



Professional Presence

An etiquette brief on showing professional dress and decorum
by Civility Experts Worldwide

Introduction

Although it is true that we notice someone's appearance initially, it does not take long before a person's outward appearance can be overshadowed by a negative attitude or a less than sunny disposition. If you are interested in mastering all the elements of professionalism; image, attitude, communication, and confidence, you will benefit from this Brief.

For an expanded lesson plan including activities and answer keys, please visit the shopping cart at www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com

Lesson K4L5: Elements of Professionalism: Demeanor and Attitude (Excerpt)

Professionals in modern business circles understand that “success” requires insight as well as the right attitude. As you climb the corporate ladder you will need to acquire knowledge and skills that set you apart from the competition. Knowing how to look and act like a professional is synonymous to being a professional.

Professionalism is directly related to each of the following:

- How credible people think we are
- How confident we look
- The level of customer service
- How well we interact with co-workers
- Team productivity
- How much value an action/behaviour has
- How much someone will pay for your services

Overview-Elements of Professionalism



THINK ABOUT IT....

Do you agree that in most cases, professionalism includes many factors, some related to image, some related to communication skills and some related to less tangible qualities such as motivation, confidence, or attitude?”

Although it is not always easy to pinpoint the specific reasons why one person is more professional than another, we can usually make pretty reasonable judgments about the level or degree of professionalism based on someone’s actions.

So...are *You* a Professional?

- A professional is constantly learning. An amateur takes short cuts and/or “fakes” it whenever possible.
- A professional researches and/or ask questions for clarification. An amateur makes assumptions.

Professional Presence

□A professional takes the time and trouble to dress well. □An amateur does not care about his/her appearance.

□A professional understands that a cluttered workspace, a messy car, and other “busy” surroundings impact productivity. □An amateur is unaware of how our surroundings influence us.

□A professional has a plan and a focus. □An amateur “wings it” and is easily distracted.

□A professional acknowledges, fixes and learns from mistakes. □An amateur ignores, dismisses, and repeats mistakes.

□A professional approaches challenges willingly. □An amateur runs away from new tasks and challenges.

□A professional sticks to a timeline and generally respects time. □An amateur misses deadlines, is often late, and doesn’t understand the real value of time.

□A professional handles money and accounts very carefully. □An amateur takes money for granted and/or does not keep accurate financial records.

□A professional approaches every task as if it was the most important task and completes it to the highest standard. □An amateur does only what he/she has to do, and drops tasks when something more exciting or seemingly more important comes along.

□A professional engages with others and accepts both the strengths and weaknesses of others. □An amateur is only interested in pointing out the faults of others and engages only when doing so benefits him/herself.

□A professional is positive, or at least tries to be. An amateur allows pessimism and negativity to control him/her.

□A professional keeps trying until a job is finished. An amateur gives up at the first sign of difficulty.

□A professional charges what he/she is worth. □An amateur charges more or less than he/she is worth and bases fees on what he/she wants versus what he/she deserves.



TERMS TO KNOW: What is decorum?

The experts at Civility Experts Worldwide describe “decorum” as “*the situational application of appropriate behaviours*”. Most often decorum is first exhibited as an attitude or a mood of civility and respectfulness, in writing decorum comes across as a tone, or underlying mood.

Decorum is an important aspect of civility and especially professionalism because etiquette, and doing the “right” or appropriate thing, is very often situational. This is where experience and social intelligence come into play. The best way to illustrate decorum is by reviewing some examples.

Quotes and Anecdotes

. . the world prefers decorum to honesty. George Meredith

Human flower shrubs, if they will grow old on earth, should, besides their lovely blossoms, bear some kind of fruit that will satisfy earthly appetites, else neither man nor the decorum of nature will deem it fit that the moss should gather on them Nathaniel Hawthorne

Necessity dispenseth with decorum. Thomas Carlyle

Three key aspects to encouraging, reinforcing and motivating a commitment to professionalism are:

- 1. Personal commitment/leading by example**
- 2. Motivation**
- 3. Addressing learning styles; ensuring everyone acquires necessary knowledge/skills**



MODERN TIPS: Tips on Attitude

Do you work with anyone who you would describe as having an attitude? How do you know or what makes you think this person has an attitude? Do any of the following apply?

