

# TULSA WORLD



## Etiquette errors can be costly

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Exchanging business cards is something I do frequently in my job.

It's not uncommon for me to do this early in a meeting. I'm also prone to scribbling notes on someone else's card.

Both of those practices, however, are not ideal business etiquette, says Rachel Wagner.

Wagner owns Broken Arrow-based Rachel Wagner Etiquette and Protocol. Since this is National Business Etiquette Week, I thought I better find out what else I need help with.

"Good business etiquette reveals a lot about you as a person and reflects on your company," Wagner says.

Research done by Harvard University and others shows that social skills, including business etiquette, are responsible for 85 percent of an individual's professional success, with the remaining 15 percent being technical skills, training and education.

Here's some of Wagner's advice on four key areas of etiquette.

**Business cards:** Wait until the end of the meeting to offer your card, the consultant says.

"When you accept the other person's card, look at it carefully for a moment and then put it away — don't just stuff it into your pocket immediately."

And, she says, don't write on the person's card while he or she still is with you. Do it later.

"All of this shows that you have respect for the other person. It's something we don't do enough in our culture."

**Handshake:** Make sure it's firm and involves your entire hand, Wagner says. A weak handshake reflects poorly on you, while a strong one — two pumps are best — shows you have confidence.

In addition, look at the person while shaking, focusing on the eyes and brow area. Looking any lower on the face is not perceived positively, Wagner says.

**Business meals:** If you're the host, arrive early and tell the waiter you want the check.

"As the host, you also should be the first to put your napkin in your lap," Wagner says. "You might want to suggest a menu item, such as saying, 'The prime rib is good here.' That gives your guest an indication of what price range he or she should choose. And, let your guest order first."

**Networking:** At business social functions, don't just hang out at the bar or buffet table. Mix and mingle — but take care here, too.

Wagner says to approach a group of three or four people, extend your hand in the proper handshake form to the person closest to you, introduce yourself and ask, "May I join you?"

After making small talk, thank each person around you. Now is your chance to move on to the next group, but what smooths this break?

Offering your business card, which puts us back to the beginning of this column.

"Business etiquette is really about making other people feel comfortable," Wagner says. "It can be what sets you apart from the competition."

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