

Block**3****SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE-I**

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this block we have concentrated on three very important aspects of business:

Unit 9 - Etiquette, cultural awareness and gender perceptions

Units 10 and 11 – Understanding customers and customer service

Unit 12 – Work Ethics

Businesses are no longer highly localized entities, but part of a global village. It, therefore, becomes essential to understand the basic business etiquette that is followed at any workplace. Moreover, it is also important to be sensitized about other cultures and people especially the gender perceptions that may vary from one culture to another. The most important aspect of any business is the service to the customer. If the customers are happy, the business prospers. In this block we have dealt with different types of customers that you may encounter in your workplace. It is important to build rapport with them, handle their complaints with sympathy and sensitivity. In this block we have tried to make you understand the means of retaining your old customers as well as getting new customers. The final unit of this Block is on Work Ethics. Eventually, in whatever we do, we must be honest and upright. Remember, it is always good people who achieve great things professionally in the true sense of the word.

The information is couched in reading, writing, speaking and listening activities. Please complete these activities and we assure you that your communication skills will considerably improve. We request you to spend time on all the activities in each unit. This will enhance both your fluency as well as accuracy in the language. While performing the listening tasks, please take notes as you listen. This will aid your comprehension as well as concentration.

For the entire activities look at the answers after you have attempted them. If you answer incorrectly, try to analyze why; if not consult the teacher at the study center.

Do write to us if you have any problem.

Good luck with the block.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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UNIT 9 ETIQUETTE, CULTURAL AWARENESS AND GENDER PERCEPTIONS

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Warm Up
- 9.2 Reading: Etiquette
- 9.3 Vocabulary
- 9.4 Listening: Understanding Cultural Differences
- 9.5 Grammar: Articles
- 9.6 Speaking: Expressing Opinion About Workplace Etiquette
- 9.7 Writing
- 9.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.9 Answers

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will focus on the importance of etiquette and cultural awareness as well as gender perceptions at the workplace. Here you will learn:

- What workplace etiquette means
- The importance of etiquette in a competitive job market
- The importance of body language in etiquette
- What constitutes bad manners at work/what is not appropriate
- The importance of cultural awareness in a multicultural workplace
- Common gender perceptions

9.1 WARM UP

- Do some people put you off by the way they talk?
- Why do you think this happens?
- Why do you think you find some people more pleasant than others?
- Are you as comfortable working with people of another culture as you are with people with whom you have cultural similarity?
- Do you think men and women are treated the same in your office?

9.2 READING: ETIQUETTE

Read the following passage and answer the questions given:

What is Etiquette?

The Oxford dictionary defines etiquette as ‘the customary code of polite behavior

in society or among members of a particular professional group'. Adhering to a behavior code at work helps to create a work environment that is conducive to positive interaction among employees; this makes for a productive and efficient workforce.

What is this code of polite behavior that we speak about? The list of things that constitute good workplace etiquette could go on and on. We can broadly classify this into: (i) professional appearance, (ii) behavior code or office etiquette.

Professional appearance:

When you step into the job market, your first impression is created by your appearance at the interview. At the workplace too, your appearance plays an important part in how you are perceived as a professional. Good grooming, which includes maintaining good personal hygiene, is fundamental to a professional appearance. It shows that you care about the image of the organization you represent, and that cleanliness and neatness are important to you. Here are some fundamentals that you need to bear in mind:

- Choose a wardrobe suitable to your workplace. Some offices specify a dress code – abide by it, footwear included.
- It is not necessary to have hair styled according to current trends, but ensure that hair is well groomed at all times.
- Never appear sloppy.
- Keep nails clean and neatly clipped.
- Take care of your dental hygiene. Bad breath isn't just unhealthy for you; it is very bad manners to subject others to it.
- Use fragrance or deodorant to get rid of fowl body odor, but do not overdo the fragrance.
- See that footwear is polished and clean always.
- Wear a pleasant expression instead of a frowning one.

