

Mastering Small Conversations

Good manners are important in the workplace for the same reason good manners are important anywhere. Good manners demonstrate that you possess self-control, that you are civilized, and that you care about and are capable of respecting others.

It doesn't matter whether your company is a highly-caffeinated start-up, a small gift boutique, or a good ol' boy law firm, good manners are important because they emphasize your willingness to control your own behavior for the benefit of others. Social relations between people evolve. The accepted guidelines for getting along with others – etiquette – cover less grave behaviors.

Etiquette and good manners set out the “grammar” of social interaction. Grammar helps you get your words and sentences in the right order so that people can understand what you are saying. It helps others understand the content of what you mean without having to worry about the form. The same is true of etiquette. Etiquette helps you get your behavior in expected order so that others can focus on the content of what you're saying rather than on the form of your behavior. Good etiquette and good grammar, becomes invisible.

The person who is able to draw people into conversations, introduce interesting topics, and make everyone comfortable is valued in all situations, business and social. Conversation is an art as well as a skill.

- Handling office conversations
- Developing cubicle courtesy
- Chatting politely with coworkers
- Respecting ethnic and cultural differences
- Offering your opinion
- Mingling effectively
- Saying something awkward while making small talk
- Cutting in on the conversation'
- Talking too loudly in a restaurant
- Drawing a blank on what to say