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Executive Perceptions of Business Etiquette in Recent College Graduates

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**EXECUTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF
BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN RECENT
COLLEGE GRADUATES**

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BUSINESS ETIQUETTE IN RECENT
COLLEGE GRADUATES**

**Prepared by
Lauren L. Kirby**

March 26, 2014



EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Serving Kentuckians Since 1906

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and International Business
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TO: Students in CCT 300W – Managerial Reports

FROM: Dr. Marcel M. Robles

DATE: August 27, 2013

SUBJECT: Authorization of Field Report

Students who are preparing to graduate from college need a number of skills that may or may not be included in their planned programs. According to research, these “professional skills” give graduates a competitive edge in finding jobs and receiving promotions. Therefore, the objectives of the field (analytical) report are to enhance your critical thinking skills and oral and written communication skills while investigating specific professional skills that employers believe are essential for your success.

The field report for CCT 300W is a two-fold assignment that will result in the following outcomes:

1. A team oral presentation to be given to a visiting business executive and the class, based on data obtained from face-to-face interviews with business executives.
2. A corresponding individual, formal, written report to be based on the shared data obtained from the interviews.

The class will be divided into teams of three or four. Each team will select and investigate a topic of professional development. To become knowledgeable of the team’s chosen topic, each team member is asked to obtain at least two related secondary-data sources. These sources are to be included in the final report. Additionally, at least one source must be used from Stephen R. Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* or from another current, well-known author (e.g., Sam Walton, Dave Thomas, Malcolm Gladwell, Frances Cole Jones, Tom Peters, Ken Blanchard, Peter Drucker, Warren Buffett).

As a member of a team, you are each asked to schedule interviews with two business executives. Prior to the interviews, each team will write a specific statement of the problem as it relates to the professional development of college students. The team will then construct a questionnaire that each member will use to interview his/her business executives. After each interview, please send a follow-up letter to the executives, thanking them for their participation in the study. Include copies of the letters in your written report. The members of each team will compile the results of the interviews and give a group oral presentation. From the tabulated and edited data, each team member will write a formal report with a title fly, title page, memo of authorization, letter of transmittal, table of contents, executive summary, and the report proper. The final report must have a spiral binding. Before the report is submitted for a grade, I must review it with you either individually or as a team. Please adhere to the Criteria and Date Checklist Schedule that you receive with this Memo of Authorization. Your final written report will be submitted to Dr. Robert B. Rogow, Dean of the College of Business and Technology at Eastern Kentucky University.

Lauren Kirby
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(606) 682-0661

March 26, 2014

Kevin Jones
103 Libraries Complex
521 Lancaster Avenue
Richmond, KY 40475-3102

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am enclosing the report *Executive Perceptions of Business Etiquette in Recent College Graduates* assigned by Dr. Marcel Robles on August 27, 2013. This study was conducted because of my strong interest in business etiquette and the proper way to conduct oneself while representing the company. Business etiquette seems to be a lost art in today's generation and many students could benefit from the lessons taught in a business etiquette course.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is any correlation between the proper use of business etiquette and the trajectory of one's career. The study covers topics ranging from pre-interview etiquette, dress, technology use, to conflict management and communication etiquette required at management or executive level. After analyzing the results from eight executive interviews, it is recommended that some form of business etiquette course be required in basic business curriculum or as a basic graduation requirement at the post-secondary education level. Today's graduates are entering the workforce unprepared to extend social graces correctly, as suggested by the executives. It is also recommended that companies offer or notify employees of trainings or educational courses that would enhance the soft skills discussed in the analysis to promote improvement and lifelong growth.

Thank you for taking time to read this complete analysis on business etiquette. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this topic further, please contact me at lauren_kirby5@mymail.eku.edu or at (606) 682-0661.

Sincerely,

Lauren Kirby

Enclosure

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Definition

The definition of business etiquette as it relates to this study is the range of soft skills and manners that are used in the corporate setting.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine if the proper use of business etiquette results in the success or failure of the career trajectory.

Research Questions

During the research process, the answers to five basic questions were sought:

- 1) How do business executives define and apply business etiquette?
- 2) How have the trends of business etiquette changed over time?
- 3) What type of training methods do executives suggest to improve business etiquette skills?
- 4) What aspects of business etiquette do executives value in potential employees?
- 5) How does business etiquette impact workplace success or failure?

