

Always say Please and Thank You



A FEW nice words can keep the mood of the office uplifting or at least keep the mood from turning foul.

■ When you pass co-workers in the hallway, and this person isn't particularly your friend, smile or nod. Acknowledge that they are there. You don't have to run over and hug them, but just say hello.

■ Think about what kind of message you send when you look the other way, to purposely avoid contact.

■ Say hello to people in your vicinity when you come in every morning.

■ A vicious habit can creep in when people let this well-mannered greeting slip and just slink into their seats without saying a word.

■ It is rude and it's not going to garner you any favours with others. Even if they don't make the effort, be the example for everyone else to let them know it is not only OK but expected.

■ Watch your language. When interacting with others at the office remember that profanity offends some people. Also avoid innuendos or jokes at the expense of other people.

OFFICE ETIQUETTE



OFFICE etiquette helps smooth the wheels of daily interaction within the office. Getting along with people is essential for good work outcomes and a happy co-existence, and it is office etiquette that ensures this, even when there is mutual dislike or disinterest.

Moreover, office etiquette ensures that you don't become office enemy NO.1 because you have been irritating people with unhelpful habits or comments. Not that you deliberate aim to be an office challenge, but there are some actions that can unwittingly cause other people discomfort or unease.

Office etiquette is the key deciding factor on how your colleagues will respond to you when you need help.

The manner in which you conduct yourself within the office environment among people who effectively become your "second family," will determine how you are viewed, and the ease which you will be supported by others around you.

■ STEPS

1 Understand the point of office etiquette.

While the term "office etiquette" may conjure up images of stiffness and formality, it is in actual fact very simple. Office etiquette is about observing a simple set of rules for getting along with other people in an organisational context.

Just as living in a society requires us to follow a set of conventions (unwritten but well understood expectations) and rules, observing appropriate social behavior within the work context, ensures congeniality, team respect, and an enjoyable day-to-day working experience.

While most etiquette remains unwritten, just because it isn't down in black and white and pinned to the noticeboard doesn't excuse lack of observance.

2 Being punctual is very important, especially if you have an appointment.

It shows that you respect the time of your colleagues and in turn it will compel them to respect your time too. The popular saying that would fit in this situation is that 'Time and tide wait for no one'. Lead by an example,



and everything else will fall into place.

3 Dress appropriately.

Most offices have a predefined dress code that has to be followed strictly. However, if you do have the privilege of working at a place which does not define a dress code, then it is up to you to dress appropriately. Remember that the office is not a party place and you will have to dress in a way that commands respect both from your colleagues and clients. The dress code has a strong influence in establishing the trust.

Dress professionally, or in the manner expected at your particular work site. A suit or other professional outfit should be used when interacting with clients, seeking important deals and other highly professional situations.

4 Stay away from gossip. Office gossip may not make or break your career but it can cause a lot of unnecessary stress which should be avoided at all costs. You would not want someone to gossip about you and neither will the next person. In some cases, if the source of some malicious gossip can be traced back to you, then your job can be in jeopardy. Limit your comments about coworkers to positive ones only. Office grapevines can be faster than the speed of lightning; anything negative you say will get around and may reflect poorly on you, or possibly label you as the company gossip.

5 Ask before borrowing.

If you are in good terms with your colleague, it may appear all right if you borrowed a stapler or a marker from their desk without asking. Well, the fact of the matter is that it is not all right. It is imperative that you ask first and then borrow. This attitude will ensure that people also treat your things with the same respect and your things are not missing (read borrowed) when you get back to your seat after a meeting.

6 Be sensitive to others' need for privacy.

Don't read someone else's faxes, emails, mails, or computer screens. Only share personal things at work that you wouldn't mind reading in next week's newspaper. And remember that when you send emails, never write anything that would be a problem if forwarded; simply by virtue of the fact that anyone can forward an email, you need to be alert to this potential.

If you need to discuss anything sensitive or private with another colleague, find a room where you can shut the door and nobody else can overhear you. Personal issues and work performance reviews are not for the ears of anyone other than the recipient.