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**They Called Me an Idiot! A Review of Web Etiquette**

**By Alvin Apple**

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Recently I received an email from someone who had read one of my articles online. This reader told me that, while reading my article, she had noticed that I had used "their" where I needed "they're." A simple mistake, but one that could have been avoided with a little better proofreading on my part. I would have been pleased to receive this reminder to be more astute, but the message didn't stop there. The reader went on to call me, among other things, an idiot.

Now we all make mistakes, and we all have our pet peeves. (Mine happens to be dawdlers.) Clearly this reader's peeve is the mixing up of homonyms, and my mistake made me a criminal in her eyes. Thus, hidden behind the anonymity of email, she attacked.

As a frequently published author, I am used to criticism, and always open to a reminder to pay more attention, even if that reminder stings a little at the time. I am not, however, nor do I think I will ever be, open to being called an idiot. Was I upset by this person? Mildly. Do I think there's a problem with web etiquette in general? Absolutely. The insulting reader wasn't doing anything different than so many other self-appointed web critics do all the time.

The basic problem with web etiquette lies in the inherent anonymity of e-correspondence. The fact that we can't see someone, or hear their voice, does not entitle us to treat them rudely. Anonymity makes us bold, and some of us tend to forget our manners when sending emails or posting on discussion boards. I have a feeling that if this reader had been speaking to me face

to face the word "idiot" would never have been invoked.

Think about it, when dealing with mistakes or service problems in person, we always try to be polite while still getting our point across, right? That is a basic social rule, but one that has been all but thrown away on the web. I have read atrocious things online that I believe never would have been spoken aloud had the people involved been in the same room together.

Let's try to bring good old fashioned manners to the web. When composing an email involving a complaint or a correction, write it as though you will be reading it aloud to the person you're

writing to. Yes, you want to get your point across, but do so without being nasty. When posting on a discussion board, try to keep a conversational, even-tempered tone, even if someone has attacked your statement or question. Rise above the situation and keep things polite and decorous. If we all remember our manners, the web can be a much friendlier, and more professional place.

Alvin Apple helps everyday people start businesses they will enjoy. Then he teaches them how to succeed. Read all his helpful strategies, including his latest article, "Use Hands-on Marketing to Sell Like Crazy" at <http://AlvinApple.com>. Reach Alvin at 801-328-9006 or [alvin@drnunley.com](mailto:alvin@drnunley.com).

## **Business Etiquette**

### **By Neil Payne**

Business etiquette is in essence about building relationships with people. In the business world, it is people that influence your success or failure. Etiquette, and in particular business etiquette, is simply a means of maximising your business potential.

If you feel comfortable around someone and vice versa, better communication and mutual trust will develop. This comfort zone is realised through presenting yourself effectively. Business etiquette helps you achieve this.

Business etiquette revolves around two things. Firstly, thoughtful consideration of the interests and feelings of others and secondly, minimising misunderstandings. Both are dependent upon self conduct. Business etiquette polishes this conduct.

Business etiquette varies from region to region and country to country. For the international business person, focusing too deeply on international business etiquette would leave no time for business. However, there are some key pillars upon which good business etiquette is built.

### Behaviour

Your manners and attitude will speak volumes about you. They will point to your inner character. If you come across selfish, undisciplined or uncouth your relationship is unlikely to prosper. Appropriate business etiquette promotes positive traits.

### Honesty

A reputation for delivering what you say will deliver goes a long way in the business world. Remember, a reputation for integrity is slowly gained but quickly lost. Understanding a particular country's business etiquette provides a framework in which you can work without fear of crossing boundaries in terms of agreements, promises and contracts.

### Character

Your character refers to what you as an individual bring to the business table. Proper business etiquette allows you to exhibit your positive qualities. For example, knowing when to be passionate and not emotional or self-confident without being arrogant. Just through learning another's business etiquette you demonstrate an open-mindedness which will earn respect.

### Sensitivity

Sensitivity and consideration underlie all good business etiquette. Being prepared for foreign ways and methods and responding thoughtfully is achieved through experience and business etiquette know-how. By avoiding misunderstandings and misinterpretations through business etiquette you lay

foundations for a strong business relationship.

### Diplomacy

Avoiding thoughtless words and actions protects you from negative consequences. Impulse often leads a business person astray. Business etiquette encourages the careful thought of the interests of others and choosing acceptable forms of expression.

### Appearance

Dressing appropriately, standing and sitting in the right place at the right time, good posture and looking physically presentable are all elements in making a good impression. Business etiquette teaches you how to suitably present yourself and what to avoid.

Analysing, understanding and implementing the above will help you recognise what business etiquette is and how it should be employed within the business world.

For the international business person business, etiquette acts as a key. It locks the doors of poor communication and misunderstandings and opens doors to successful business relationships.

Neil Payne is Director of

Business Etiquette

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