- The way he/she moves
- The tone of voice he/she uses
- He/she rolls his/her eyes
- Signing
- Arms crossed, or other defensive behaviour
- Tension whenever a certain person is around or a certain topic comes up
- Close mindedness or being stubborn and not being able to explain why
- Strong opinions without any real back-up, justification, or rationale
- _____
- _____

One of the interesting things about attitude is that often people who have attitudes (particularly unfavorable or negative ones) are in the habit of expressing an attitude about something and they don't even really realize they are doing it. These are "implicit" attitudes which are unconscious but they still have impact on our behaviour.

Experts suggest that attitudes form as a result of experience; both our first-hand, personal experience as well as third-party experience, or what we hear or see as experienced by someone else who has some influence over us, e.g., a parent, or friend, etc.



TERMS TO KNOW:

Attitude is a concept in psychology. Attitudes are positive, negative or neutral views of an "attitude object": i.e. a person, behaviour or event. People can also

be "ambivalent" towards a target, meaning that they simultaneously possess a positive and a negative bias towards the attitude in question.

Attitudes come from judgments. Attitudes develop on the **ABC** model (affect, behavioural change and cognition). The *affective* response is a physiological response that expresses an individual's preference for an entity. The *behavioural intention* is a verbal indication of the intention of an individual. The *cognitive* response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity to form an attitude. Most attitudes in individuals are a result of *observational learning* from their environment.

The link between attitude and behaviour exists but depends on human behaviour, some of which is irrational. For example, a person who is for blood transfusion may not donate blood. This makes sense if the person does not like the sight of blood, which explains this irrationality From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, www.wikipedia.com

There are many scientific theories about how to change attitudes. For example:

- Consistency theories, which imply that we must be consistent in our beliefs and values. The most famous example of such a theory is Dissonance-reduction theory, associated with Leon Festinger, although there are others, such as the balance theory of Fritz Heider.
- Self-perception theory, associated with Daryl Bem asserts that we only have that knowledge of our own behavior and its causation that another person can have, and that we therefore develop our attitudes by observing our own behavior and concluding what attitudes must have caused them.
- Social judgment theory; that the most effective position to advocate for changing another's attitude judgment is the most extreme position within that person's "latitude of acceptance," within which assimilation effects will make your position seem more like their own
- Balance theory; a motivational theory of attitude change proposed by Fritz Heider, which conceptualizes the consistency motive as a drive toward psychological balance. Heider proposed that "sentiment" or liking relationships are balanced if the affect valence in a system multiplies out to a positive result.
- Abundance theory; postulates a benign universe in which any individual with the correct attitude, training, or spiritual alignment can acquire personal abundance which should lead to material abundance: wealth regardless of economic or social circumstances (reality).

www.wikipedia.com

PROJECTING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

When you look like you are confident and in control, and when you've learned professional habits that make you feel more confident, it's time to start inspiring confidence in others.

The number one way to encourage your co-workers, employees and employers to feel confident about your abilities is by being consistent in your behaviors. If others know that you are always calm, approachable, and can be trusted to react in a professional manner in any situation, you will inspire confidence and make your way to leadership. The best way to develop this kind of consistency is to maintain a positive attitude. Here are some tips:

Get it together. Be neutral or be positive. If you try hard enough, there is always something positive you can say. If not, smile and listen respectfully to the opinions of others. You can always say, "That's interesting" or "I'll have to give that some thought" and save your opinion for a more appropriate time. Besides, there are times when silence is power.

That was my evil twin talking. Ask a close friend or family member to tell you if you have any "tells." These are "emotion telling habits" that you may not be aware of. Maybe you clench your jaw when you're angry, maybe your ears turn red when you're tired, or maybe you inadvertently shake your knee when you're nervous. Don't forget how much communication is nonverbal. It's important to control it if you can and keep your emotions in check.

Oh this old thing. Purposely identify the attributes of others and point them out. It's strange that people are often conservative with their praise, considering how much they enjoy being praised themselves. Be spontaneous. If you really feel grateful for something someone has done, say so! If someone's service or presentation or attitude genuinely impresses you, go out of your way to tell them or send a note. You'll both feel great.

And if I wave my magic wand. Remember you cannot control other people's behaviour; you can only control your reaction to their behaviour. There are times when you will have to take the high road. Sometimes there is just no point in arguing or pointing out an error or giving someone the satisfaction of reacting to his or her behaviour. Pick your battles carefully and try not to let the little things bother you.

You know what they say about a-s-s-u-m-e. Do not underestimate people or take them for granted. Make sure you have all the facts and if you don't know something, ask!