Methods and Procedures

The Memo of Authorization was received in mid-August giving permission to study and write a field analysis report that would consist of one book, eight or more scholarly articles, and interview data gathered from eight business executives spanning the entire state. The executives were all asked the same list of twenty interview questions to prevent error in data reporting.

After each interview was completed, an electronic thank you note was sent to each executive. The data were then compiled and a complete report was written. The data was organized and presented in the *Data Findings and Analysis* section of this report.

Data Findings and Analysis

The most important categories that researchers state that executives evaluate are: dress, dining and interview manners, technology use, and conflict management and communication skills (Pachter, 2006). The primary data from the business executives echoed this finding as those topics appeared most frequently in the interview discussions. These topics are discussed further in the section below.

Dress

Appearance is the first aspect of an interviewee that executives notice. The primary and secondary research both stressed that it was important for a professional to look the part. To accomplish the professional look, it is recommended that potential employees arrive to interviews in business professional attire, which is defined by authors and business executives alike as a suit and tie for men, and a conservative dress or skirt/pant suit for women. All hemlines should be an appropriate length; and shoes should be clean, polished, and appropriate in nature (Kiddie, 2009; Mausehund et al., 1995; Pachter, 2006; Robles, 2013).

Dress is important because it shows an outward effort of professionalism. Sloppy appearance can cause skilled people to be overlooked for a job or promotion. Business casual is appropriate in some offices and should only be worn if prior approval is obtained or the organization culture warrants it.

Dinner Interview or Meeting

Certain actions should be avoided during dinner interviews or meetings. Basic knowledge of a dinner table setting should be learned before the event. Knowledge of the restaurant and menu is also a must. Actions such as burping, nose blowing, cell phone

use, and drunkenness are absolutely forbidden. Confidence and simple manners will take allow a potential employee to excel in an interview or meeting (Pachter, 2006).

Technology

Technology should be limited to the topic at hand. Cell phones should never be used in interviews and should be limited to emergency situations in meetings. Executives stated that cell phones did influence their decision if they saw one in an interview and would result in a lost opportunity if it happened to ring. Laptops, PDAs, and tablets should be used for taking notes and nothing else (Pachter, 2006).

Conflict Management and Communication

Authors agree that how an employee handles conflict is also a major factor when supervisors are considering promotions. Employees should always be level-headed and listen to what the other has to say (Pachter, 2006). If an employee cannot control his or her anger, how can he or she be expected to handle mediations between two other employees?

Communication is the exchange of meaning (Grossman, 2013). Ineffective communication results in errors and lost company time. It is essential that people improve communication skills to succeed in the workplace.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Business etiquette consists of a host of topics; but the most important relate to dress, interview and meeting manners, technology use, and conflict management and communication. Interviewed executives provided immense emphasis on the importance of these topics. They have related that it does provide success in the career path if skills are sharpened in relation to other colleagues.

It is recommended that employers offer or notify employees of trainings and classes that would improve soft skills mentioned in this analysis. Employees and college graduates are also encouraged to take advantage of any opportunity to better themselves. Schools of Business should also consider making a business etiquette course a graduating requirement.

Introduction and Definition

The official definition of business etiquette according to researchers can be defined as a set of soft skills required to interact appropriately in business settings, such as company parties, interview dinners, and informal everyday workplace situations (Mausehund, Dortch, Brown, & Bridges, 1995). Schaffer and Kelley (1993, p. 330) echoed that definition with one that states etiquette as “the behavior, manners, and protocol established by convention as acceptable or required in business or profession.”

All executives interviewed indicated that business etiquette was how a person presented his or herself professionally, treated others, dressed, and communicated.

Most agree that business etiquette includes a range of skills such as the correct way to introduce two colleagues, to the proper way to shake hands, correct telephone etiquette, and everyday manners like saying please and thank you. According to Pachter (2006), every small action within the office matters as it relates to promotions or stagnation. Spargo (2004, p. 28) shared that “no single conversation is guaranteed to change the trajectory of a career, a business...any single conversation can.”