Behavior code:

In addition to your professional appearance, there is a way of conducting yourself at work which we refer to as office etiquette. Here are some features of office etiquette that you need to bear in mind and practise at work:

- Say 'Good morning' to colleagues when you enter office.
- Say 'thank you' when someone offers help or does something for you.
- Remember to speak softly instead of shouting and disturbing others.
- Listen patiently while others are speaking instead of interrupting them.
- Respect others' opinions even if you don't agree with them.
- Remember to return things you have borrowed from colleagues.
- Keep your office table/cubicle neat, especially if you are sharing it with someone.
- Avoid gossiping about colleagues to other office workers.
- Avoid using fowl language, however angry you are.

- Limit personal phone calls during office hours to emergency situations only.
- Avoid surfing on the net/checking your Facebook posts or Whatsapp messages during work hours.

How does etiquette benefit you?

Etiquette differentiates you from others in a competitive job market. Good social skills, of which etiquette is a large part, help you make a great first impression in the job market. However skilled you are professionally, if you do not create the impression of being well groomed, well mannered and polite, and someone who other office workers could easily get along with, your chances of getting a good job are reduced drastically. Furthermore, workplace etiquette helps you create and perpetuate a comfortable, warm and friendly work relationship with your colleagues.

Check Your Progress 1

You have read many examples of what constitutes professional etiquette. Here are more examples of what we commonly see in offices. Some of them constitute acceptable and some unacceptable office behavior. Classify each of these as ‘acceptable’ or unacceptable’.

- 1) Arriving late for meetings.
- 2) Cleaning up after using the office kitchen or snack area.
- 3) Talking while someone is making her/his presentation.
- 4) Offering to help when a new colleague is in need.
- 5) Making promises to help but not really keeping them.
- 6) Talking about personal problems with colleagues at work.
- 7) Talking about personal problems with colleagues after work hours.
- 8) Gossiping to other office workers about a colleague’s problems with handling his/her work.
- 9) Offering a colleague help with work that is new to him/her.
- 10) Flirting with co-workers.
- 11) Coming to a colleague’s work station while they are working and start chatting.
- 12) Speaking so loudly on the phone that others cannot focus on their work.

Check Your Progress 2

Now answer these questions based on the reading passage:

- 1) What does your appearance say about your professional attitude?

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2) Why is it important to follow a behavior code?

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9.3 VOCABULARY

We are sometimes rude or disrespectful to others or may just embarrass them without meaning to do so because of the use of inappropriate language/body language. Hence, it is important to be conscious of what we say and the manner in which we communicate our thoughts and feelings to others at the workplace.

Check Your Progress 3

Here are some examples of inappropriate language/body language use. Change them and give an alternative that you think will not be rude, offensive or embarrassing to the listener.

A) Something people said that was unacceptable:

- 1) Meena: Shut up, Madhuri. You're disturbing me with your loud chatter.
- 2) Mohit: Hi Geeta. You're looking really hot today.
- 3) Lalit: Prem, give me Rs. 500/-.
- 4) Madhuri: Prem, throw that paper cup in the dustbin. I hate your habit of littering the office.
- 5) Amit: Mohit, the boss wants you in his office. You're in for some fireworks because he's very angry with your stupid mistakes.

B) Some things people did that were unacceptable. Offer acceptable alternatives.

- 6) Mohit wanted some help from Geeta in understanding a document. He went up to her table and bent so close to her while speaking that it made her uncomfortable.
- 7) Prem forgot to bring lunch from home, but he was so hungry he ate up most of Mohan's food.
- 8) Hemant's colleagues gifted him a perfume for his birthday. They then told him loudly to use lots of it every day.
- 9) Hemant burst out laughing when Reena made a mistake in her presentation.
- 10) Rakesh cracked a joke about women that embarrassed all his female colleagues.

- 11) Just after lunch, Prem put his finger in his mouth to dislodge some food stuck between his teeth.
- 12) Jatin takes too many breaks and goes to his colleagues and starts chatting with them and distracting them from their work.

9.4 LISTENING: UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Listen to a talk on cultural differences and the necessity to understand them. Answer the questions that follow.

Check Your Progress 4

Based on the lecture on cultural awareness that you just heard, term these statements as true or false.

