

GEORGIANNA DAS

Discover the Best Business & Social Etiquette
Practices in Asia, Europe & America



How To Stand Out In The Business World

Poised and Polished

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How to stand out in the business world



BY MARGARETTA DAS

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How to stand out in the business world

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Preface

We live in challenging times and in a fast-paced business world of negotiations, networking, dining and entertaining. We are faced daily with so many conflicting behaviour patterns of what is appropriate and professional and what is unacceptable and thus unprofessional. Amidst this confusion a lot of us are in a quandry as to how to present ourselves in the best possible light in a business setting. This has to do with what the world expects and our individual value system.

It is unfortunate that the world has become increasingly materialistic and supercilious. Like in most affluent societies, we have begun to rate ourselves according to our salaries, personal accomplishments, beauty, clothes, jewellery, social circles, club memberships, exotic holidays and even the schools our children are in. It's all one big status competition.

The image we are trying to put forth is so tied up with these factors. As we begin to place so much emphasis on these aspects of our lives, our values are bound to be called into question. There's no congruence between what the world expects and how we feel inside.

But the question that really needs to be answered is, 'Amidst all of this, are you happy with an abundant life or are

you just coping, struggling and surviving?' If your answer is the latter, you would no doubt be feeling burnt out and frustrated.

And, 99% of people today feel that way.

With such feelings of being burnt out, your image is definitely one that is not at peace. And, if you are not at peace, how could you have a dynamic corporate image?

Recent studies reveal that when intelligent, capable people fail, it is often traceable to a lack of social skills.

One's self-image is manifested through one's attitude to life. The way you smile, or if you don't, the way you talk, the honesty with which you interact and how you present yourself to the world is a reflection of your self-image. Such is the power of body language; it reveals almost everything about who you really are.

In business, we meet all sorts of people. Some may be rude, unkind, arrogant, insensitive, dismissive or cold and calculative. Most of the negative patterns that are displayed are learnt from both the environment and individuals who may have caused them pain. It's a knee-jerk reaction to start adopting similar behaviour in order to keep one's defences up. But just as how they have been learnt, these negative traits can be unlearnt.

Sensitivity is the intuitive knowledge of our hearts. It's an element that cannot be destroyed but is yet often cast aside in the business world. The truth is, sensitivity comes naturally to us but through the trials and tribulations of life, we begin to learn to become insensitive, unkind and ungracious. And while

we suppress this wonderful vulnerable spirit that is inherent in us, we become unhappy. Just making do, turns us into unhappy, stressed people because we are not being true to who we really are inside. The repercussions of this non-balance between our true emotional selves and the professional world, creates an attitude that is destructive to the emotional fabric of the world.

How do you remain true to yourself? It's really about a change in mindset. There has to be the ability to honour the sensitivity element within yourself as only then will you have a deeper understanding of how to handle the people you work with. In time, a sense of freedom and peace and a natural sense of confidence is attained. That is what makes one stand out amongst others in the business world. This is self-confidence and it comes by honouring who you are inside.

In the business world, those who have a strong sense of self-confidence are people who are naturally poised and polished. The bases of business and social graces are social sensitivity and respect for others. This comes naturally to a self-confident person.

Graciousness is one of the key elements of etiquette, conveying warmth, generosity and kindness to all fellow beings.

Today we travel the world in a matter of hours, and we must learn to fit in instantly with the various cultures we are exposed to. There is no room left in the world for uncouth or ungracious behaviour. This quick guidebook will help you enhance your image and give you a sense of confidence to project the right image for success. It covers the Business and Social Graces, Communication Skills, Corporate Dressing and The Art of Western as well as Asian Dining.

Please take this book not just as a superficial guide on the basic decorum required in civilised society but as a short inward journey of self-discovery and self-awareness. By knowing your self, being perceptive to others and learning how to honour sensitivity within yourself and according it to the people who come into your life, you will indeed have a dynamic corporate image.

