



The Power of Dignity, Efficiency, and Integrity in Behavior and Communication

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

LISTEN: Listen and let the other person know you are listening. Use body language and physical prompts to show you are listening. Make notes of what they are saying. Take the phone off the hook. Invite the person to come to your office.

SYMPATHIZE: Take note: sympathizing is not the same as agreeing. It does not mean accepting liability or signal surrender. It helps you take the heat out of the situation. Choose your words carefully.

DON'T JUSTIFY: The irate person in front of you is not in the least bit interested in the fact that half the staff are off with the flu, you crashed the car on the way to work, or you have family problems. Whatever the reason, whatever the problem, now is not the time to bring it up. There will be a time to explain why, but definitely later. In the life of the complaint, now is not the time. It is too early.

The objective here is to defuse the situation, deal with the complaint with the minimum collateral damage and get on with your life.

MAKE NOTES: There is something reassuring about having someone write down your complaint - a simple record of who, when and what it's about - it reinforces the listening message and notes will be helpful if things get out of hand later on.

A summary of a complaint made at the time is a reliable record, pre-empting the escalation in terms of compensation claim and 'embroidery' of the problem from complainant's side.

AGREE A COURSE OF ACTION:

- How do you think we should take this forward?
- How would you like me to handle this from here?
- How do you see us resolving the situation?

By asking these types of question you will get a feel how far you will need to go to get this out of your in-tray. It doesn't mean you're capitulating or ready to roll over. It is your gauge of the best way forward in resolving the issue.

It may well be that the complainant is reasonable and asking for a solution within your responsibility, so all you have to do is grant or deliver.

On the other hand, they might be asking too much or beyond your call - in this case a few more well-chosen words are called for.

FOLLOW THROUGH

The easiest way to make a bad situation worse is failing to follow through. Telephone call, letter, e-mail, whatever it is, do it. Even if you can't deliver what you thought you could, call back and say so. Agree another deadline.

If you said you would call back someone, be sure to do it. No news yet? No information to hand? No matter. Make this call.

Once in a while, in every organization, mistakes will occur. It is no great sin to get things wrong. It is a sin, however, to get things wrong and not put them right, or get things wrong too often, or, worst of all, to get things wrong and not know about it.

Savile Rogues: London's Rakish Tailors

Abstract From *Intelligent Life* magazine, Summer 2009

Complete article may be found at: <http://moreintelligentlife.com/content/michael-bywater/savile-rogues-londons-rakish-tailors>
By Michael Bywater

To a dyed-in-the-wool traditionalist, Windmill Street would be an unthinkable place to go for the sort of hand-tailoring London is famous for. Indeed, anywhere outside Savile Row would be unthinkable. That's why the zenith, the apogee, the ne plus ultra of tailoring is, throughout the world, referred to as "Savile Row". Because that is where it comes from: the Row.

But Quearney, as affable and as voluble as his Irish roots would lead you to expect, is a Savile Rogue: one of a relatively new breed of tailors who are faithful to the great traditions of English tailoring, without nominating themselves as a branch of the heritage industry. Old-established tailoring houses may adorn their interiors with stuffed stag's heads and curious wooden horses on which a man can sit to check the fit of his breeches. The Rogues are having none of it. Edgier, more in tune with the spirit of the times, they cater for a younger, hipper clientele. If fashion is about advertising the "designer", and the Row is about declaring one's affiliation with a (partly imaginary) tradition, then the Savile Rogues are about bending the conventions while respecting the craft.

Quearney is passionate about craft. He trained with Thomas Mahon (the Prince of Wales's tailor for over 20 years), who taught him a semi-freehand way of cutting which acknowledges the fact that the human body contains no angles, only curves. In common with all craft tailors, the engineering of a suit fascinates Quearney. A customer sees only the cloth and feels only the fit; a tailor knows that it is multiple layers of canvassing and padding that give the suit—and sometimes the customer—shape. "I like to make a soft canvas in the breast of the suit," he says. "That's where the stitching counts. I like large, loose stitching, rather than small and tight like Huntsman [H. Huntsman & Sons of Savile Row, famous for their slim silhouette and nip-waisted, one-button jackets]. But the big thing is colour. You have to show the customer how it works, how the grey has green or brown in it. Show them how to look into the colour, not just at the colour."

Yet, despite all his typically fantastical detailing—despite the top-stitching on the lapels, despite the silver boots, despite the half-gauntlet cuffs ("buttons are boring")—fundamentally Baker offers, just like the ultra-respectable H. Huntsman, what is known as "the London Cut": narrow shoulders, narrow sleeve, high armhole, long vents and quite a long skirt to the jacket. He describes this as "a combination of Dickens and rock'n'roll. I like the tubular effect of those trousers in the John Leech illustrations to Dickens. I like to fit a suit right to the bone...but pull the cake out of the oven just before it burns." One other thing marks him as a Rogue: his label. It's sewn where you can see it. With an Old Row suit, nobody ever sees the label: it's sewn inside the inner pocket. Baker—as you'd hope of a man who dresses Mick Jagger—is a Rogue for sure.