- 1) A person's culture affects their managerial style.
- 2) We need to understand other people's culture, but we should not try to adapt their practices.
- 3) It would be rude to talk to colleagues about their cultural practices.
- 4) Just because people do things differently from you does not mean that they are wrong.
- 5) Koreans think it is disrespectful to give somebody something with one hand.
- 6) Japanese people bow in greeting.
- 7) In the Middle East people lightly hug each other in greeting.
- 8) Kissing on the cheek is a formal way of greeting in France.
- 9) In Britain it is accepted for friends to ask each other personal questions.
- 10) If a man addresses his boss by his first name, chances are they are in USA.

9.5 GRAMMAR: ARTICLES

You have already studied Articles *a/an, the*. Let us revise them with this exercise.

Check Your Progress 5

Fill in the blanks using suitable articles:

I had strange dream last night. I saw myself sailing in boat, in the middle of Atlantic Ocean. alien landed on my boat. It made strange sound and my boat began to fly. I think we were moving towards moon when suddenly unusual looking eagle hit against the boat. The boat fell back into the ocean and I fell with thump— not into the ocean but onto the floor!

9.6 SPEAKING: EXPRESSING OPINION ABOUT WORKPLACE ETIQUETTE

We often need to speak out when things get unpleasant. But we must convey our feelings with tact, taking care not to cause offence. Let us practice the scenarios given below.

Check Your Progress 6

Presented below are two scenarios where a few employees have made the workplace atmosphere unpleasant for others. Write and speak out solutions for these situations.

Scenario 1

The official language of this organization is English. However, a few employees who speak a language other than English often communicate with one another in that language. Some employees think there is no problem with this and it is none of their business. Other employees feel uncomfortable and left out when in the presence of these coworkers. What is your opinion? Do you believe that workplace etiquette demands that employees should always speak in a language that everyone can understand?

Scenario 2

This office has provided its employees with a spacious, well equipped kitchen with a refrigerator, a microwave oven, and a coffee maker. While most employees clean up after using these services and do not leave stale food in the refrigerator or the kitchen counter, throw used disposables in the trash can and keep the microwave clean, a few employees are careless. The behavior of these careless coworkers has led to both resentment among their tidier coworkers and annoyance that everyone else has to clean up their trash. What do you think can be done to improve this situation?

9.7 WRITING

Read the following paragraphs and attempt the task given below.

Gender and the workplace

Although economic roles between men and women have become more similar over time, sex differences are still prevalent and tensions still exist in the workplace.

Organizations across countries are increasingly implementing nondiscriminatory hiring practices where women are given opportunities equal to men. We do find that there are certain types of jobs such as those of police officers, fire fighters, truck drivers, etc., which are generally preferred by men, and there are other occupations like nursing, teaching, etc., which are preferred by women. These are personal preferences which may be dictated by nature or the way boys and girls are nurtured. However it is the duty of organizations to give equal opportunities to people of both sexes, based only on a person's credentials.

Although the number of women in all types of work fields has been steadily rising, there is still a gap between women and men regarding compensation for producing similar work in many fields. Also since women are the primary care givers at home, the entire workforce needs to be sensitized to certain needs that may arise from time to time as a result of the dual role they are necessitated to play throughout life. Additionally, their vulnerability where personal security is concerned needs to be understood and taken care of.

Check Your Progress 7

What is your opinion about the kind of challenges women face at the workplace and how do you think their organizations can help them in overcoming these challenges?

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9.8 LET US SUM UP

We have learnt in this unit that etiquette plays a major role in our professional lives. We have also studied what constitutes this polite behavior code that we call etiquette. We have studied several examples of acceptable and unacceptable behavior at work. In addition we have learnt the importance of cross cultural awareness in today's shrinking world where we need to work with people from all over the globe. We have also familiarized ourselves with several differences in cultural practices. This unit has also helped us understand gender perceptions and the importance of an equal opportunity at the workplace.