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*Every man has three characters-
that which he exhibits,
that which he has,
and that which he thinks he has*

— ALPHONSE KARR

The Social Graces

THE VALUE OF ETIQUETTE

In a business environment, we rarely have the opportunity to get to know each other well. The primary focus is usually the business at hand. However, our interactions can be more meaningful if we conduct ourselves courteously and attentively, according respect to the people involved while acknowledging their valuable time. It also establishes us as perceptive and well-mannered professionals. It is a general misconception that

doing things politely takes more time. While you may need to spend time learning to approach things differently, handling matters correctly saves you both time and anguish. You would not have to spend time fixing problems if matters had just been handled the right way.

Though manners are learnt from a young age, certain protocol and principles that apply to a corporate setting remain unlearned. But just as skills need to be updated because of technology, manners need to be updated to suit the vastly different international business environment of today. What was accepted or expected in the past has changed a lot. In today's work environment, it is a must to demonstrate sensitivity while eliminating behaviour that comes forth as being sexist, racist, discriminatory or simply an invasion of a person's space and privacy.

The general guidelines for etiquette are based on kindness, respect, courtesy, sensitivity and logic. Etiquette applies not just in a boardroom or when you meet an important client, but also in informal settings where you make it a point to greet the receptionist or the tea lady. By applying etiquette in every part of your daily life, you can enjoy better rapport with co-workers. The workplace would become substantially more pleasant and the end result would be a better impression of you, both as an individual and as a representative of your company.

It is no secret that employees who are treated with respect also feel valued and are usually more productive. Similarly, when an employee makes a customer feel comfortable and valued, it is more likely that the business relationship will grow and that the orders will keep coming in. You see, what goes around, comes around.

Being well-mannered is really about being a happy, confident person. It's what's inside that matters and this manifests itself through our behaviour and interactions. People who have low self-worth and who are generally pessimistic rarely care too much about the world and people around them. It is hard to imagine that despite the technological advances and general progress of the world, there is still a need to change people's attitude and mannerisms.

Over the years, I am often faced with the question, "How is one to be nice to everyone, even those you dislike?" My reply is simple. "Why allow someone to take away your individual specialness?"

Did you know that the way a peacock gets feathers, is by actually eating thorns? Just look at its beauty. Similarly, the difficult people we accept in our lives make us better and more 'beautiful' people. Sometimes, the hardest personalities we encounter contribute the most to our personal growth.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The basis of all first impressions is good self-esteem. Every action, from a smile to one's posture, to eye contact and the handshake given, is an indication of a person's self-confidence. And with self-confidence, a person has an energy that surrounds him/her.

When meeting someone for the first time, a person has the first eleven seconds to make a powerful first impression. People tend to sum up those they first meet. They look for indications that help determine the level of education, company designation, socio-economic status and marital status of the individual.

First impressions are short and highly significant encounters that set the tone for the entire interaction that follows. How we project ourselves and greet people has a strong influence on how they perceive us. A poor initial impression may mean having to exert extra effort to undo the damage. Therefore, it is imperative to take note of these tips to ensure a positive first impression.

1. Walk with a purposeful stride whether you're entering your office block or a client's . Be sure not to carry any plastic or paper bags, but just a handbag and/or briefcase.
2. Smile; it's simple and yet not done enough. Your facial expression should convey positive energy and motivation.
3. Dress for impact. Take pains with your dressing, ensuring that your clothing is appropriate and your hair is neat. Give the same attention to your shoes to ensure that you put your best foot forward.
4. Stand when shaking hands and offer a firm and complete handshake to both men and women alike. Avoid limp handshakes or the 'hand over hand' position where one side appears to be dominating the other.
5. Make your first ten words count when meeting someone. Say something like, *"Good morning, thank you for meeting me, Mr Hayden."*
6. Ensure that you include the person's name in the initial conversation. It is a mark of attentiveness and respect.

7. Give people your full attention and listen to what they have to say. Smile and make eye contact. Move your body towards the person you have just met and pay attention to what he/she is saying using appropriate acknowledging words like, *"I see."* or *"That's interesting."*

TABOOS OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Whether you are in a business or social setting, you need to make some decisions as to how you want to present yourself. If you've spent time and money on education and dressing well, you must also be aware of behaviour taboos. Finding yourself in a casual setting, doesn't mean that you don't have to be mindful of elements that could ruin your image forever.

It's about being in control of thoughts, what you say and how it manifests itself in your behaviour.

