

“BAD BEHAVIOR COSTS BUSINESSES”



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If we know that relationships are the key to doing business successfully today, why is it that rude, offensive or inappropriate behavior is so pervasive in the workplace? The result is not only unpleasant circumstances, but, indirectly a negative impact to the bottom line through loss of employees, customers or prospects.

The Mitchell Organization, a Philadelphia -based consulting firm specializing in client servicing and business and personal etiquette surveyed 200 major U.S. businesses to get a handle on the dynamics between consumer and supplier that can impact a business relationship.

"We learned that product, price, and quality did not make the top ten," reports Mary Mitchell, president of The Mitchell Organization, and author of *Class Acts* and the *Complete Idiot's Guide To Business Etiquette*. "Instead, we found that both individuals and companies make their decisions based on how well they are treated and the relationships they form with the people in that company."

According to Mitchell's survey, here are the ten most common mistakes that should be avoided:

1. **Negative attitudes.** This includes rudeness, surliness, bad temperament, unprovoked anger, and "taking it out on someone" unnecessarily. At best, they are further distancing themselves from a solution; at worst, they are jeopardizing their careers.
2. **Sloppy telephone communication and incomplete or erroneous message taking.** Callers are unhappy with support staff who are brusque, won't take detailed messages, or are uninformed. If phone skills were improved, business could save millions of dollars and hours of wasted time.
3. **Making people wait.** Putting people on "hold" indefinitely on the phone, or to be kept waiting without an explanation for a scheduled appointment, will create resentment and sets a negative tone for the ensuing conversation.
4. **Criticizing people in front of others.** If in a business meeting or confrontation the intent is to improve a situation or encourage someone to grow, public criticism doesn't work. This behavior serves no purpose except to breed ill will and cutthroat competitiveness.
5. **Disregarding invitation requests.** Business people show disrespect if they do not RSVP promptly, if at all, or assume that they can bring uninvited guests.
6. **Errors with people's names and titles.** Pronouncing or spelling a person's name correctly is very important. If you can't get something as simple as a name or title right, a superior or client may wonder what else you will be careless about.
7. **Vulgar language.** In today's workplace you can witness the deterioration of verbal skills, evidenced by the common acceptance of foul language, poor grammar, and slang. Practicing proper and respectful language in business conversations projects an image of professionalism and intelligence.
8. **Inappropriate clothing.** Many companies have allowed employees with poor judgment to get into dress habits that are inappropriate and not a positive reflection of the company. Individual freedom of expression must be tempered by good judgment.
9. **Forgoing introductions.** Lack of an introduction makes people feel uncomfortable. If you have forgotten the person's name, simply ask and move on. People don't mind so much if you forgot their name; they do mind if you don't acknowledge their presence to others.
10. **Giving someone the run-around.** Complaints include not being able to get an answer, being referred to ten different people, or getting conflicting information. Although it may be unintentional, the negative impact on the customer, prospect or employee is the same.

(Adapted from the author's column, previously published in the Syracuse Newspapers)