



## The SMMarT Guy

# Bad Manners Are Bad for Business

By Kim Robinson

The man at the airport ticket counter handed his paperwork to the airline agent while he carried on an animated, and loud, cell phone conversation about a big business deal. The agent asked the man a question. He waved at her dismissively as he continued his phone conversation. The agent dropped the paperwork onto the countertop and calmly repeated her question. The man shot her a glance of annoyance, thrust out his arm, palm outward, as if to say *just a minute*, and kept talking—thereby holding up the line and inconveniencing everyone waiting to be helped.

This man's arrogant disregard for others while using his cell phone clearly announced that he believed himself more important than they. And, speaking loud enough for all to hear as he crowed about his big business deal, indicated he wanted everyone within earshot (about 20 feet radius) to know just how important he thought himself to be.

But, what if one of the people waiting in line behind him was vital to the success of his deal? I'll bet the "big deal" would've

changed to "no deal" in a hurry.

Bad manners are bad for business. We all judge others by their behavior toward, and around, us. People with good manners are judged well because their behavior indicates they are aware and considerate of others. Having good manners shows the world you have some class.

In business, being known as someone with class can be vitally important to success, regardless the endeavor. For example, I'll hire a polite gardener over one who is not polite, and the same holds true in my professional dealings. Put simply, I prefer to work with well-mannered and classy people. Don't you?

Here are a few rules of business manners:

**Rule #1: Keep your cell phone calls private**, and do not take calls while meeting with someone else unless the possibility of such calls is established at the beginning of the meeting (kids are sick at home, you expect a call from the President, etc.).

**Rule #2: Pay attention** to the person with whom you are speaking. Do not glance around and look over his or her shoulder as if seeking to speak with someone "more important." This applies to everyone from a salesman working an after-hours chamber meeting, to a CEO

speaking with a frontline customer service representative.

**Rule #3: Return calls and emails.** Countless books are written about how to get through to the decision-maker in the sales process (I've written a manual on it, as well), but the decision-maker shows no class by ignoring all attempts from others to communicate. A simple "no thanks" to someone who repeatedly attempts contact only takes a moment and shows courtesy. Additionally, ignoring those with whom you are doing business shows arrogant disregard for their time.

**Rule #4: Be conscious of table manners.** Lunch is a great time to conduct business, but be careful about making a mess and do not talk with your mouth full of food. Pasta tends to be sloppy, and no one wants to wear part of your meal.

**Rule #5: Write thank-you notes.** Send handwritten thank-you notes to people who help you. Set yourself apart from others in a positive way by taking a minute, and a minute is all it takes, to hand write and send thank-you notes to everyone—**everyone**—who does anything to make your life easier.

To measure how effective such notes can be in business, think of the last time you had a number of friends over for dinner or a party and only one couple or person wrote you a note of thanks. You worked hard to see that everyone had a good time, but only a few "worked hard enough" to write you a note of thanks. That note was powerful, wasn't it? The person(s) who wrote the thank-you note showed class and got invited back.

The same holds true in business. The people who show good manners have class and "get invited back." ■

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