercings

Here's another business etiquette "do" related to your physical appearance. Along the lines of it being more acceptable to be casual in the workplace with your attire, the same can be said about your hair color and piercings.

It was once primarily acceptable to keep your hair its natural color or choose one similar to a color that would be natural. Now, you will find various hairstyles and colors that are obviously not natural, and like tattoos, it's as okay. 34% of companies see no problem with sporting nontraditional hair colors in the workplace.

33% of companies view nontraditional piercings as an acceptable part of the company culture. While ear piercings in women have always been seen as acceptable, the same can be said about other piercings.

According to an article by [Business.com](#), Kirsten Davidson, the Head of Employer Brand at Glassdoor, finds that many people seek out companies that allow tattoos and piercings. This is the type of company culture that is desired, so it makes sense to get on board the train and stand out as a one that allows for freedom of expression through things like hair color, piercings, and tattoos, as long as they don't detract from your ability to complete your job appropriately.

Don't wear headphones or stream sporting events

These don'ts might come as no surprise, but it's typically not acceptable to wear headphones at work or stream sporting events. Both tasks can distract you from performing your job at the highest level and communicating effectively with others in the office.

Even if you have a position that tends to be more solitary without much communication with those around you, these tasks were seen as unprofessional by 2 in 5 respondents in the Accountemps survey.

Do sprinkle emojis into email conversations

Emojis have taken over text communication, and now they are becoming more popular in emails. While they are traditionally seen as acceptable in informal social settings, it is now becoming more acceptable to use memes in professional workplace settings.

According to the senior managers surveyed, 30% find this to be an acceptable form of communication in workplace emails.

While details aren't provided regarding what exactly is considered acceptable when using emojis, this statement comes with the understanding that only appropriate emojis should be incorporated, so you should probably stick with a smiley face here or there.

Business etiquette is evolving

As our culture evolves, so do workplace expectations. While business etiquette ranges significantly from one company to another, the overall rules are starting to loosen, which can be a great thing, as long as company norms are considered and respected.

Your company might not yet be at a place where casual dress and tattoos are considered acceptable, or the culture might allow for cursing and political conversations. It's okay to keep your hand on the pulse of business etiquette in general, but always mind your specific company's expectations and consider updating them if you have the power to bring new business etiquette expectations to light.

The relaxation of the company culture can bring forth a crop of candidates who are ready to work with a company that offers these simple yet impactful perks.