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine if the proper use of business etiquette results in success or failure of the career trajectory.

Research Questions

Listed in the outline below are the research questions and are covered in the analysis that follows.

- 1) How do business executives define and apply business etiquette?
- 2) How have the trends of business etiquette changed over time?

- 3) What types of training methods do executives suggest to improve business etiquette skills?
- 4) What aspects of business etiquette do executives value in potential employees?
- 5) How does business etiquette impact workplace success or failure?

Methods and Procedures

After receiving the Memo of Authorization, the topic, business etiquette, was selected from a predetermined list. Eight executives were chosen to interview to accrue primary data on the topic. The interviews were conducted face-to-face. No two executives were from the same company and only one executive from Richmond, Ky, was chosen. The other seven executives worked in various cities and industries spanning the state of Kentucky and southern Ohio. A complete list of executives is attached as *Appendix A*.

A total of eight scholarly articles were to be selected during the research that provided secondary information regarding the chosen topic as well as one book.

A problem statement was formed based on information and questions about the topic. Following the formation of research questions, logical and relevant interview questions based on the problem statement and secondary sources were formed. The same questions were used with each executive to reduce error in data interpretation. The list covers all topics such as: definition, change in etiquette in generations, interview etiquette, and workplace etiquette. A complete list of interview questions can be found in *Appendix B*.

The interview questions can be grouped into the research questions according to the following outline:

- 1) How do business executives define and apply business etiquette?
 - a) 1. How do you define business etiquette?

- b) 2. What topics do you consider it to cover?
 - c) 4. How does business etiquette play a role in your workplace?
 - d) 19. Concerning dress: please define business professional and business casual and the appropriate place and time for each.
- 2) How have the trends of business etiquette changed over time?
- a) 3. How has it changed?
 - b) 5. How do you view today's standard of etiquette compared to the past? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years?
 - c) 6. How do you see the difference in generations affecting accepted business etiquette in the future?
- 3) What types of training methods do executives suggest to improve business etiquette skills?
- a) 7. Should college students be required to take a class specific to business etiquette?
 - b) 8. Should companies offer or notify their employees of classes that would help their professional image?
- 4) What aspects of business etiquette do executives value in potential employees?
- a) 9. What qualities, in respect to business etiquette, do you look for in potential employees?
 - b) 12. What is the first thing you notice about potential employees when conducting an interview?

- c) 13. When you see an interviewee with a cell phone in his or her pocket, even if it does not ring during the interview, does it influence your decision in hiring this person?
 - d) 14. Is there something a potential employee could do when he or she walks into your office that is a deal breaker for you no matter what?
 - e) 15. When an interviewee comes prepared with knowledge of the company and questions for the interviewer, how does it set him apart?
 - f) 16. After interviewing a prospective employee, how does a thank you note influence your decision?
- 5) How does business etiquette impact workplace success or failure?
- a) 10. What are the habits of every successful employee?
 - b) 11. Do you believe good business etiquette or lack thereof can make or break you in the business world?
 - c) 17. Does how an employee act at a function outside of work affect how her or she is treated in the workplace? Is this right or wrong?
 - d) 18. What are the procedures for telling an employee that his or her etiquette has to change?
 - e) 20. When you see an employee too casually dressed, what does that say about that person?

A call to the executive was required to schedule a 30 minute interview between September 26, 2013, and October 19, 2013. The interview data were collected by recording the interview with permission from the executive, or by taking notes during the interview if permission for recording was denied. Within 24 hours of the interview, an

electronic thank you note was sent to the executive along with a link to a survey. A sample copy of the thank you email is attached as *Appendix C*. The survey questioned the executive on the researcher's performance during the interview, appearance, and professionalism. Those results were sent to the professor to critique the actions of the researcher.

All interview data were compiled to look for similarities among the answers given by the executives. Some data were used to create graphics within the report. The executive data were added to the secondary research to answer more of the problem statement.