9.9 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Acceptable or unacceptable

- 1) Arriving late for meetings. **Unacceptable**
- 2) Cleaning up after using the office kitchen or snack area. **Acceptable**
- 3) Talking while someone is making her/his presentation. **Unacceptable**
- 4) Offering to help when a new colleague is in need. **Acceptable**
- 5) Making promises to help but not really keeping them. **Unacceptable**
- 6) Talking about personal problems with colleagues at work. **Unacceptable**
- 7) Talking about personal problems with colleagues after work hours. **Acceptable**
- 8) Gossiping to other office workers about a colleague's problems with handling his/her work. **Unacceptable**
- 9) Offering a colleague help with work that is new to him/her. **Acceptable**
- 10) Flirting with co-workers. **Unacceptable**
- 11) Coming to a colleague's work station while they are working and start chatting. **Unacceptable**
- 12) Speaking so loudly on the phone that others cannot focus on their work. **Unacceptable**

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Appearance plays an important part in how you are perceived as a professional. Your first impression, at the interview, or as the representative of your organization, is created by your professional appearance and approach. Good grooming, which includes maintaining good personal hygiene, is an important part of professional appearance. It shows that you care about the image of the organization you represent, and that cleanliness and neatness is important to you.
- 2) Your behavior code or how you conduct yourself at work, plays a big role in enhancing your career. However skilled you are professionally, if you do not create the impression of being well groomed, well mannered and polite and someone who other office workers could easily get along with, your chances of getting a good job are reduced drastically. Furthermore, workplace etiquette helps you create and perpetuate a comfortable, warm and friendly work relationship with your colleagues.

Check Your Progress 3**A) Something people said that was unacceptable:**

- 1) Meena: Shut up, Madhuri. You're disturbing me with your loud chatter.
Meena: Madhuri, would you mind speaking softly? I'm getting a little distracted.
- 2) Mohit: Hi Geeta. You're looking really hot today.
Mohit: Hi, Geeta. You're looking lovely/beautiful.
- 3) Lalit: Prem, give me Rs. 500/-.
Lalit: Prem, could you lend me Rs. 500/-please?
- 4) Madhuri: Prem, throw that paper cup in the dustbin. I hate your habit of littering the office.
Madhuri: Prem, please throw your used paper cup in the dustbin. Let's try to keep the office clean.
- 5) Amit: Mohit, the boss wants you in his office. You're in for some fireworks because he's very angry with your stupid mistakes.
Amit: Mohit, the boss wants you in his office. Take care; I think he's a little upset with you about something.

B) Some things people did that were unacceptable. Offer acceptable alternatives.

- 6) Mohit wanted some help from Geeta in understanding a document. He went up to her table and bent so close to her while speaking that it made her uncomfortable.
Mohit should have taken a chair and sat at a polite distance from her. Sitting too close makes people uncomfortable.
- 7) Prem forgot to bring lunch from home, but he was so hungry he ate up most of Mohan's food.

Prem could have shared Mohan's food, but he should not have eaten a lot of it. He should have arranged for some food from elsewhere.

- 8) Hemant's colleagues gifted him a perfume for his birthday. They then told him loudly to use lots of it every day.

If Hemant's colleagues thought that he needed a perfume because he had bad body odor, they should just have gifted it to him without those taunting remarks.

- 9) Hemant burst out laughing when Reena made a mistake in her presentation.

Everybody makes mistakes. It was ill mannered of Hemant to laugh when Reena did. Instead, he should have said some words of encouragement to her.

- 10) Rakesh cracked a joke about women that embarrassed all his female colleagues.

It is very bad manners to crack sexist jokes in office. Rakesh should not have done it.

- 11) Just after lunch, Prem put his finger in his mouth to dislodge some food stuck between his teeth.

Rakesh should have used a toothpick to clean his mouth. If he could not find one, he should have gone to the rest room and rinsed his mouth.

- 12) Jatin takes too many breaks and goes to his colleagues and starts chatting with them and distracting them from their work.

Jatin should not chat with his colleagues while they are working. This way he wastes not only his own time but also theirs.

Text for audio

Cultural awareness in a multicultural workplace

The nature of our workplaces has changed over the last several years. We now have colleagues at work from all over the world. This new multicultural workplace has brought differences in cultures which in turn bring differences in areas such as communication styles, managerial styles, workplace etiquette, approach to time and a plethora of other cross cultural differences.

To maximize potential at work and to maintain a comfortable work atmosphere, cross-cultural awareness is essential.

