

Strategies for

Corporate Dining Success

life and business skills
today



Corporate dining is where you break bread with colleagues, competitors and friends. Most employees are lacking in the soft skills necessary to outclass the fierce competition in the corporate world. If ever there was a time to stand out from the crowd, it is now. Represent yourself and your company with confidence.

Good morning Jack,

Welcome to our company. I would like to extend to you an **invitation to attend a boardroom dinner** in Melbourne on Thursday April 25th for you to have the opportunity to meet with our new international client, Dr. Jane Pearson.

Other guests at the lunch will be prominent members of our industry, of which you will know many.

Please confirm your availability with my PA Helen Simpson and advise her of any dietary or timing requirements that you may have.

Kind Regards,

Peter

Sir Peter-James Hitchener.
Chairman



In the world of business, what do you think countries like America, China, Japan, Germany and England all have in common?

Having presented many many workshops I have discovered that they all embrace Life & Business Skills knowledge as one of their tools for success in both the business and social arenas. Although the division between the two is much blurred these days because most workplaces are less formal and a lot more business is done socially, i.e. around a dining table or on the golf course. However, the reality remains that etiquette, or Life & Business Skills as it known today, is the key element to personal and business growth.

You will find that embracing Life & Business Skills is awesome.

I know companies who, having taken on these skills as part of their business structure are now both retaining and attracting employees who give a higher level of energy, are better team players and are working in a happy and healthy environment, all of which contributes to new business. We are talking about sales teams, junior executives, middle management, general office workers all being better ambassadors to their employers.

Many potentially worthwhile and profitable alliances have been lost because of an unintentional breach of business manners.

This can be avoided!

Stuart Nelson



Your Invitation

Your preparation and performance is important to both yourself and the company you represent.

What's the first thing you do?

- ✓ Read it carefully
- ✓ Check diary
- ✓ Make a diary entry
- ✓ RSVP and mention any dietary requirements.

The most important thing here is to reply to the invitation whether you are going or not. To RSVP is mandatory. There are those who simply do not understand the importance and thoughtfulness of responding in a timely manner. Compounding the problem, those who do respond late or who show up without responding at all are accommodated, regardless of the difficulties placed on the hosts.

Preparation is a priority

You know that there is no such thing as a free lunch and you know business will be discussed. You must be prepared

- ✓ But how and what do we prepare?
- ✓ Who's going to be there?
- ✓ Is there a keynote speaker?

Read your invitation again, not up to date with the host company talk with a colleague.



Your Arrival

It's no secret that corporate success is based on people's perception of you as much as your actual performance.

✓ Understand the dress culture of both your company and the host's company. As you know companies spend a lot of money branding themselves, they want you to reflect that brand. It doesn't matter what your business is, in the dressing department it affects:

- ✓ how you think and feel
- ✓ how you act and how other people re-act to you
- ✓ I know that you are told to be early for an interview but for a boardroom function please don't be early, don't walk in on your host still placing name tags on the table.
- ✓ If you are running late make every attempt to make contact, when you do arrive apologise *once* and give a brief explanation. If at the last minute you cannot attend ring ahead, maybe a colleague can replace you, remember catering has been allocated
- ✓ Turn your mobile or your blackberry to OFF. If you are expecting an urgent call leave your phone with the receptionist, she will get a message to you.
- ✓ Treat your lunch/business meeting the same as you would if you were meeting in the hosts' office, their time spent in the dining room might also billable. Give them 100%.



The Meet & Greet Ritual

The 15-20 minute ritual that plays two roles. It gives you a chance to meet with the other guests prior to the meal and it allows for *late* guests to arrive.

- ✓ Know your hosts name, title and the company's activities, your research has given you some guest knowledge.
- ✓ Upon arrival give your host a warm greeting, a good eye contact a firm handshake, maybe a 'one liner' your research may have highlighted something.
- ✓ Take plenty of business cards.
- ✓ Ensure that your name tag is placed high on your right hand side. Hold your pre-dinner drink in your left hand and don't carry it to the dining table.

Small talk is an art.

This is a two way conversation - show interest. If you are stuck for an 'ice-breaker, you might you talk about;

- ✓ The artwork on the walls
- ✓ The magnificent views from the window
- ✓ Have you a common interest in the business world?
- ✓ The magnificent Collingwood Football Club is well worth a mention.