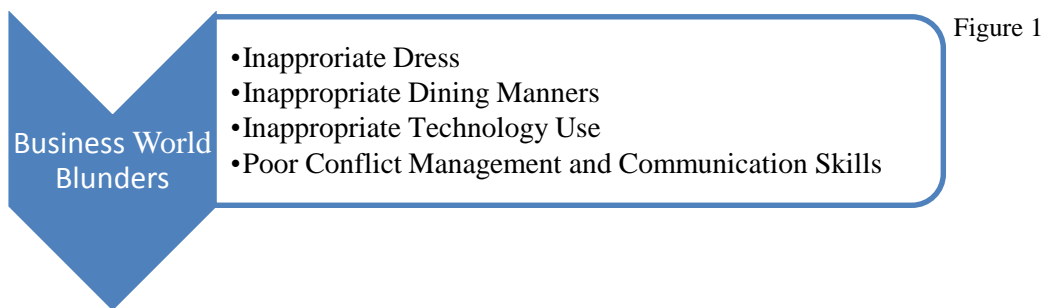
After all data were gathered, a field analysis was written on the research findings. The data are reported in the report that follows.

Data Findings and Analysis

The topics that executives said business etiquette were communication, dress, courtesy, people skills, and two executives expressly stated "everything." The executives also specified, in reference to interview question 4, that business etiquette does play a role in every workplace. They all agreed that professionalism is a must, and etiquette must be used when dealing with customers and coworkers. Also when asked if they "believed good business etiquette or lack thereof can make or break" someone, all executives but two answered that it would make or break a person. One executive who did not fall under that answer stated that someone could be successful and not a good professional. The other stated that it could contribute to the success, but it could not induce failure.

The most important etiquette standards to understand as determined by the research to correlate to dress, dining, phone and technology use, conversation, and conflict

management (Pachter, 2006). Figure 1, below, lists these blunders in the order discussed below.



Business executives were questioned about major infractions that would automatically break an interview. Most responded that having a cell phone out, inappropriate dress, tardiness, and no confidence would definitely fall under that list. Only one executive stated that there was no simple action that she could not look past. She even related that she had a lady bring a toddler with her to an interview. The toddler then wet on the floor. The executive had compassion because the single mother was trying desperately to obtain a job and the executive would have hired the lady if a position had been open at the time. There are very few executives that are that compassionate, and conservatism should be observed at all times.

When questioned about how business etiquette has changed, the business executives stated that the younger generation has a more laid back feel in the work place and have very few business etiquette skills. It is not as formal as it was twenty or even five years ago. One executive even stated that it was not a bad thing that the culture has become more laid back. It provides less stress on the workers and in turn produces less stress related health problems. They also stated that the technology has changed dramatically and this generation is more plugged electronically. Two executives said that the generations have become too technologically advanced and not as personal in the

business world. This is creating a change meaning that the future generations will have to work harder to become more accepted in a traditional workplace while the new workplaces will continue to be less formal. With either style workplace knowing what is or is not acceptable on company time is key for next generation workforce.

How to Dress

Appearance and dress are a major part of business etiquette. Six of eight business executives interviewed related that the first thing they notice about potential employees is the dress and appearance. The two executives who did not respond with the dress/appearance indicated that alertness and eagerness were the first thing they noticed. These results are shown in Figure 2 below.

First Impressions of Potential Employees

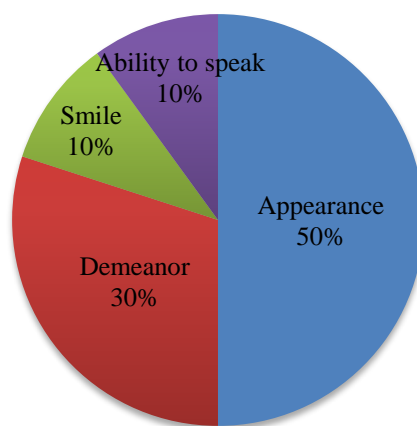


Figure 2

One executive who did respond with appearance did feel remorseful that she took their appearance into consideration. She did mention that she hired a young woman that came into her office in jeans, because the young woman was in the area and was not expecting an interview. Executives like her are few and far between so how one dresses during an interview or after they have accepted the job is very important.

With regards to dress, the authors agree that professional is better. Both Pachter and Kiddie agree that casual can become too laid back (2006; 2009). Superiors take clothing choice into consideration when determining promotions within the company. While deciding, managers and presidents will go with the employee who dresses more professional. Business casual is acceptable in many offices today, usually one day per week. Employees should check with the manager to determine what is considered business casual and if it is permissible to wear at all.