Here are some of the common taboos:

- Ignoring people. Not acknowledging people you know or those you are unfamiliar with in a group you've just joined is rude. If someone is across the room, nod, smile and acknowledge them. For those you don't know, be friendly and introduce yourself.
- Body odour and bad breath. Take care of your personal hygiene and ensure that your body odour is not offensive. If you have a problem with bad breath, keep a mouthwash at the office and use it regularly.

- ☛ Snacking on food, chewing gum and sucking on mints do not belong in the workplace or a social setting. It gives the impression of a lackadaisical attitude and makes one look sloppy.
- ☛ Mind your language. Using words like 'yeah' and 'okey dokey' can reflect poorly on you. It is important to use proper language as not doing so can lower your credibility.

PROFESSIONAL BODY LANGUAGE

Imagine that each morning, as you leave your home, you are on a stage. You are the actor or actress and the world is your audience. Whether you are in a boardroom or a ballroom, it is just a change of scene but at all times, your posture, poise and attitude are on display. Even how you sit in your car, drive, walk, or sit at your office desk and how you entertain – are all being observed. You therefore cannot afford to be slack.

The first thing a person notices is your posture. A hunch can add years to you. Always be aware of your posture and walk with your shoulders held back and your head up as this reflects self-confidence. Similarly, if you walk with a curved back and lowered gaze, it reflects a sense of low self-worth. Whether you are standing, sitting or walking, remember that your body language is constantly on display.

- ☛ An open posture communicates non-verbally that you are open to the speaker and the ideas being presented.

- When in a conversation, face the speaker and sit or stand in an attentive position.
- If you're standing, your feet should be parallel, with your weight evenly balanced.
- Avoid crossing your arms or legs as that's a closed posture and can be seen as a hostile or defensive gesture. When both arms are folded across the chest, it usually signals disagreement or that the person is not 'open' nor fully receptive to what is being said or discussed. Sometimes he/she is also trying to hide the 'truth'.
- Remember to do the forward lean. During a conversation, occasionally lean slightly forward to emphasize your attention. Remain alert but comfortable. Conversely, when someone leans away from you during conversation, he or she is probably uninvolved.
- Close the loop at the end of the conversation by saying goodbye and moving away to meet someone else. Add something like, *"It was a pleasure to meet you"*.

Gestures are part of body language and certain gestures demonstrate sincerity and confidence while others demonstrate nervous energy and negative intentions. In business, it's not always about the big things like the impressive venue or the distinguished manner with which communication takes place. People who are quick at reading body language also look out for the little things that reveal a whole lot more about the people they are negotiating with.

Avoid fiddling with your eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Covering your mouth when you speak indicates lying. Also avoid tugging at your clothes and playing with your pen. These gestures display nervousness or that you are perhaps unsure of what you are saying. It also creates a bad impression and people might not believe what you say.

Certain gestures can help emphasize a point but the gesture should be appropriate to what is being said. Remember however, that gestures should draw attention to the idea being put forward and not the gesture itself.

Consider what you want to project and what response you want from your audience before deciding what gesture to incorporate.

DETECTING NEGATIVE HABITS

Negative habits are sometimes unconscious because they are bad habits that become part of a person's lifestyle. However, they not only damage an image but can also indicate insensitivity towards others.

For instance, smoking, especially amongst a group of non-smokers indicates that others' feelings have not been taken into consideration. Being willing to risk one's own health is one thing but risking the health of others is another. Because of the negative health effects, you will be seen as an insensitive person and it is also possible that people will cut you off, even in vital business relationships.

I myself am militant about people coming to my office or home and smoking. No matter how important they are, I ask them to go out to smoke.

Be aware of your own negative habits. Sit down and analyse them, ask others for feedback and be willing to take it constructively. Identify the grey areas. If your image is important, start eradicating negative habits from your whole attitude and behaviour. If need be, seek counselling. Very often, there are deeply-rooted psychological issues that make us behave in a certain way. With professional help, you can overcome them.

