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Boosting morale

Dear Jill,

We want to work on building team morale in our group, but we don't have the budget for a trainer, so my administrative assistant suggested sending you an e-mail for ideas. Do you have any cost-effective suggestions to build team morale?

ASK JILL



JILL MCGILLEN

- N

Dear N,

Start with ideas from the team itself as to why you do not currently have team morale and then tailor

your solutions to the actual issues. Do this in your next team meeting and discuss ways for people to respond anonymously (if necessary to get honest answers). Here are some questions you may want to ask:

Team Questionnaire

1. Do you understand your role on the team?
2. Do you think others understand their role on the team?
3. How does the team operate together (1-5) 1 being Excellent and 5 being Poor:
1 2 3 4 5
4. Please explain why you chose the number above.
5. Is there sufficient sharing of information (communication) to allow work to get done efficiently?
6. If you answered no to above, what would help improve the situation?
7. Does the team have an effective way for dealing with conflict?
8. If you answered no, please indicate any ideas you may have to handle conflict.
9. Does the team recognize and celebrate successes? If not, what could be done?
10. Does the team receive support from other parts of the organization? If not, what could be done?
11. How would you describe your ideal workplace and team?
12. What is needed on our team to get us there?

Here are some general ideas that should be customized to fit the situation:

1. Take time to discuss team effectiveness. Where you spend time is where you will see changes and results. Commit time every week and month to this issue. How are we doing and how can we get better?
2. Treat everyone (and I mean everyone) with dignity and respect. Provide support, encouragement and constructive feedback. You are a role model and in

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At Work With: Syndi Seid, Etiquette instructor

By JoAnna Rodriguez



PHOTO BY JIM CHAPMAN/STAFF

SYNDI SEID operates Advanced Etiquette and teaches people of all ages best manners or social practices.

If you don't know which fork to use at a business luncheon, it might be time to call Syndi Seid. Along with teaching proper table manners, the etiquette expert — who has groomed everyone from teens to corporate executives — can offer guidance on how to behave in any social situation, whether meeting the President of the United States, future in-laws or a foreign business associate. She talked with us about how the rules of etiquette have changed and why it's still important to say "please" and "thank you."

What is the scope of your work?

I provide training and consulting for people of all ages, 9 to 99, in international business and social etiquette and protocol. I like to say it's the missing link to a complete professional education. I conduct public seminars throughout the year and private briefings to help people gain the self-confidence and skills we all want in life.

What are some of the most common etiquette mistakes?

There are many I could mention, depending on the category you want to discuss. Most people ask me about table manners mistakes, first impression errors and business meeting faux pas. Yet to me the biggest etiquette mistake we all make is not performing basic common courtesies like remembering to say "please" and "thank you," being on time to appointments and not starting to eat until everyone has been served.

How has etiquette changed over the years?

Common courtesies in personal and social interactions have, for the most part, remained

the same. Where the rules of etiquette have softened are in how people dress. When you dress up you're showing respect for the event you're going to and other people in attendance. There are places you shouldn't wear your casual clothing and more and more people are becoming sloppy in their attire. Another thing that has changed is that children are not encouraged to show respect to adults by addressing them "Mr." or "Mrs."

How important is proper etiquette?

I'm sure everyone would say proper etiquette is very important. But the question remains: If everyone says it's important, why aren't more people displaying good manners? Etiquette and civility make for more pleasant interactions in daily life. It is obvious that without them we continue to see many examples of discord.

How do the rules of etiquette apply to things like an iPod or a BlackBerry?

How I approach the discussion of using technology is to think about how etiquette was displayed prior to the



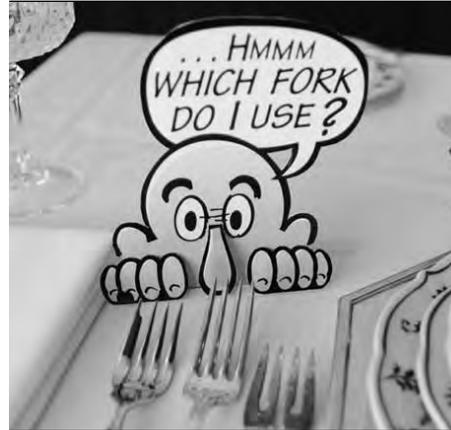
Syndi Seid

Job title:
Etiquette instructor

Place of employment:
Advanced Etiquette

Years on the job: 15

If you would like to appear in "At Work," contact us at AtWork@angnewspapers.com.