But then of course there are the un-mentionables:

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Income
- ✓ Business gossip
- ✓ Smutty jokes
- ✓ And please, we don't name drop.



The Handshake

The most powerful tools you have at your disposal are your smile and that proper handshake.

The handshake is presented in many different forms. Each delivers a different message. Your handshake together with your appearance and your body language sends signals to colleagues, clients and friends about you and your fit in the company.

Let your handshake set the tone for your introduction to distinguish yourself from the pack.

In a social environment

The accepted physical greeting in the western culture is a man will shake a man's hand; a man may kiss a female gently on the cheek.

Not so in the business arena. It is accepted that whether you are a man or a woman or even to a good friend, we will greet your colleague with a handshake, that way you don't send confusing messages.

Most men report that they received some basic handshaking training from their fathers when young, but few women report the same training.

Do you remember a recent handshake, one that has stuck in your mind?

- ✓ Who shook first?
- ✓ Who let go first?
- ✓ Was the person nervous or relaxed?

- ✓ Did they not say their name or just “hello”?
- ✓ Did they mention their last name?
- ✓ Did they look at you or the next person
- ✓ Did you look them in the eye?

Three main handshakes:

Dominance: the boss has his hand facing down.

Submissive: the boss offers hand palm down, you have palm up.

Equality: the perfect handshake, web to web.

A proper handshake should engage the others person's full hand. This means the web between your thumb and index finger should be touching your partners. Your hands should be flat enough so your palms are also touching.

Pausing is the key ingredient to a successful handshake. By pausing or lingering at the natural conclusion of a handshake, you are expressing sincerity and openness.

The Pumper.

Don't become a pumper.

When you shake the hand more than 3 times, you're a pumper!

If you are on the receiving end of a pumper, simply grab the wrist with your free hand - it looks friendly, and it will stop the pump.

The Lingerer.

Have you met this one?

This one is firm, with a warm grasp, and two or more pumps.

The end of the handshakes pauses or lingers. The lingering may denote openness and sincerity, or it may suggest that the person has something up his/her sleeve.

The Two Handed or Double hander handshake.

A corporate favourite around the world.

It is common to see politicians greeting voters and business people doing it to clients without realising it can be business and political suicide.



The Introductions

What's in a name - everything. The most important thing about introductions is to make them. It only takes 5 seconds. The mastering of introductions is an art. It helps put you and the people you are introducing, at ease.

Most people would prefer you made the introduction incorrectly even though you forgot their names than stand there unacknowledged.

You're networking. You enter the room looking for a familiar face.

- ✓ Good posture
- ✓ Straight back
- ✓ Look ahead with a smile, don't look down
- ✓ Walk with energy, enthusiasm
- ✓ Someone's nods to you, into the circle you go
- ✓ Don't stand with your arms folded
- ✓ Keep your hands in view
- ✓ If you are feeling nervous and look awkward, you will project that feeling. When introduced to a group of people you only need to say your first and last name once and maybe your company name.
- ✓ Repeat their names (both if offered), as soon as you can in the conversation hopefully at least 2-3 times during your short conversation
- ✓ Return the grip you receive
- ✓ Smile. A smile shows non-aggression
- ✓ Strong eye contact is important

- ✓ Encourage them to talk about themselves
- ✓ Avoid interrupting someone in mid conversation
- ✓ Be positive of who you are and what you do
- ✓ Be enthusiastic and interested
- ✓ Don't criticise anyone or anything.

These all make you feel more confident and translate confidence to others no matter where you are, what you are doing or what you are wearing.

Introducing yourself

"Hello, I'm Stuart Nelson from the Business Etiquette Consultancy."

You are born with your name, your first asset and it takes years to gain respect. Your name and your reputation are your brand. Always introduce yourself with pride. Their perception of you is your secret.

- ✓ Don't talk negatively about yourself; that you are having a bad day at the office; the fight you had before you left home that morning.
- ✓ Extend your hand for a firm shake.
- ✓ Good eye contact, show a real smile
- ✓ Be clear and concise in your speaking.
- ✓ Always use your both names to convey the message that you take yourselves seriously.
- ✓ If you have previously been introduced to someone do not assume that they will remember you. Be prepared to re-introduce yourself.
- ✓

Introducing someone else

Whoever is the highest ranking person is introduced to everyone else in order of their position, in simple terms the first name mentioned should belong to the most important person.