The negative habits to watch out for are:

- ☛ Smoking
- ☛ Spitting
- ☛ Biting fingernails
- ☛ Tapping feet or constantly moving your legs
- ☛ Drumming fingers
- ☛ Grooming oneself in public
- ☛ Picking teeth or nose and scratching eyes or head
- ☛ Yawning
- ☛ Over alcohol-ing
- ☛ Crowding other people's space

Negative habits not only affect people's impression of you, but can actually intimidate others. Pounding a table, for one, makes people fear you are enraged. Most important, you should rarely, if ever, touch a person in a business setting. That is an

intimacy that is subject to misinterpretation, even if you do it playfully. People have vastly varied tolerances for physical contact, and the best rule of thumb is to avoid it altogether. Even innocent, supportive pats on the shoulder can be considered familiarity in excess.

THE POWER OF GREETINGS & INTRODUCTIONS

Common sense combined with courtesy will help you in addressing others.

Introductions are important. A properly-performed introduction honours the person being introduced, makes the new acquaintance feel included and subtly acknowledges professional status / rank. It also reflects favourably on you that you are aware of protocol. So remember to make introductions.

Be sure to start any introduction or conversation with Mr., Ms. or Dr. until you're asked to use first names or are sure that it's appropriate to do so.

When people know who the players are, they can focus on their roles in the game. Be sure to follow the ABC of introductions, especially when introducing others:

Authority - Say the name of the person who holds the position of most authority or importance first. This applies, regardless of gender or age in business introductions.

Example: *"Ms. Manager, I'd like you to meet Mr. New Employee."*

- Basic** - Keep it basic. Say each person's name only once. Avoid introducing everyone to each other. Don't say, "*Ms. Manager, meet Mr. New Employee. Mr. New Employee, meet Ms. Manager.*"
- Clarify** - If possible, provide some pertinent information about the people you're introducing.

FACE TO FACE

When introducing yourself, remember to stick to a planned and practised way of describing who you are and what you do. Write your own self-introduction and learn it well. It should be clear, interesting and well-delivered to make a good first impression. This will help initiate a conversation.

Say, "*Hello, I'm Julie Winters. I don't believe we've met.*"

Say your name and extend your hand. Usually the higher-ranked person should extend a hand first.

Do not mention your titles when introducing yourself.

"*Hello, I'm Charles Roxford,*" and **not** "*Hello, I'm Sir Charles Roxford.*"

When you introduce people of unequal rank, you are expected to use the professional titles. Say, "*Mrs Lenox, have you met Dr Bains*".

or "Your Excellency, may I introduce Mr Williams".

When you are introduced, do stand up, whether you are a man or a woman. Move towards the person you're meeting, establish eye contact, look pleasant and smile while repeating the name of the person you've just met. Don't be dismissive of the person being introduced, by nodding while looking elsewhere.

Smile and say something like, *"Pleased to meet you, Mr Peterson."*

If the meeting is taking place at your office, never stay behind the desk when greeting someone. Stand up and move forward towards the door to greet them. Offer them a seat and then return to your place behind the desk.

THIRD PARTY INTRODUCTIONS

Besides introducing oneself, another significant and highly important part of your life would be introducing people to one another. You can usually find yourself in various settings and you need to know the appropriate way to do a smooth and savvy introduction.

BUSINESS SETTINGS

The etiquette in business settings is based upon hierarchy rather than chivalry, and hierarchy is arranged, as in the services, by rank within the company and not by age, gender or social status. Therefore, precedence is awarded to the person of greater authority.

BUSINESS INTRODUCTIONS

Person of Lesser Authority	TO	<u>Person of Greater Authority</u>
Non – Dignitaries	TO	<u>Dignitaries *</u>
Non – Official	TO	<u>Elected Official</u>
Junior Executive	TO	<u>Senior Executive</u>
Junior Military Officer	TO	<u>Senior Military Officer</u>
Company Associate	TO	<u>Customer/Client</u>
Peer /Your Company	TO	<u>Peer /A nother Company</u>
New Colleague	TO	<u>Group</u>
Group	TO	<u>Client</u>

Underscored Name Stated First

**(A member of the Royal Family, Head of a Country, Chiefs of State Ministers, Ambassadors, Dignitaries of Religious Order, High – ranking Elected or Appointed Officials, etc.)*

SOCIAL SETTINGS

The etiquette in social settings is based upon chivalry, and therefore, precedence is awarded to age, gender, and social status.