Business casual can be described as polo shirts and khakis for men and slacks or a skirt and sweater set for women. Women's dress can become more complicated however, and it is best to watch the other employees when starting a new job (Kiddie, 2009; Pachter, 2006). Business executives have all defined business professional as a suit and tie for men, and a dress or pant suit for women. One executive indicated that a church outfit would be appropriate. Business casual, as defined by the interviewed executives, includes any other dress clothing except tennis shoes, sandals, jeans, nor t-shirts should ever be worn. Some executives stated that while at work, formal is better.

Dr. Marcel Robles has emphasized in lectures that the first and last 12 inches of a person is the most important when appearing for any business meeting or interview. The first 12 relate to hair and grooming, modesty of the upper chest area for women and tie or no tie for a man. If the person does not have clean hair, appropriate make-up, or is dressed too casually then that person may lose the interview or the respect of the executive with whom he or she is meeting. The last 12 inches refer to the lower part of the legs and feet. Hemlines should be appropriate lengths and socks or hosiery should be worn at all times. Shoes should be appropriate in nature and clean, as well as polished. In

addition to cleanliness, shoes should also match the last hemline. It will create a more streamlined look (Robles, 2013). Above all a clean and polished appearance will earn the recent graduate the respect from the executive needed to compete with other graduates in the job market.

In addition to clean clothes and shoes, careful attention to fingernails should be considered. Both women and men should have clean and trimmed nails. If women should choose to wear polish, it should be fresh and not chipped or wild colors. A professional manicure with a basic French manicure or solid neutral color would even be worth the expense to give off a polished and professional look. Unkempt fingernails may signify to the executive that attention to detail is not important (Bockanic, 2012).

Bockanic also recommends that scented lotions or aftershaves be shunned. Many people have allergies to certain scents. It would not be fit to cause suffering to the person in charge of the hiring. It is also disrespectful to other employees to wear strong perfumes if it is a requirement to work within close proximities to colleagues (2012).

Bockanic suggests that any “religious symbols or service club pins” (2012, p. 48) should be avoided. It can create a ‘we-versus-them’ attitude if the interviewers belong to a different or rival religion or service club. It is strictly against federal law to discriminate based on religion, but it could cause the hiring executive to scrutinize the achievements and skills more than if the membership to the other club or religion were not known.

Business executives, when questioned about the perception of an employee who happens to dress too casually, related that it shows a sign of disrespect for the company. One executive even went as far to say he took it personally since that employee is representing his company.

Clothing choice during a dining interview or dinner meeting should be considered as well.

How to Master a Dinner Interview or Meeting

According to Pachter and Kiddie, the dinner interview can make or break a career (2006; 2009). Most current graduates do not know the proper formalities associated with a professional dinner. Such formalities include the correct usage of forks, knives, and spoons based on placement in relation to the plate, stacking plates when finished, correct introductions when meeting with prospective clients, improper actions like burping, nose blowing, cell phone use, or getting drunk should be avoided. Inappropriate behavior can cost the company prospective clients and, depending on the severity of the infraction, could result in a lost job. The executives cited that it is difficult to separate work and personal life. Therefore all executives agreed that it is important that employees know how to act at any function the company is being represented at. They also noted that there are procedures in place to notify an employee that etiquette skills must change or need to be focused on in the event of a breach and that if the employee does not change his or her ways, then that employee is usually terminated. It is also recommended that if the employee is in charge of setting up a dinner meeting, to follow basic guidelines (Kiddie, 2009; Mausehund, Dortch, Brown, & Bridges, 1995; Pachter, 2006).

Business executives stated that they look for confidence, solid ethics, ability to maintain relationships, respect, dress, and a firm handshake in potential employees. It is important that a person be well rounded in the sense of knowledge and soft skills. Seven of the eight business executives interviewed also noted that college students should be required to take a course specific to business etiquette. The executive who did not think

of it as a necessity did indicate that it would not be a bad idea to take the class if offered. The executives also unanimously agreed that classes or trainings to enhance current employees' etiquette skills should also be offered by the company or their employees should be notified of upcoming events to sharpen soft skills. Many of the executives also stated that their companies do offer such trainings. Training courses should cover such topics as listed in the paragraphs that follow.

