

Five Rules for Business Rapport

by Christine Valentine-Owsik



ood business manners have really taken a hit these days – just like the economy. There’s never been a better time for true professionals to

shine - people who either keep their jobs, or don’t have much problem moving into new ones.

Dressing the part. Whoever said ‘don’t judge a book by its cover’ wasn’t in charge of hiring. First impressions are critical. People presenting the best impressions have an advantage over those who need ‘polishing.’ Casual Friday fashions come off well in magazines – they don’t in reality.

Ladies, pay attention to detail: keeping hair styled, and maybe colored; nails groomed; clothes fitting well; wearing makeup when it’s optimal. Stocking-less legs, open-toed sandals, too-short skirts, and scantily-cut blouses are *out*. That goes for gaudy or abundant jewelry. You’re not on a fashion runway – you’re working.

Those who don’t let their professional image suffer usually don’t let their work-quality slide, either. On so-called casual days, don’t dress down much. That goes for company parties, even the picnic. Opt for classy-casual. Don’t drink or talk excessively, nor linger too long.

Dealing with a difficult boss. In real life, bosses usually doesn’t have time to “pick” on subordinates. They want quality – even superior – work. In a word, *excellence*.

So give them more.

The “difficult” boss might have too much on his or her plate and too few people to get it done. Look beyond your job to lighten the boss’ load. This gives you singular worth in their eyes. There’s no need to be overly familiar or to assume a



friendship that might not exist. Just do a great job ... and you should both be content.

Accept criticism with humility – even if it seems unfair. Then work to turn things around. If the boss is really errant in judgment, point this out gingerly. If you’re one of the boss’ favorites, keep a low profile. Don’t tempt colleagues into sabotaging you.

Playing nice. Avert trouble by keeping your nose clean. Avoid gossip, conjecture, and pandering. When co-workers suck you in to tittle-tattle, come up with reasons why the subject of their scrutiny is really a great person – talk about his “good” attributes. Throw cold water on the whole crusade; it’ll keep you out of the dangerous “inner circle” next time.

Diversity issues and non-negotiables. Here’s the trickier stuff. If you’re an avowed Catholic, keeping too low a profile can be hypocritical. If “policy” pushes you to accept principles which you clearly don’t, speak up. It’s not a hate-crime, it’s honesty. Working alongside someone with an ‘alternative lifestyle’ is different than being coerced

into sharing a hotel room with her on a business trip. Draw the line.

Working on a pharmaceutical product which opposes Catholic teaching can also be a problem. Are you directly involved in working on it? Advertising? Sales? You might have a tough choice. Make that choice with an informed conscience, in accordance with Truth.

Then let the chips fall where they may, and remain firm.

The dignified resignation. Here’s where even the most seamless of professional transitions can get botched. Never - without exception - use a resignation letter as a forum to insult or “tell off” an employer or client. Even if you detest the people, or don’t yet have another job, resign with confidence, gratitude for the job, and grace. Make your exit as airtight as possible. After all, it’s a small world. You may have to co-exist with these people again ... if not here, *there*.

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