In the last analysis, the Savile Rogues are doing what tailors have always done: cutting their stylistic coats according to the commercial cloth. A bespoke outfit will cost the customer, say, £2,800 for a basic two-piece suit. The cloth will account for £750 or more of that, and there'll be an average of 75 hours' skilled labour involved in making it. The tailor will probably net about £500 to cover other overheads and profit—it's not the road to riches. However fine your craftsmanship, however heartfelt your aesthetic principles, if nobody is buying, you will not survive. The law of top-of-the-scale bespoke tailoring, like the law of the jungle, is find your niche.

As for the future of bespoke, even the tailors don't know which way it will go. "Bespoke is a dying art," says John Pearse, "but there'll always be a place for it." Jonathan Quearney disagrees. "The younger generation...they have a feeling they've found something nobody knows about. I think bespoke is going to come around again, big time."



BESPOKE-SPEAK:

Braces, aka suspenders: Not any more; too “Wall Street”. Only acceptable if hessian, on farmers’ work trousers.

Buttonholes: Should be slightly ragged at the back—little imperfections are the stamps of bespoke.

Cuffs: The first two buttons (there should be four) must be made of horn, and must work. How you find out is up to you.

Back: A hard thing to get right. If it hunches or strains, the suit is not a good one.

Collar: If the collar stands away from the neck, best to stand away from the man.

Fly: (NB: never “flies”) Buttons are no longer amusingly archaic. They are simply silly.

Linings: A bonus of bespoke is being able to choose your lining. But be careful with colour: the line between stylish and foolish is very narrow.

Pleats: Not now. But they’ll come back.

Pockets: Slant pockets are falling into favour again, though still considered suspiciously racy among the world’s more conservative diplomatic corps.

Shoulders: On a good suit, you shouldn’t really notice them.

Turn-ups: Only on rustics.

Vents: One is dull. Two is flamboyant. None is incorrect. You can’t win

“I am not the type, monsieur, who feels himself superior to the rest of humanity. Indeed, I am not better than others. But these people, these Afghans. They are not human”. “But why do you say that?” “You don’t see why, monsieur? Have you eyes? Look at those men over there. Are they not eating with their hands? With their hands! It is frightful”.

Robert Byron (1905-1941), British travel writer, *The Road to Oxiana*

Greetings between Cultures

In the Western culture, when greeting someone, our first instinct is to shake their hand, look directly at the other person, and smile. In some situations, this habit can mean making three mistakes at once. And the moment of greeting is when crucial first impressions are made. Methods and styles of greeting vary greatly around the world, and you need to know which practices apply in different circumstances.

A handshake is not the universally approved greeting. Also, “Look ‘em right in the eye” is not always the best advice.

Same-sex hand holding, seen by some as a signal of a homosexual relationship, is a common gesture of friendship in many countries, particularly Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries.

When greeting Asians for the first time, do not initiate the handshake. You may be forcing a physical contact that the other person finds uncomfortable. Many Asians, particularly Japanese, have learned to accept the handshake when dealing with Westerners. Because the bow is the customary greeting in Japan, a slight bow of the head when responding to a proffered handshake is appropriate. Westerners generally are not expected to be familiar with the complex Japanese bowing protocols.

Most Latinos are more accustomed to physical contact. Even people who know each other only slightly may embrace when greeting.

Middle Easterners, particularly Muslims, avoid body contact with the opposite sex, but persons of the same sex commonly hug when greeting each other. When shaking hands, men should be careful not to pull their hand away too quickly. Orthodox Jews also avoid all physical contact with those of the opposite sex who are not family members.

People from France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal greet friends by kissing on both cheeks.

The smile is the near-universal gesture of friendliness, and in America its meaning is usually clear. The person smiling is happy, amused, and/or sending out a friendly signal. In other cultures the smile may be sending other signals. In some Latin cultures, for example, the smile may be used to say “Excuse me” or “Please.”

If a person from another culture does not return your greeting smile, it doesn’t indicate hostility or bad manners. In some Asian cultures, smiling is a gesture to be reserved for informal occasions, and smiling while being formally introduced would be considered disrespectful.

In many cultures, avoiding eye contact is a sign of respect, but such behavior can lead to misunderstandings. For example, some Korean shopkeepers have been accused of disrespecting their non-Korean customers because the shopkeepers avoided making eye contact. The same sort of misunderstanding has occurred between American teachers and Asian students who do not look at the teacher while he or she is speaking.

Chopstick Etiquette

In Japan, chopsticks are more than just an eating utensil. They are used in a variety of Japanese rituals as well, especially in funeral rituals. Because of this, chopsticks should be respected, and using chopsticks the wrong way while eating can be highly offensive to a Japanese person. Here are some rules on how to use chopsticks at the table:

Do not play with chopsticks. Fooling around with chopsticks at the table or sushi bar is considered childish and barbarous in Japan.