The executives also noted that respectfulness, neatness, attention to detail, ability to focus on the customer, professionalism, and good communication skills are habits of every good employee. If employees take advantage of the classes and trainings offered by the companies, it will enhance those skills.

It is necessary that the host know the restaurant where the meeting with the client is going to be. It is important to know what is a good item on a menu to recommend and also if the potential client has any food allergies or religious restrictions. Reservations should be made in advance and should be double checked the day before the meeting. This preparedness will allow time to get reservations at the previously mentioned venue or make different reservations at an equally professional restaurant if the first restaurant choice is not available. It will also save embarrassment if the reservations have been misplaced. Arrive early to make sure someone is there to meet the client. Metzger calls it a "cardinal sin" to be late to any meeting (1998, p. 16). Introductions should occur in order of importance-naming more important first. This is a sign of respect and acknowledgement to the person's accomplishments. Pachter suggests that alcohol should only be consumed with conservative limits in mind, if at all (2006). Bockanic says not to

order alcohol. If you are nervous, a foggy brain due to alcohol consumption will not help (2012).

Place settings can differ from restaurant to restaurant, but usually not very dramatically within the United States. Careful attention must be paid if travelling outside of the United States. The basic US layout includes a center dinner plate, a bread plate to the top left of the dinner plate, a water glass on the top right, and a wine glass to the right of the water glass. To the left of the dinner plate is a salad fork on the outside and entrée fork on the inside. To the far right lays the spoon and a knife to the left of the spoon. The most common cited rule is eat from the outside in (Pachter, 2006).

The next set of rules apply only to dinners held in the United States and only with those accustomed to the American culture. Different cultures have different customs, and those customs explained here may actually offend someone of a different culture. Further research is recommended if travelling or entertaining clients of other nationalities.

In the United States it is frowned upon to ask to try anyone's meal at any point during the meeting or to ask for a to-go box. Sharing an entrée is also not appropriate for dinner meetings. Double dipping in any shared appetizer sauce is highly discouraged. It is mentioned by Pachter that a man lost an interview because of this breach. He was viewed by the interviewee as "inconsiderate or thoughtless" (Pachter, 2006, p. 51). Bockanic (2012) strongly advises against seasoning the food before tasting it. The interviewer could jump to the conclusion that the person is "not a logical thinker" with the "assumption that the food wasn't sufficiently seasoned" (2012, p. 49). Having basic manners and knowing key points to proper business etiquette could save face for the

employee and the business (Kiddie, 2009; Mausehund, Dortch, Brown, & Bridges, 1995; Pachter, 2006).

After the interview all authors recommended that a thank you note or email should be sent within 24 hours. The business executives were split on this topic. Most said that it would set the candidate apart from other prospective candidates. However, a few said that it was not necessary. Once again it is recommended that one send a thank you note simply to make a statement to the executive. The results are showcased in Figure below

