

ETIQUETTE, IMPRESSIONS AND SUCCESS

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Haifa Shawwa is currently a consultant, speaker, and international trainer of Business Etiquette, protocol, and Children's etiquette. She provides customized Etiquette training to Banks, Hospitals, Organizations in the public and private sector, as well as to Universities and schools in Palestine and other Arab countries. She provides Skype training sessions to her clients worldwide. Mrs. Shawwa has been in the training business for fifteen years. Her childhood at a German boarding school away from home enriched her perspective of diversity, respect and an empathetic understanding of all cultures. She is a fervent believer in "good manners" as a magic potion for understanding, easy fruitful communication, conflict resolution and success. As a published writer, she puts her writing skills to the best use by promoting etiquette through writing articles to international and regional newspapers, e-papers, weekly columns .She is a frequent guest speaker at Palestinian Universities, giving lectures to graduates about the importance of Etiquette for their self esteem, job search and distinction. She was appointed as a member of The National Team for writing the Palestinian civics education curriculum which is studied by tens of thousands of Palestinian student from the first grade onwards.

In almost every culture, ambitious women were once hindered by stereotypes regarding their priorities and were often compelled to make the hard choice between a serious career and their typical role of making a family. Julia Robert's "The Mona Lisa Smile" is a close embodiment of such a conflict, where girls were taught to focus on their debutante skills rather than academia. Accordingly, so many women were discouraged to take the path of education and career for the fear of losing their youth and «femininity" to study, research and career.

Fortunately, Things have changed so much for most cultures; so many pioneer women have bravely learned the art of holding to both, their ambitious career and their "womanly" presence. Again, very few of them realize that this is essential for the sake of not only proving a point, or winning a battle for change, but for the sake of gaining more confidence and achieving excellence in both their social and professional life. There is a point where every professional woman should know something about professional etiquette, better known as Business Etiquette, comprising numerous skills that help her stand out and manage her professional and social relationship with the others successfully and fruitfully.

Professional Etiquette is not a luxury, it is very fundamental for progress, excellence and success. Etiquette provides unfailing techniques for getting along with others in a smooth convenient stress and conflict free way .It is the art and talent of making the others around us feel respected, acknowledged and most at ease .

But even before expecting acceptance from the others, comes mastering the skill of presenting ourselves in the best "appropriate" way possible. Trying to win the battle of impressions can be daunting if left unmanaged. A polished professional image, our pass to such a presence, is something that should be realized, planned and managed but can we really control and manage the way people see us? The answer is a big definite "Yes"! Initially it is about the reflex action of them "seeing us", but it is more about how they perceive our presence, what feelings do we provoke in them. Was the meeting, whatever the work context may be, successful? a failure? An experience they do not mind going through again?, or better, they'd look forward to being exposed to again.. An Impression is the mental and emotional picture imprinted in the "others" mind about us .A first impression will probably last forever, the more reason to display your best self. A second chance is also possible, but

not before passing through the cumbersome process of erasing the first...wrong impression.

But how do others judge us even before we utter a word? A Harvard social psychologist, Amy Cuddy in her book "Presence", suggests that people during a first meeting evaluate us from both the "trust" and respect" perspectives. In their evaluation they seek two dimensions; warmth and competence. Cuddy, after extensive 15 years of research, argues that from an «evolutionary perspective, warmth comes first, after which trust or competence is established."Elaborating on Cuddy's perspective, warmth is typically established through a pleasant appearance, friendly body language and respectful, kind, tactful and considerate language. This is where Etiquette, better Business Etiquette, steps in to provide the "know how» to accomplish that. All of the above stated precedes the clients' evaluation of your technical knowledge .A bond based on warmth and trust is formed even before your clients care to know how experienced or well informed or intelligent in your work you are. While if they are repelled by your image or attitude, feelings about you will be formed/established before you ever get the chance to display your technical assets

Image is also about our silent messages. What does our body language, dress code, voice, language and conversation skills say about us. More specifically put, "what messages does the "client, beneficiary» get through our body language, dress code and language. Does he see/feel our confidence, reliability, trust, credibility, empathy? Does the sight of our messy hair and slanted shoulders at the end of a long working day, put the worried patient at ease? Doesn't he doubt our expertise and judgment? After all we appear too tired to observe and make decisions. Does our monotonous voice while explaining imply respecting his need to fully understand his case, or does it make him feel like he should have chosen the other doctor who is more articulate and has a pleasant clear voice.

Professional dress codes, a very important topic in the field of Image & Etiquette, may vary according to diverse work settings .Whether an entrepreneur, a banker, a doctor or a university professor, common guidelines apply to all. Clothes should convey a serious dependable, empathetic and pleasant presence. Less is more when it comes to accessories and makeup. And as Emily Post puts it," if people focus on your clothes rather than on you, then you're wearing the wrong clothes"."Too short, too tight,, too loud, too sheer or too low-cut "means you are sending the wrong messages, risking that you're not being taken as seriously as you deserve to be .However a pleasant "appropriate" appearance is an integral part of good customer service in any profession. Studies indicate that

customers or clients of any category feel more comfortable and communicate better with pleasant well groomed friendly service providers. Moreover, they opt for buying service or merchandise from such a pleasant and neat person.

Dr Michael Kahn, a psychiatrist at and an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School in Boston ,provoked by the harsh mechanical behavior of so many professionals in the medical field, came up with a comprehensive manual for professionals working in the medical field "Etiquette Based Medicine"(Michael Kahn, M.D., Volume 358, Number 19 New England Journal of Medicine). The research was an inspiration to so many medical centers throughout the world, stressing the importance of the positive friendly attitude of doctors towards their patients. It focuses on the basics of Business Etiquette for every workplace.

His simple instructions checklist starts with the typical etiquette skill of introducing ones-self and ends with the much overlooked vital skill of listening:

1. "If the patient is new to you, introduce yourself.
2. Wash your hands in front of the patient to reassure that he or she is not going to catch something from the previous patient.
3. Shake hands.
4. Sit down.
5. Smile.
6. Ask about the patient's life.
7. Listen attentively

An endless rich field of knowledge, there is so much to know about Etiquette for women in all fields of Business. Each detail comes in handy in daily situations leading to more confidence, less stress and more success in regard to establishing, keeping and developing relationships with family, friends, strangers and work colleagues. Moreover, focusing on refining additional etiquette skills results in excellence, perfect personal branding, more exposure and better opportunities in life and career.