



Courtesy

Some people might think there is no place for courtesy in the rough and tumble world of business. In their minds the demonstration of manners might be perceived as a sign of eagerness, which can, under certain circumstances, be seen as weakness. Other people don't practice courtesy because they are very busy and don't have the time or patience for silly niceties.

Sometimes the lack of courtesy can be as dramatic as failing to deliver on a promise, leaving the other side in a quandary that can cost them money, customer loyalty, and perhaps even their hard earned reputation. The commission of this kind of act can often lead to a severing of a relationship, meaning that the consequence of this lack of courtesy is immediate and apparent to us.

Other times the lack of courtesy is demonstrated by the omission of simple acts, like the failure to return a phone call. The rationale for failing to return a call is often based on our immediate assessment of the purpose of the call and our lack of need for the individual making the call. If we have no or little need the chances that we will return the call is lower than if we perceive a higher need. This is rather self-serving, but more critically, it is self-defeating. It is a short term view of a long term circumstance – and it is bad business.

When you do not return a phone call (and we are not talking here about blind telemarketing calls but rather calls from people you recognize and have had some sort of exchange with) you are communicating to the other side that you not only have no interest in the proposition they are attempting to advance, but also that you have no respect for them as professionals and individuals. If you do not wish to have a relationship with someone you can communicate this in the simplest way – by telling them “no thank you”. To try to hint your disinterest through avoidance tactics is childish and humiliating to the other side. They will recall the humiliation whenever your name comes up – meaning you will be creating a negative broadcaster in your business circle.

There is no need to tell someone you'll call them right back and then never do it. There is no reason to allow someone to leave numerous messages without your ever responding to any of them. There is no reason to make someone work so hard for something you already know will never happen. Treat people as you wish to be treated and even when you say no you'll have someone out there in the business community that relays to others how courteous and professional you are. That's what you should want for your own personal reputation and for your business. Courtesy isn't just being nice. It's being smart.