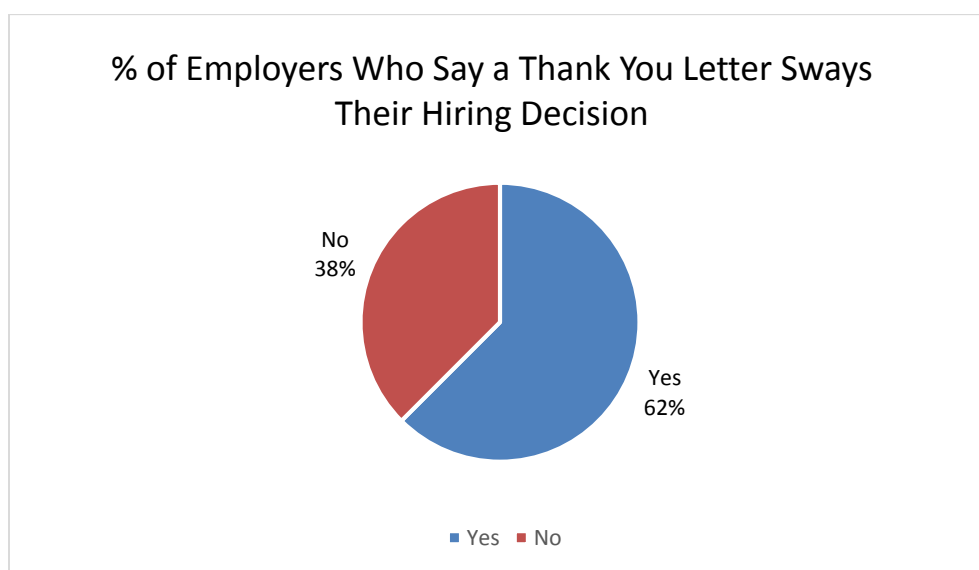


Figure 3

Most said that it would set the candidate apart from other prospective candidates. However, a few said that it was not necessary. Once again it is recommended that one send a thank you note simply to make a statement to the executive.

The business executives were also split on the idea of a candidate coming to an interview with knowledge of the company. Three executives said that it does make a difference and shows them that the candidate was interested in the company. Another executive stated that it did not impress him as all the candidate had to do was Google the

company. Three more executives stated that does not set that candidate apart and the last one stated that it evens out the playing field if everyone comes prepared.

How to Use Technology Politely

Cell phones, laptops, and other pieces of technology have become staples in the corporate setting. The etiquette associated with these devices is very straightforward. It is considered rude to use the phone at any point during a meeting, whether it is one-on-one or a group meeting. The only exceptions fall under a pregnant wife expected to go in labor at any minute or if the host is expecting an out-of-the-country call from another executive. At this point, the device should be silenced or placed on vibrate. Other uses of technology in meetings (laptops, tablets, or PDAs) should be restricted to use concerning the meeting. Participants should not check their email, check social media sites, or surf the web during the meeting. At no point within a job interview should a phone ring. It is best not to even take the phone inside. It is very rude and will be noticed by the interviewer (Pachter, 2006).

Business executives were questioned about cell phones and their presence in an interview. The executives were split on the impression that a cell phone made if an interviewee had one in his or her pocket. Three executives expressly stated that, as long as the phone did not ring, then it was not an issue. Three stated that it was very inappropriate and the last indicated that it could be a deciding factor. Therefore, phones and other electronic pieces should be left in the car during an interview.

How to Improve Conflict Management and Communication Skills

How an employee handles conflict is also a major factor when supervisors are considering promotions. Employees who do not handle it well (swearing, screaming, or

drama starters) will be passed over for promotions (Pachter, 2006). Another “cardinal sin” stated by Metzger (1998, p. 16) is using vulgarities. It relates back to a lesson taught by the author’s mother relating that intelligent people should be able to express themselves with anything other than crude words (Metzger, 1998).

In a management position one may be placed in a position that would require him or her to mediate a conflict. If the employee does not show good resolution skills in his or her everyday life, he or she cannot be expected to handle other’s conflicts in a professional way. Bad conflict management can reflect poorly on an employee’s otherwise good character. Muir (2012) suggests that as a manager, he or she should sit down with the troubled employee to carefully present possible attitude adjustments. It will not only better the person but also improve the company. It is suggested to try to stay calm, never write a reply email or call the person until anger has cooled down, and work toward a common resolution (Pachter, 2006).

It is also important that every conversation be entered into with an open mind. It would be very rude for a person to make assumptions without knowing the entire or both sides of a story. Grossman (2013) suggests that each conversation be entered into with the purpose of learning something new. To accomplish this, he recommends that the employees listen completely before forming a response so that the employee may focus on what is being said instead of what he or she will respond with. Since communication is “the exchange of meaning” (p. 17), all verbal and non-verbal cues must be considered (2013).

Body language should be measured according to Grossman (2013). It can further the conversation or potentially cause the other person to avoid discussing pertinent matters.

Be aware of stance, facial expressions, and tone of voice. If left unchecked, a person could come across as downgrading or disapproving. Body language would hinder future conversations on important topics relating to the company. Executives, managers, and supervisors should take special care to monitor these reactions (2013).