SOCIAL INTRODUCTIONS

Man	TO	<u>Woman</u>
Younger	TO	<u>Older</u>
Less Important	TO	<u>More Important</u>
Non – Dignitaries	TO	<u>Dignitaries *</u>
(Male or Female) Guests	TO	<u>Host and Hostess</u>
(Unless Dignitaries or Elderly) Guests	TO	<u>Guest of Honour</u>
Family Member	TO	<u>Outsider</u>

Underscored Name Stated First

*(A member of the Royal Family, Head of a Country, Chiefs of State Ministers, Ambassadors, Dignitaries of Religious Order, High – ranking Elected or Appointed Officials, etc.)

The Four Forms of Proper Introductions

1. Name, I would like to present.....to you”
2. Name, may I introduce.....to you”
3. Name, I'd like you to meet....., my dear friend”
4. Name, this is....., from the U.S”

Acknowledgements to Introductions

1. “It’s an honour to meet you...” (Formal)
2. “How do you do...?”
3. “It’s a pleasure to meet you...”
4. “Hello, I am Lina...”

It is helpful to tell something interesting about the person you are introducing. In this way a topic of conversation will already have been established. Avoid praising the person to the skies even if you are sincere, as it embarrasses him or her, and it sounds phoney.

AN INTRODUCTION GONE WRONG

The key to handling mistakes in an introduction is to handle the situation as subtly as possible. Acknowledge the problem, quickly address and correct it and let it be forgotten.

If you do not remember a person’s name, just say to the newcomer brightly, *“How nice to see you again. I’m Gina Lee. We met at Tom’s party.”* Hopefully the newcomer will be tactful and understanding enough to announce his own name.

Never say, *“You don’t remember me, do you?”*

The embarrassment of having a slip of the mind or not knowing someone’s name can be overcome with,

“I’m so sorry, my mind’s gone blank! You are....?”

or “I remember meeting you but I’m sorry, your name’s just slipped my mind.”

On the other hand, if someone mispronounces or calls you by the wrong name / position, make the correction without embarrassing the other person. Say,

“Actually, it’s pronounced ‘Pas-rich-a.” or

“My official title is the Director of Finance.”

This is especially important in situations where you expect to see the other person again, or when the information could influence the relationship. To avoid any awkwardness, smile when making the correction.

GREETINGS AROUND THE WORLD

Asian Greetings

Greetings are considered to be of extreme importance in Asian culture. Therefore it is important to observe local greeting customs when meeting with business associates from different countries within the region. Take note of the following greetings when in Asia:

Chinese Greeting Etiquette

- Be sure to allow your Chinese hosts to set the tone by allowing them to initiate the greeting.
- Bowing or nodding is the most common form of greeting. Unlike the Japanese, the Chinese bow from the shoulders rather than the waist.
- Handshakes are gaining acceptability. Chinese usually shake hands very lightly, with each handshake lasting some 10 seconds.
- Always stand up when being introduced and remain standing throughout the introductions. Useful Chinese expressions to know include *ni hao* (hello), *xiexie* (thank you) and *zaijian* (goodbye).
- Upon meeting someone, Chinese tend to lower their eyes slightly as a sign of respect. Staring into the eyes of a Chinese might make them uncomfortable.
- Introductions are formal. Use formal titles. Formality is a sign of respect, and it is advisable to clarify how you will address someone very early in a relationship, generally during your first meeting. Address a person using his or her family name only, such as Mr. Cheng or Ms. Hsu. Avoid using someone's given name unless you have known him or her for a long period of time.

"Business Success is all about projecting a Powerful Image.

A powerful image is based on confidence, composure and credibility."

Poised & Polished provides you with great tips to turn you into a savvy and sophisticated businessman or businesswoman.

Renowned etiquette and image coach Georgianna Das who has trained thousands of individuals from large corporation in the business and social graces area brings to you all the answers to challenges you face in your interpersonal relationships with people whilst networking, negotiating or entertaining in Business World.

This power-packed guide covers vital information on Business and Social Graces, focusing on topics like Firsts Impressions, Handling Conflict at Work, Corporate Dressing, Dynamic Public Speaking Skills to Business Entertaining and Gift-giving. Also covers protocol on Continental and American Customs and Etiquette practices in Japan, China, Indian, and Philippines.

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