



The Examiner.

BY NINA WU
Of the Examiner Staff

Syndi Seid is the founder and director of San Francisco-based Advanced Etiquette, a consulting firm that helps business people get ahead. Seid, who holds a certificate from the Protocol School of Washington, has been teaching manners for more than 10 years and conducts seminars for corporations and even Miss Universe. Seid gives tips for parties and networking events during the holiday season.

Nina Wu: Has demand for etiquette courses gone up since the dot-com boom went bust and we're in this economic slump?

Syndi Seid: I can't say it's gone up, but I think it has expanded in new areas that people may not have thought about, particularly for schools. I've gotten a lot more calls from elementary, middle, high school, colleges and universities this year, recognizing that this might be a new or different course to add to their curriculum.

Q: *Is etiquette now more of a required course at business schools?*

A: It hasn't quite gotten there yet, but I would love to support that movement, because I think it should be a required course.

Q: *Can business etiquette help make or break a deal?*

A: Yes. Our slogan is, it's the missing link to a complete professional education. So what if you get your Ph.D., MBA, or all of that knowledge? Now that entrepreneurship is at its all-time high, the one thing lacking is people's self-confidence level and this kind of professional polish.

Q: *E-mail and cellphones are part of daily life now. Has instantaneity caused a decline in civility?*

A: I think modern technology has its place in the business world. I think they're great. But it's not what it is, it's how you use it. It comes back to the same, old-fashioned guidelines. I think, in email, a person should address it at

the top properly, at least to say hello, Dear John, howdy, something other than to just start in saying, "I got your email, see you later."

Q: *What about cellphones? What are some of the general rules when it comes to using a cellphone?*

A: Again, I think it's only courteous to not allow your cellphone to go off in a restaurant, a theater performance or church service. If you need to take a call or make a call, you're going to get up from the table and go to the lobby. If you have to take a call at the table, when it goes off, the first thing you're going to say is, "One moment please," and then to the lobby and take the call.

Q: *What about people who yell out their conversations?*

A: We're not aware of how loudly we are speaking. We think we have to yell because we're in public places, and we have to talk louder because the person on the cellphone can't hear. So the tip I give is, you are going to remove your ear from the phone piece—just an inch from your ear. And by doing so, you'll hear your voice resonating no different than you and I are talking now.

Q: *What are the most common faux pas at a holiday mixer or business networking event?*

A: Eye contact. The worst offense is, you're talking to me, and I'm looking around the room for somebody else. It's as though I'm not interested. You're talking to me and I don't think you're very important. No. 1, I should not be rude by looking around to see who else is around. I should just excuse myself. Likewise, if you see me doing that to you, don't prolong the agony. You should excuse yourself because obviously, I'm not very interested in you.

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For information on Advanced Etiquette, visit www.advancedetiquette.com or call 800-276-7419.

Holiday Party dos and don'ts

DO:

- ◆ Dress appropriately during the holiday season, in fact better than during the rest of the year. When in doubt, call the host and ask.
- ◆ RSVP personal invitations by the due date.
- ◆ Find the host to say hello upon your arrival and to say goodbye before leaving.
- ◆ Bring a small gift of appreciation.
- ◆ Introduce yourself to other guests. Don't expect the host to do it.
- ◆ Hold a glass of wine by the stem, especially if it is white wine.

DON'T:

- ◆ Be a no-show for a party you have responded to attend. Call and tell the host you are unable to attend.
- ◆ Show up at a party unannounced or bring a guest unannounced who was not invited.
- ◆ Be more than eight minutes late for a private dinner party.
- ◆ Put your napkin on your lap when you are first seated or do anything until the host or hostess does it first.
- ◆ Overstay your welcome. If the invitation says 5 to 7 p.m., expect to leave at 7 p.m. unless the host encourages you to otherwise.