

# Modern Etiquette: Ten rules for success in the workplace

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Over a century ago, legendary magnate John D. Rockefeller said, “I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than any other skill under the sun.”

Since then, studies by companies such as Google have echoed his thinking by pointing out that the most effective managers and executives possess strong interpersonal skills.

Thus, here are my Ten Commandments for Effective Business Behavior:

1. Thou shalt have a positive attitude. Everybody has bad days. Nobody has the right to take it out on others. Rudeness, impoliteness, surliness, ugly moods, unprovoked displays of anger, and general unpleasantness can be costly to your career.
2. Thou shalt respect yourself and others in cyberspace. E-mail is eternal. Social media is a minefield. If you would not want your mother to see it, do not hit “Send.”
3. Thou shalt be on time. Keeping others waiting is the ultimate power play. This goes for in-person appointments, emails, and telephone calls. In the end, being late is self-defeating. Everybody’s busy. Everybody’s time is valuable. Being late only makes you look as if you don’t have your act together.
4. Thou shalt praise in public and criticize in private. If you intend to improve a situation or somebody’s performance, public criticism is the worst approach. It

serves no purpose except to humiliate the other person, and possibly lead to cutthroat retaliation. Remember that the office gossip looks far worse than those being gossiped about.

5. Thou shalt honor social courtesies at business functions. Etiquette is just a matter of common sense with a large dose of kindness. Make sure you respond to invitations promptly and never bring an uninvited guest. Never be a no-show when you've said you'd be there. Good guests contribute as much, if not more, to a social occasion as good hosts.

6. Thou shalt get names straight. We all forget people's names. There's nothing wrong with saying, "Please tell me your name again. My brain just froze." But there is something wrong with not checking on correct spelling whenever you write a name. That's lazy. It can cost your career. And remember, with four generations actively operating in today's workplace, it's a big mistake to assume you can call someone by his or her first name.

7. Thou shalt speak slowly and clearly on the telephone. A smile can be heard in your voice. So smile or you will sound irritated and put out. Not a good move when you are speaking with someone in authority, and perhaps from a different culture or generation.

8. Thou shalt not use foul language. Kind is about the only four-letter word for the workplace. Don't accept vulgarity and poor grammar as your personal standards. On the other hand, liberal use of "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" is helpful in career advancement.

9. Thou shalt dress appropriately. Don't enter your workplace without knowing its dress code. Good grooming is more important than making a fashion statement.

10. Thou shalt be accountable. We all make mistakes. That does not give us license to blame someone else for them. There is no shame in admitting you don't have all the answers. Yet there is shame in not being willing to look for them.

(Mary M. Mitchell has written several books on the subject of etiquette, now in 11 languages, most recently "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Modern Manners Fast Track" and "Woofs to the Wise". She is the founder of executive training consultancy The Mitchell Organization ([www.themitchellorganization.com](http://www.themitchellorganization.com)). The opinions expressed are her own.)

(Editing by Michael Roddy)



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