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*— Michele Parrish,
president of Parrish Partners*

CinDayB2B photo by Greg Lynch



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**— Nanci Glendening,
owner of Glendening Image Research**

That’s how fast you have to prove yourself. And obviously your voice is not going to do it, your experience is not going to do it, and your reputation is not going to do it. It’s how you look.”

Whether you are interviewing for a new job, making a sales call, wooing a client or attending a business event, your appearance is the gateway to everything else you will be presenting.

Sleeves or pants that are too short, collars that are too tight or hair that is too long can doom your mission before it even begins.

“When you make a good impression,” Glendening says, “that first three seconds buys you maybe 30 seconds to make your elevator speech that enables people to know a little more about you. And those 30 seconds buy you maybe three minutes, which buys 30 minutes.”

Of course, one size does not fit all workplaces. The power suit that works in the board room would be out of place at a tech company where jeans and polos are the norm. It’s as important to feel comfortable yourself as it is to give those around you a sense of comfort.

Be courteous by using what Glendening calls the “million-dollar words” — “please,” “thank you” and “you’re welcome.”

Turn your charm on and your cell phone off. Show your smile, but not constantly. And be attentive and interested with good eye contact and a slight forward lean to your posture.

“The principle of etiquette is based on rules, but it’s more important to make people feel comfortable around you,” Parrish says. “Even if you know all the rules and you’re a stickler for them, people (might still be) uncomfortable around you and you’re not going to meet that whole objective of building trust and that connection.”

No matter your line of business, people are a key factor. The way you present yourself will play a major role in your success. And it’s not just about clients or customers. Your interaction with co-workers, whether they be bosses, colleagues or subordinates, counts just as much, if not more.

“Everything little thing you do, people take a cue from that,” Parrish says. “It’s follow the leader, and the leader has to be really conscientious about how they’re coming off to others. A lot of leaders have blind spots, and that’s the benefit of having a coach.

“There is nothing more important than understanding the impact you’re having on people around you,” she said. ■

DO'S AND DON'TS OF BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

INTERVIEWS

Do

- Be prepared. Visit the office beforehand. Get to know the surroundings. Pay attention to how others are acting and what they are wearing.
- Be well groomed. Men should be clean shaven with hair not too short or cropped and not too shaggy. Women should pull back long hair.
- Offer a firm handshake. And a smile.
- Turn your phone off. Not on low. Not on vibrate. Nothing is more important than the interview.
- Ask if there will be time for you to ask questions at the end. There's nothing wrong with setting ground rules. Some interviewers will prefer you to ask questions as they arise.

Do Not

- Wear a new suit for the first time. Being comfortable is of the utmost importance.
- Slouch. Or be too rigid.
- Be worried about making a good impression. Just be yourself.
- Interrupt, swear or tell off-color jokes, no matter how comfortable the setting.

BUSINESS MEALS

Do

- Mind your posture. Keep your elbows off the table, although forearms resting on the edge is acceptable. The more of you that is showing presents more of a power posture.
- Keep your napkin in your lap until the meal is finished, then fold it and place it next to your plate.
- Make sure your phone is on vibrate or silent.
- Show assertiveness if you are missing a spoon or glass of water.

Do Not

- Arrive late.
- Order something difficult to eat or crunchy.
- Gobble. Pace your eating to coincide with the other people at the table.
- Send back your food, if you can help it. You don't want to throw off the timing of the meeting.

E-MAIL

Do

- Be precise in e-mail subject lines. Make it easily searchable for the person with a loaded inbox.
- Keep it short. If you can't, you shouldn't be using e-mail. Pick up the phone or schedule a meeting.
- Include your contact information in e-mails. If the person is away from the office and doesn't have your number stored, referencing an e-mail will be the quickest way to that information.

Do Not

- Forget about grammar and punctuation. It's still formal communication, just shorter.
- Hit send without reading it at least once and double checking the "To:" line to make sure it's going to everyone it should be and no one it's not.
- Reply to another e-mail with a simple "yes" or "no." Instead, copy the person's question(s) and write your answer(s) next to or below.

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SO, WHICH IS THE RIGHT FORK TO USE DURING THE INTERVIEW?

Whether you realize it or not, business etiquette counts — and coaches can help

By Jay Morrison
CinDayB2B

Business etiquette comprises varying sets of rules, most of which are vastly more important than which fork to use at lunch with a client.

Like the fork itself, etiquette is a multi-pronged tool that enables a person to navigate certain tasks in a comfortable and appropriate manner — and to get ahead, at the same time.

“The thing about etiquette is, it’s really complex,” says Michele Parrish, president of Parrish Partners (www.parrishpartners.biz), a Liberty Twp. company that specializes in executive coaching and consulting.

“Nobody comes to me and says, ‘I want

to work on my business etiquette,’” Parrish continues. “They don’t recognize it as that. A lot of leaders have blind spots. The behavior is unintentional and they don’t realize it is putting people off.”

One of the first — and as some would argue, most important — rules of business etiquette is proper appearance.

“Appearance is becoming more and more important,” says Nanci Glendening, the owner of Glendening Image Research (www.asknanci.com), a Cincinnati company that helps clients with areas such as clothing, grooming, posture and body language.

“Yes, beauty is only skin deep. I firmly believe that,” Glendening said. “However, your appearance buys you three seconds.