Cultural differences at the workplace may be due to differences in people's country of origin, race, religion or ethnic background. The best way to have an integrated workforce is for workers to understand each other's culture and benefit from the strengths of each culture.

How do we build cultural awareness?

Try and learn a bit more about other cultures and countries. Information is easily found on the internet and in books. You can also ask your colleagues. Then try to

use that knowledge to understand socio-cultural habits of people from other cultures and how they react to situations. If you learn something interesting about a coworker's culture, ask about it or mention it in a relevant situation. Hearing about it from them will clarify it to you even better. Try to avoid jumping to conclusions about people, if they do things differently from you. One of the first rules of cultural awareness is refraining from assuming one way is wrong and the other is right.

Here are some common differences in people from different nationalities.

The length of pleasantries before getting down to business varies from country to country. In the eastern part of the world i.e. in countries like India, you would traditionally greet someone with folded hands or even touch the feet of elders, whereas in the west you would do so with a handshake. In Japan and Korea, bowing to greet someone is a common sight. The Koreans also think it disrespectful to hand something over to another person with one hand. They use both their hands to do so. The French greet formally with a handshake and informally by lightly kissing the cheek or 'air kissing'. In the Middle East people hold each other lightly by the shoulder and hug. If you get somebody flowers in France, buy them in odd numbers, but not 13. The French always believe that gifts should be opened when they are given, in front of the giver.

In India you may easily ask somebody where they are from. But if you asked the same question in Britain, it may be viewed as an attempt to "place" the person on the social or class scale. In Britain, even close friends do not ask pointedly personal questions relating to professions or relationships whereas in India, it is considered a sign of closeness for us to take an interest in our friends' personal lives.

In England, seniors at the workplace are generally addressed formally whereas in USA, first names are common. Cultural differences also dictate the dress codes in organizations in different countries, with some being much more formal than others.

Check Your Progress 4

True or false.

- 1) A person's culture affects their managerial style. **True**
- 2) We need to understand other people's culture, but we should not try to adapt their practices. **False**
- 3) It would be rude to talk to colleagues about their cultural practices. **False**
- 4) Just because people do things differently from you does not mean that they are wrong. **True**
- 5) Koreans think it is disrespectful to give somebody something with one hand. **True**
- 6) Japanese people bow in greeting. **True**
- 7) In the Middle East people lightly hug each other in greeting. **True**
- 8) Kissing on the cheek is a formal way of greeting in France. **False**
- 9) In Britain it is accepted for friends to ask each other personal questions. **False**

- 10) If a man addresses his boss by his first name, chances are they are in USA.
True

Check your progress 5

a, a, the, an, a, the, an, a

Check your progress 6

Scenario 1

Possible solution

This is a common issue, especially in India where there are many regional languages. One solution is to establish a code of conduct that requires you to use only official language at work, whether in writing or while speaking. In spite of this if some people persist in using another language, they should be gently but firmly dissuaded from doing so. It should be explained to them that this isolates their colleagues and would also not be good for their own image at work.

Scenario 2

Possible solution

There will generally be a few people in office who need to be given lessons in cleanliness and tidiness. They may not mean to be messy, but perhaps have never learnt or been taught the importance of being neat and clean. There is no harm in enforcing a strict code of conduct. If they still do not learn their lesson, daily or weekly duties may be assigned to keep the kitchen clean. This way the culprits will not be able to ignore their duties towards keeping the place clean.

Check your progress 7

In my opinion, women face several challenges at the workplace especially in the Indian context. In many places, women have to face verbal and behavioral discrimination from their male colleagues who make snide comments on their looks as well as manner of functioning. For instance, women are denied lead roles in projects that involve high risk-taking or travelling. Women are even subjected to sexual harassment with men asking for sexual favors from women who are ambitious and eager to move up the career ladder. Some women also face “gender pay gap” where they are offered lower salary than men though their designation or position is the same. Another significant problem that women face is that many of them are forced to quit their jobs or denied promotions when they are pregnant.

Organizations can play an important and active role in overcoming such challenges. The companies must ensure parity in working conditions and make all rules and regulations transparent. Companies must introduce women-friendly policies such as offering maternity and child-care leave to women. Last but not the least, employees must be gender sensitized for better functioning and workplace congeniality.