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## TODAY

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EXPERT ADVICE

## Tech Etiquette

**RACHEL WAGNER KNOWS** her workplace manners. Founder and director of **Rachel Wagner Etiquette and Protocol** (918/970-4400 or [etiquettetrainer.com](http://etiquettetrainer.com)) in Bixby, this former middle school English teacher routinely trains executive managers on the dos and don'ts of professional communication in a high-tech world.



Rachel Wagner in her Bixby home office

**Twitter, iPhones, and Facebook didn't exist a decade ago. Today, new technology has legitimate—and illegitimate—workplace uses, says an etiquette expert.**

Create business emails that give a positive impression of you and your company. Always include a greeting such as 'Dear' and a closing like "Best regards" or "Sincerely." Proper capitalization, punctuation, and spelling are vital. Avoid using all caps, emoticons, and text jargon.

No one has time to read long-winded emails. Stick to facts and data. If the

topic is sensitive or requires a lengthier discussion, pick up the phone or have a face-to-face meeting instead.

Don't leave people hanging. Respond to business emails and phone messages by the end of the day if possible or within twenty-four hours. Even if you don't have the information requested, get back to the person and say you're working on it.

Ditch the chain letters, jokes, and forwards. More than 80 percent of professionals complain that colleagues send them too much email. Increase everyone's productivity by not sending

junk emails. And don't hit "reply to all" unless everyone needs the information.

Ban boorish ring tones. Nothing says unprofessional like a ring tone that sounds like a duck or the local discotheque.

Mind your meeting manners. Turn your phone off. You'll resist the temptation to check email, Facebook, or your favorite sports scores. Incessant key tapping is discourteous and distracting to those around you. For those who take meeting notes on a hand-held device, explain before the meeting starts.

If you're expecting an important call that you must take during a meeting, presentation, or business meal, alert others ahead of time. Then when the call comes, excuse yourself and quietly step out to take the call.

Give 100 percent attention in a face-to-face conversation. The most important person is the person before you—not a text message or a nonurgent phone call.

At business meals, keep hand-held devices in a handbag, briefcase, or on your person—not on the tabletop.

Record a professional-sounding voice mail greeting like this one: "You've reached (first and last name). I'll be checking messages periodically and will get back to you as soon as possible."

Keep voice mail messages brief. Include your first and last name, the reason for the call, and give your callback number twice so the listener doesn't have to replay the message.

Designate LinkedIn for professional networking and reserve Facebook for family and friends. Be mindful about posting anything on Facebook that could harm your credibility and professional image. Employers read Facebook, too!

Be discreet when using cell phones in public. Never divulge confidential company or client information. You never know who is listening.

## Four-Way Communication

**We asked a handful of Oklahoma corporate leaders what one piece of advice they would give about technological etiquette in the workplace.**

**Susan Ellerbach**, Managing Editor at the *Tulsa World*: "If you must take your 'device' into a meeting, keep it on silent. If you are expecting an important message or phone call, excuse yourself from the meeting and take it outside. I don't need

to know that your ring tone is 'Sexy Back.'"

**Jim Gipson**, Director of Media Relations at Chesapeake Energy: "Before 'replying to all,' consider whether everyone on the email chain will benefit from the information."

**David Klaassen**, Director of Corporate Communications at Devon Energy: "Think before you tweet. When it comes to critical communications, don't be tempted by the convenience of social media. While tweets, texts, and blogs have their place,

nothing replaces the human elements of tone, body language, and instant feedback of face-to-face communication."

**Tiffany Monhollon Wilson**, Corporate Communications Supervisor at Express Employment Professionals: "Don't use your cell phone while you're in a public restroom. Even if the people you're calling are fine with it, the people in the restroom with you may wonder at your lack of tact—or even your sanity."