The sky is falling, the sky is falling. Do not always assume the worst. One of the reasons we often find ourselves on the defensive is because we have a tendency to jump to conclusions. Think about what goes through your head when the boss's number shows up on your home call display. The same applies to being approached by a client who may not seem in a good mood. We assume the worst and we're automatically on the attack.

I'm here now so let the party begin. There is no such thing as fashionably late. If you will be late, call! There is nothing more disrespectful than taking someone else's time for granted. Being late and then making excuses or even worse, making no apology, does not leave a positive impression.

Just breathe. Pause purposefully. Take a moment to compose yourself and gather your thoughts when you walk into a new situation or environment. This allows you to take a deep breath, think productive thoughts and present yourself in a positive light.

Oops, did I say that out loud. Be mindful of where you are and who may be listening or watching. Be very careful about letting that negative energy out. Temper, temper! A burst of tension expressed by slamming the door or kicking the vending machine can leave you with some explaining to do if witnessed by the wrong person. Similarly, don't speak negatively in the elevator or corporate washroom, the parking lot, the corner store by the office or even the staff lunchroom.

Professional Decorum: Guidelines for Professionalism

1. Go out of your way to maintain a high personal standard.
2. Always do at least what is expected, and then some.
3. Don't rely on "high-tech" modes of communication to build relationships.
4. Focus on what you can do rather than what you can't do. Stick to the old adage of saying nothing if you cannot be positive.
5. Consistency lends credibility; be deliberate in choosing to do a few things exceptionally well all of the time, rather than doing most things almost well enough some of the time.

Did you know?

In most mixing settings where business is the priority, "two drinks is one too many".

Top Ten Behaviours to Avoid:

- 1) Being late to work and/or scheduled workplace meetings and events.
- 2) Using inappropriate language or a harsh tone or rude gestures.
- 3) Lounging at work (i.e. putting your feet up on desks, lying on the floor, or any other lazy or slovenly behavior)
- 4) Chewing gum (or eating) when engaged in face-to-face interactions or on the phone.
- 5) Taking care of personal hygiene in workplace including at your desk; things like filing nails, combing hair, shaving, applying make-up etc. These activities should be conducted in the washroom only.
- 6) Making personal telephone calls, sending email correspondence, or visiting on company time.
- 7) Coming to work or meetings unprepared or deliberately leaving others unprepared.
- 8) Gossiping, badmouthing and general negativity.
- 9) Ignoring co-workers or encouraging/prolonging strife and stressful situations.
- 10) Being too casual or overly familiar.

[An ABCNEWS/World News Tonight Poll](#) confirms that most of us (85%) feel that a simple “thank you” and “please” would make the world a better place.

Tips on General Communication

Here are some commonly held misconceptions about communicating:

1. If I cannot be understood I need to speak louder as I am sure that the problem is no one can hear me.
2. If I continue to tell my stories and overwhelm myself and others with my fascinating life I will be the hit of every meeting and work function.
3. It is essential to memorize really big words and use them whenever possible so my associates know how smart I am.

4. When others have an opinion that I do not agree with I must debate with them until they see my point of view or even better.... I change their opinion completely.
5. If a co-worker is trying to explain to a group an idea or situation and is talking a little too slow for your liking help them out by finishing their sentences.
6. The quicker you speak the more information you can share with others in a shorter period of time.
7. As long as I nod my head or say "u hum" occasionally no one will know if I am listening or not.
8. Using acronyms or business lingo will impress people from other companies and when they do not understand this fantasy language they will have to ask....again I will get to be the centre of attention.
9. I should try to ask questions that stump my peer group or even better my superiors. This will impress everyone and give me the recognition I deserve.
10. It's good to ask questions (even if the answers are obvious) of those who are explaining a situation or telling a story just to ensure the others around know that you are well versed in all subjects.

Try to remember these few tips and you will become an exceptional communicator.

- Ask questions that show interest in the speaker and their topic.
- Use words that others understand and that help to improve the direction and tone of the conversation. This does not mean you have to use simple words during all discussions but that making up words or using them out of context will only make you look silly.
- Keep all the people in your group involved with the conversation by asking for their opinion. Always remember that an opinion is merely that and being right is not always part of the equation.
- Compliment others on their ideas and keep the conversation as positive as possible. Remember, the best conversationalist is a good listener.

If you would like an expanded version of this brief, please visit www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com where you can purchase this and 140+ additional civility and etiquette lessons and other materials.