

## 6 WAYS TO BE SMART AND SAVVY IN TODAY'S CELL SOCIETY

By Rachel Wagner, July 2007

Ill-mannered mobile users are not amusing. My husband and I were patio dining recently on Ft. Lauderdale's lovely Las Olas Boulevard. The alfresco dining ambiance was soon marred, however, by a nearby patron's fondness for her cell phone. Not only did she carry on a continuous conversation during the entire meal, she even placed the call on speaker phone so her table companion could hear!

With cell phone faux pas like this, no wonder the whole month of July has been designated as Cell Phone Courtesy Month. The more than 235 million\* cell phone users in the United States are encouraged to be more respectful of their surroundings and those around them.

As a business professional, cell phone etiquette is another way to give a good impression. Consider these 6 tips:

- 1. Make safety your first call.** Using a cell phone while driving is dangerous and best avoided. Last month an inattentive Tulsa driver reaching for a ringing cell phone caused the needless fatality of a 6-year old. Let calls go to voice mail until you reach your office or other destination. If you must take the call immediately, pull into a parking lot.
- 2. Public Politeness.** Many establishments ask customers to refrain from using cell phones, but no one wants to miss a call. At movie theatres, plays, concert halls, houses of worship, museums, hospitals, public meetings and public buildings, use your phone's vibrate or silent features and let calls go to voice mail. If you must take an important call at a restaurant or in a meeting, quietly excuse yourself and go to an area where you can be discreet.

Some restaurants such as the Brooklyn Café in Atlanta, The Biltmore Room in Manhattan, and Chicago's Boka restaurant have even installed Cell Phone Booths. While these deluxe calling cubicles do provide privacy for a quiet call in a noisy venue, patrons should remember to show courtesy to those in their group and not leave the table unless the call is urgent.

- 3. Soften the "cell yell."** Use your regular conversational tone. Most phone microphones are so sophisticated they can sufficiently amplify even your quietest library voice!
- 4. Office cell phone etiquette.** If you have your cell phone at work, be mindful of your coworkers, your boss, and time spent on personal calls. Never allow your phone to ring out loud; turn it on silent and let voice mail take your calls. It will take much less time to check your messages than answer the call and have to

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tell the caller you can't talk. If you must take an emergency call, step away from your desk to a private place and use a soft tone. Use your lunch break for non-emergency calls.

- 5. Put people first.** At a social function or business meeting, show precedence to those with whom you are meeting. Don't keep the group waiting or disrupt an ongoing conversation while you make or take a call. Don't take calls during critical meetings, such as job interviews or your yearly review.

To create a good impression among your business associates during a meeting, avoid constantly checking your messages or sending text messages. Most conferences and longer meetings schedule ample breaks for taking care of business communications.

Show courtesy by not talking on your phone while conducting public business with someone, such as in the drive-through, at the bank, or in the check-out line. This is both demeaning and annoying to those assisting you.

- 6. Be discreet.** According to a recent national poll by market research group Synovate, about 72% of Americans agree that users' worst cell phone habit is having loud conversations in public. It's amazing what private and personal information callers make privy to others while waiting on planes, in check-out lines, on public transportation, in elevators, and even in restroom stalls. Never display strong emotion such as anger during a public call. You never know who is within listening range.

Kudos to everyone who practices considerate cell phone savvy!

\*CTIA The Wireless Association

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