Adapting to the New Normal: Navigating Business Etiquette in the Age of Remote Work

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Defining Business Etiquette and its Importance

In essence, 'business etiquette' refers to a fundamental set of protocols professionals are expected to follow. They are often characterized as "good manners", since they are a crucial factor in characterizing a positive image in the corporate world. While the concept of business etiquette may sound daunting at first, its practices are self-explanatory and should already be incorporated into one's daily life. Despite this, it has been statistically proven that more than half of the workers in the corporate world fail to act in accordance with these protocols, such as waiting for their turn to speak. This is primarily caused by an individual's failure to realize the impact of their decisions.

Warren Buffet once said, "it takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin one" (Pride, 2020). This statement may seem exaggerated or unrealistic at first,

but it is, in fact, an accurate observation. An individual's reputation is a delicate and easily influenced characteristic that can be altered within seconds. By maintaining high business etiquette, ethical behavior can become an instinctive response and professionalism a core value. Furthermore, following simple professional guidelines can allow individuals to interact with more respect, thus allowing them to retain more information and become a self-driven individual. Going back to Warren Buffet's point, the simple things make a substantial difference for the future. Simply following business etiquette could drive an individual's motivation and push them to achieve their ultimate goals.

How to Implement Business Etiquette

Exhibiting professionalism and building respect in the workplace involves paying attention to several details. This

includes dressing appropriately, paying attention to names, offering handshakes, active listening, double-checking emails, and keeping the workplace tidy. Conversely, being tardy and arriving late, failing to ask questions, engaging in gossip, being overly confident or lacking confidence, and having personal conversations at your desk are behaviors employees should avoid (Keller, 2022). By being mindful of this, individuals can create a more professional and respectful work environment.

"Pandemic" Business Etiquette

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional norms of business etiquette have undergone significant changes. One of the more notable changes would include video conferencing becoming the new norm for business communication. While this shift may make it tempting to relax certain aspects of business etiquette, it is important to remember that professionalism is still important. Hence, individuals should continue to be mindful of the etiquette involved in virtual meetings, by continuing to dress appropriately, maintaining eye contact, and being conscious of their body language. To maintain business etiquette during the pandemic, several companies have established a new set of etiquette rules for employees to follow, such as providing clear instructions on how to join virtual meetings, muting microphones when not speaking, and using appropriate language ("How Video Conferencing Changed the Business World for Better", 2022).

However, there are also several companies companies that have changed their clothing policies due to the pandemic. For instance, Google announced in December 2020, that it would allow employees to dress more casually until at least September 2021 (Elias, 2020). Walmart followed along by relaxing its dress code for employees, permitting them to

wear comfortable clothing such as jeans and t-shirts ("Walmart Dress Code", 2023). Similarly, JP Morgan Chase allowed employees to wear business-casual clothing while working from home. Even Twitter announced that they would permit a permanent remote option for employees and would not require formal business attire for those workers (Iyengar, 2021). All in all, these changes reflect the new normal of remote work brought upon by the pandemic.

Due to this increased reliance on technology, ways in which business relationships are formed and maintained have also altered. To adapt to these changes, professionals have had to explore new ways to build relationships, such as through virtual networking events and informal communication channels. While informal channels may pose a few challenges, they also provide an easier platform for people to connect. Additionally, by adapting to virtual meetings, companies have started realizing the significance of empathy and emotional intelligence in communication. As employees face new challenges, such as juggling work and childcare responsibilities, businesses are finding ways to be more understanding and accommodating (Jivraj & Khan, 2020).

To conclude, it's becoming increasingly important for professionals to adapt to new modes of communication and business etiquette. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this change, leading to a shift towards virtual meetings and remote work as the new norm. As a result, individuals should remain mindful of the evolving etiquette involved in virtual meetings. Despite these challenges, companies have taken steps to establish new rules for employees, such as providing clear instructions on how to join virtual meetings and altering clothing policies. However, the closure of physical office spaces and greater reliance on technology have also led to a shift in the way

business relationships are formed and maintained. With online platforms limiting the opportunity for business meals and coffee meetings, individuals must seek out new modes of building relationships, such as through virtual networking events and informal communication channels. As businesses continue to adapt to the new reality, it's likely that changes in communication and etiquette will continue to evolve. Regardless, professionals should always strive to adhere to good business etiquette practices. By doing so, they can build stronger relationships, maintain a positive imagine in the corporate world, and ultimately achieve their professional goals.

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