“Liz Ainsworth (managing director) I would like you to meet Hanna Jones our new receptionist”.

“Hanna, Liz Ainsworth is our Managing Director

How many techniques have you been told on how to remember a name? The first one that everyone is told is to repeat the name of the person Right? It seems simple enough, just repeat their name. This way you have a 50/50 chance of remembering at least one name.

You will be familiar with this scenario,

“Liz this is Jack, Pete and Mary”

“Hello Jack, Hi Mary, Liz”

“Hello Liz, Pete, Hi Jack “

Confused? The secret is,

Don't be in a hurry to move on.

Let's do that again

“Liz Ainsworth I would like you to meet some colleagues, Jack Brown our consultant”

(Liz) “Jack Brown”

“Peter Grainger head of HR”

(Liz) Nice to meet you Peter Grainger”

“And Mary Simpson is my PA”

(Liz) Hello Mary Simpson, I love your dress”

“Everybody Liz Ainsworth is our Managing Director”

- ✓ Give your full name
- ✓ Repeat their names.
- ✓ A warm smile.
- ✓ A good firm handshake, good eye contact.

Now that didn't take long, what 5 seconds?

Associate their name with something that will trigger you to remember their name next time you meet.

- ✓ Her perfume
- ✓ His loud tie
- ✓ Her hairstyle
- ✓ He's 6'7" tall, wow

It's important you know the greetings used by different cultures you don't want to offend unintentionally

Hearing and listening are not the same

Hearing is a natural process, all we have to do is to be there and use our ears and our brain.

Listening is a learned process it involves focusing on the speaker, what is being said, process what is being said and remember what is being said.

Hearing is a passive process. It is natural and takes very little effort on your part.

Listening is an active process. When listening you use your mental capabilities, you sit up straight, focus on the speaker's words and actions, understand the structure of the message and put it into perspective



Your road map to elegant dining

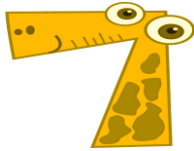
Dining with elegance reflects your company's polish.

- ✓ Reverse your tent card if it is printed one sided
- ✓ Use your napkin, they have a purpose
- ✓ Know where to place your napkin if you leave the table during the meal?
- ✓ Never try to appear to be smarter than your host
- ✓ With the bread roll the expression is, ***“break bread with your colleagues”*** not ***“saw bread with your colleagues”***
- ✓ If given a business card never put it in your back pocket, but you can keep it on the dining table
- ✓ Be ready for your 20 second elevator speech
- ✓ Have your best question ready for the guest speaker
- ✓ If your meal is 50/50, i.e. fish/chicken, don't haggle with your waiter
- ✓ Don't call attention to your dislike of the chosen meal
- ✓ If you drop your cutlery, napkin or there is a spillage seek out the waiter
- ✓ Pass communal salads etc., anti-clockwise
- ✓ The correct cutlery position will tell the waiter that you have finished eating
- ✓ If you drink alcohol at the business meal, remember who's in the room
- ✓ Snippets of discussed information could be of benefit, it could even influence your standing within your company
- ✓ How well did you listen, were you distracted by the surroundings?

- ✓ Did you drink too much?
- ✓ Did you make notes?
- ✓ Were you really listening?

If your host is insistent on you tasting his prize wine instruct the waiter to pour half a glass - then leave it.

Serious executives only drink water at the business dining table.



Your Departure

To me the most exciting thing in the world is to meet someone for the first time. How am I going to influence them? How are they going to influence me?

- ✓ Say your goodbyes warmly to the other guests with handshakes
- ✓ In thanking your host, make mention of the good meal
- ✓ If possible thank the waiter
- ✓ Don't leave other guests business cards behind
- ✓ Be mindful not to repeat boardroom conversations in the public arena like elevators and taxi cabs. Loose lips sink ships.

Strategies for Corporate Dining Successes is the first in my eBook series in recognising the importance of developing young men and women on progressing through their ranks, optimising their existing skills enabling them to hold their own when meeting with management; work colleagues and clients both potential and existing under formal and informal circumstances.

My expertise comes from over 3 decades in the corporate and hospitality industries observing; studying and training.

If you have any questions and would like to discuss any part in further detail *I would love to hear from you"*

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Stuart Nelson