PHOTOS BY JIM CHAPMAN/STAFF

THROUGH lectures, meal demonstrations and speeches, Syndi Seid shares her etiquette knowledge and skills to help people incorporate respected behaviors and protocol in their daily lives and work.

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invention of such gadgets. Was it proper etiquette to not pay attention at meetings by doing other things? Was it polite to talk too loudly on the bus or in a store? Was it polite to allow distractions to interrupt the flow of a meeting, business lunch or dinner? Of course not. So why are these things happening now? Etiquette has softened. We do not need to invent new etiquette for everything new that comes along. All we need to do is update time-honored courtesies.

What was your schooling and what training would someone need to become an etiquette instructor?

I am a graduate of The Protocol School of Washington in our nation's capital. I hold their highest certifications as a protocol officer, international corporate trainer, teen instructor and consultant and trainer in tea etiquette.

There is no formal education a person is required to have to become an etiquette expert. That said, depending on how a person plans to

build their practice, certifications and designations can be helpful to distinguish yourself. The key is to achieve these certifications and designations from reputable entities that have comprehensive and highly regarded programs.

What's the demand like for etiquette educators?

The demand for qualified etiquette educators is ever increasing. The trouble is finding them. Most are small businesses and have Web sites that aren't always easily found.

What could someone hope to make in your field?

The sky's the limit in terms of what a person can earn as a professional speaker and trainer. It is a profession that is at the threshold of doing great things. In my mind, a person can expect to make a minimum of \$100,000 a year.

What are some of the opportunities for employment in etiquette?

The opportunities are infinite in terms of how a person can build

a practice and brand him or herself as an etiquette expert. Major corporations hire experts to become their directors of protocol in matters relating to international cultural awareness and hosting international visitors. Companies in every industry hire us to train their staff to become more professional in all they do. Colleges, universities and schools from kindergarten on hire us to help train their students because today these skills are not taught in the home and it's important to bring back a level of education in courtesy and respect.

There are also myriad organizations and associations that hire etiquette speakers to provide keynote addresses and workshops at conferences and conventions.

What's your advice for someone who's interested in the field?

I have three bits of advice. First, if you are thinking about starting your own business, the most important thing to do is to take the time and make the effort to learn all you can about how to properly set up and establish your business, from book

keeping and marketing to sales and product development. Some excellent resources are the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center, Women's Initiative, the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Small Business Development Center, among others.

Second, if you want to pursue a career in etiquette, the best resource and investment you can make is to be a graduate of The Protocol School of Washington because it provides a serious education in etiquette.

Lastly, being in the professional services industry — specifically as a speaker, trainer and consultant — the nature of this business is not the same as a product-oriented business. People who provide services must have and maintain a core passion for what they do because you are your product.

To find out more about Syndi Seid's Advanced Etiquette, visit www.AdvancedEtiquette.com or call 415-346-3665 or 800-276-3665. For information on The Protocol School of Washington, visit www.psow.com or call 877-766-3757.

ASK JILL

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- the culture of a team — behavior begins and ends with how the manager acts.
3. Ask your team how they want to grow in their roles. What excites and motivates them and how can they do more of that? People are happiest when they enjoy what they are doing.
 4. Make sure your staff has the most up-to-date equipment and resources needed to do their job. A good worker needs good tools.
 5. Keep your team well informed about company and industry happenings. An informed team is more likely to be an engaged team. Ask others to present in department meetings and rotate facilitation to ensure everyone has a chance to shine.
 6. Hire the best, pay the best and expect the best.

Dear Jill,

I have worked in an office adjoining the same colleague for the past 10 years. During that time we have each had at least three administrative assistants. I don't know what his secret is, but he seems to inspire more production in his "admins" than I do. My assistants do just enough to get by, while his are proactive and alert. If he is doing something to encourage better performance, please enlighten me so I can do that, too.

— V

Dear V,

I have observed that a satisfied "admin" can be one of the strongest forces toward a productive boss and team. Ask your colleague for suggestions. Here are some additional ideas to enhance your relationship and productivity:

- Consider your administrative assistant an important member of your team, and include him or her in meetings, training and development programs.
- Discuss your objectives, priorities and plans with your administrative assistant daily. Do it first thing in the morning.
- Discuss and ask for suggestions with problems and ideas. Respect their opinion and advice — they see more than you might.
- When you are gone, tell your administrative assistant where you are going, how you can be reached and when you will return.
- Protect your administrative assistant's time as much as your administrative assistant protects your time. Of all roles in organizations, this one is the most easily taken for granted and abused.

Jill McGillen is president of NEXT TURN Consulting and Training. Send questions to askjill@nextturnconsulting.com.