These skills can carry over into everyday life and not just in the office.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Some actions will cause the person to lose the respect of the potential client or supervisor no matter the skill set he or she may have. Most researchers do agree on these major infractions.

Summary and Conclusions

It is critical to remember that every small action reflects back to the individual and can potentially cost the person a job or promotion. The way a person is dressed reflects his or her professionalism so it is important to be dressed appropriately at all times. This includes not only clothes, but hairstyle, nails, and make-up. Manners are crucial at dinner interviews and meetings. The person should ensure he or she is using the correct utensil, plate, or glass. He or she should also use all manners. Saying please and thank you make a difference. Technology should be avoided at the dinner table as well as in any meeting. If the person brings a laptop, tablet, PDA, or cell phone, its use should relate only to the meeting. During an interview, a person should not have a cell phone at all since it is frowned on by most employers. An individual should also have good conflict management and avoidance skills. These skills involve listening more than speaking and effective communication. The conflict management skill is very important if a person strives to be in a management position within any company. While not all business

executives are as critical of soft skills, most do command a basic set that fall above the bar in relation to what today's graduates have.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the data findings and analysis:

- Employers should offer trainings to employees
- Employees should take advantage of trainings offered
- Colleges should have a business etiquette graduation requirement
- Current students should take advantage of etiquette trainings offered

Well rounded etiquette skills translate into any area of an employee's or executive's life. It will be time well spent to further their knowledge in these soft skill areas. Most companies do offer courses and each professional organization usually requires members to attend continuing education courses. Adding a graduation requirement would better prepare the school's graduates for professional jobs and would then earn a reputation of having the best prepared graduates.

Overall, business etiquette is a necessity and research indicates that today's graduates are not as prepared they could be with the help of some guidance such as a business etiquette class or section.

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APPENDIX A

Executive Listing

Executive Director of Human Resources
Baptist Health – Corbin
Corbin, KY

Director of Human Resources
Cumberland Valley National Bank
London, KY

Insurance Agent/Agency Operator
State Farm Insurance Company
Berea, KY

Chief Executive Officer
Flottman Company
Crestview Hills, KY

Partner, CPA
Price, Stagner & Co., PLLC
Lexington, KY

Partner, CPA
Craft, Noble & Company, PLLC
Richmond, KY

Site Director
Greentree Servicing
Lexington, KY

Senior Vice President
iQor
Lexington, KY

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. How do you define business etiquette?
2. What topics do you consider it to cover?
3. How has it changed?
4. How does business etiquette play a role in your workplace?
5. How do you view today's standard of etiquette compared to the past? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years?
6. How do you see the difference in generations affecting accepted business etiquette in the future?
7. Should college students be required to take a class specific to business etiquette?
8. Should companies offer or notify their employees of classes that would help their professional image?
9. What qualities, in respect to business etiquette, do you look for in potential employees?
10. What are the habits of every successful employee?
11. Do you believe good business etiquette or lack thereof can make or break you in the business world?
12. What is the first thing you notice about potential employees when conducting an interview?
13. When you see an interviewee with a cell phone in his or her pocket, even if it does not ring during the interview, does it influence your decision in hiring this person?
14. Is there something a potential employee could do when he or she walks into your office that is a deal breaker for you no matter what?
15. When an interviewee comes prepared with knowledge of the company and questions for the interviewer, how does it set him
16. After interviewing a prospective employee, how does a thank you note influence your decision?
17. Does how an employee act at a function outside of work affect how her or she is treated in the workplace? Is this right or wrong?
18. What are the procedures for telling an employee that his or her etiquette has to change?
19. Concerning dress: please define business professional and business casual and the appropriate place and time for each.
20. When you see an employee too casually dressed, what does that say about that person?

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APPENDIX C

October 5, 2013

Dear XXXX:

Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to meet with me yesterday. The chance to speak with you provided solid information to use in my field report about business etiquette.

I enjoyed talking with you about trying to see the good in everyone and not strictly sticking to a set of rules when looking at potential employees. It was very eye opening that there are still some employers who will do this!

The information you provided will be applied in my professional life, since there is always room for improvement and growth, especially in our compassion toward others.

The link to the survey I mentioned before leaving is attached below.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/profskillsFY13>

Thank you,

Lauren Kirby