

## Minding Meeting Manners

Since meetings continue to grow in popularity for group communication in business, people need a reminder of how to best take advantage of them. I've taught people to work in teams and how to have more effective meetings. This training often includes basic meeting etiquette and common manners for behavior. However, I am still seeing many poorly run meetings and occasional bad manners towards each other. I feel it is time to re-emphasize the importance of good manners and professional behavior in meetings.

Everyone in business needs to understand meeting etiquette is an important part of business communications and there is a need to follow proper procedures for professional conduct in them. Bad meetings reflect on one's ability to conduct professional group communications and have an adverse influence on problem solving. Here is a baker's dozen (13 ideas) list of meeting do's and don'ts to improve meeting etiquette knowledge.

1. Do set a convenient time and place for meeting and confirm this with attendees well in advance of the meeting date. This shows respect for their time and confirmation of their attendance better enables meetings where specific people are required for decision making or problem solving.
2. Don't invite people who do not need to attend the meeting to accomplish its purpose. Inviting people who don't need to be there is inconsiderate of their time and may actually cost everyone else time in the meeting as they may have to stop and explain why the person was invited.
3. Do arrange to attend the entire meeting time. Going in and out during meetings is disruptive and can throw off the flow of the meeting for others. If leaving early or going to arrive late, ask leaders permission to do so before the meeting begins so agenda can be rearranged if necessary.
4. Do not start the meeting late or run over the communicated stop time as this indicates a lack of respect for other's time. All attendees should be punctual. It is ok to arrive early, but never to be late. Keeping people waiting is rude and it should not be expected that they will wait to begin once everyone arrives.
5. Do be sure everyone knows the meeting purpose and agenda. Put this on meeting reminders and go over it with everyone at the beginning of the meeting to insure all agree. Once everyone is in agreement, it is easier to follow the agenda and stick to time limits.
6. Don't forget to assign a recorder to document decisions and actions. Having a recorder will not only insure completion of actions outside the meeting, their visible records in the meeting can help to keep group focused.
7. Do turn off phones and pagers. Some people will find this impossible. For those people, ask they at least set it to vibrate in their pockets. Ask anyone who keeps them on to leave the room if they feel they must respond to a call so the meeting is not interrupted by their conversation.
8. Do not turn on laptop (or PDA) unless it is to be used it for a short time to present information to the group. This equipment often prevents attendees from paying attention to the meeting and is considered rude by others in the meeting as it gives the impression that the meeting topic is not important.
9. Do actively participate in discussion, idea generation, and problem solving. Respect the purpose for the meeting by making sure what you say is relevant to meeting and be brief.
10. Don't interrupt anyone who is speaking. Be polite and pay attention, as good listening skills are important to increase communication and understanding. Show respect by remembering only one person at a time talks, so take turns.
11. Do honor you presenters by making them aware or their time slot and what is expected during that time. They should arrive early and be prepared with any reports or visuals. During presentations, hold questions and comments until the end and keep questions brief.
12. Do not carry on conversations during meeting discussion or presentations. Having multiple conversations is not only rude, but it can be both confusing and distracting to other meeting attendees.
13. At the end of the meeting, do thank the group for their time, summarize what was accomplished, review and assign actions, and then plan any necessary follow-up.

I hope everyone finds these thirteen do's and don'ts helpful to improve future meetings. Remember to conduct proper and professional meetings with

good manners, attitudes, and behaviors. Basic meeting etiquette has become even more important as the time used in this group communication method continues to increase. Just because meetings are common in the business world does not mean they should not be conducted properly and with appropriate consideration toward attendees. Always keep in mind that badly planned and delivered meetings reflect both on individual and group professionalism.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

#### About the Author

Shirley Fine Lee has considerable training and expertise in leading effective meetings and projects, as well as training others within the corporate world to be able to do the same. Her book, "R.A!R.A! A Meeting Wizard's Approach", is a much-needed guide to planning and conducting meetings so that they are as productive, effectual, and smoothly run as possible. Find out more about her, her books, and learning options she provides on her website at <http://www.shirleyfinelee.com>