Be careful with splinters. If you use disposable wooden chopsticks that are joined at one end, when you break them apart, splinters might be created. You can rub the chopsticks together to get rid of the splinters, but do not let anyone see you doing this. And never rub together high-quality chopsticks, or you will insult your hosts.

Use the chopstick rest. While waiting for food or in between dishes, place the chopsticks in front of you parallel to the edge of the bar. The narrow ends of the chopsticks should rest on the chopstick rest, or *hashi oki*. Never stick chopsticks in your food and leave them there, or lay them cross-wise, since this symbolizes death. If you are using disposable chopsticks and there is no chopstick rest available, create one with the paper wrapper from your chopsticks and use that. If there is no chopstick rest available whatsoever, then you can put them on your plate, but make sure they are set across the plate rather than leaning on the plate.

Serve sushi with the broad end. If there is not a communal set of chopsticks available, food must be transferred from the serving platter with the individuals' chopsticks. The wider end of the chopstick should be used when picking up sushi from a shared sushi tray, since the narrower end is used by individuals for eating and could be contaminated with their germs. It is polite to use chopsticks, not your hands, to serve sushi from a shared platter.

Only pass food to a plate. If you need to pass food to another diner, pick it up with chopsticks and rest it on his or her plate. Never pass food from chopsticks to chopsticks. As part of traditional funeral ceremonies in Japan, mourners would pass the bones of their deceased loved ones to each other using chopsticks, so passing food this way recollects this ritual and is considered offensive.

Do manners matter?

Are etiquette lessons a good way to prepare for the workplace, asks Pamela Hutchinson
Guardian, 9 January 2008



Is knowing which knife to use any help in the workplace?
Photograph: David Sillitoe

When was the last time your boss asked you to waltz? No, I can't remember either. However, it may be that your job requires you to write formal letters, introduce people, dress smartly, and, if you're lucky, use your knife and fork correctly during a five-course dinner. And if you didn't learn to iron a shirt or tie a bowtie at school or university, by the time you take up your swanky graduate job and start attending corporate events it may seem to late to ask anyone.

The students of Brighton College won't have that problem - they are taking weekly lessons in good manners. But what good is knowing a fish knife from a finger bowl? Surely today's workers need to know more about spreadsheets than tablecloths.

You might be tempted to insert your own cynical barb about fee-paying schools preparing their students for a life of idle luxury rather than hard graft here, but it's not all black tie and ballroom. The children are also being taught how to use a cash machine and put up a tent. The idea being, presumably, that "etiquette" encompasses a whole range of practical skills for adult life. Skills that many current graduates apparently don't have.

The Guardian's Office Hours supplement looks at modern workplace etiquette every fortnight in the Work Ethics column. We have found that good office manners are now more about the correct use of email, after-work socialising and even blogging about your colleagues.

So are good manners important in your workplace? And if they are, would you update or amend the traditional rules of etiquette for your own job? Perhaps you don't need to waltz, but would you prefer to hear more pleases and thank yous at work? And if you are studying, would you like to take lectures in table manners?

The Decline of Common Courtesy

Denny Dressman
October 18, 2010

The managing editor at the newspaper where I worked about 25 years ago called me into his office one day. He was a man who had a special way with words, and with a withering look of supreme dissatisfaction, told me:

"Denny, I'm tired of dropping rocks down the well, and never hearing a splash."

He was referring to story ideas he had been sending into the newsroom. He expected them to be assigned, written and published, but many of his contributions -- I hesitate to minimize them by calling them tips -- weren't showing up in the newspaper.

I recalled his comment often as I worked on my latest book, *Eddie Robinson: ...He Was the Martin Luther King of Football*. And I continue to think of it as I try to communicate with strangers for various reasons now.

There's an old axiom in the newspaper business, a warning that the reading public could care less what kind of obstacles and difficulties journalists face in doing their jobs. Every job has its frustrations, the saying goes, so don't expect any sympathy, or even much interest.

But this issue goes way beyond me. All of the job-seekers in the audience have encountered the same treatment. So I offer my experience only as a first-hand example.

In piecing together the life of Eddie Robinson, I received wonderful cooperation from many people, who trusted a complete stranger and openly shared their recollections and impressions from one of the most pivotal times in America's history. At the same time, though, I am flat-out shocked by the number of people -- many of them holding prominent corporate positions, representing public institutions or employed in service-oriented endeavors -- who ignored emails, letters and telephone messages.

I've come to call this version of the "no splash" phenomenon "The Decline of Common Courtesy." In this age of instant communication, I ask:

How hard is it to reply to an email, phone call or letter?

How hard is it to write a response as simple as: "I received your inquiry. I do not wish to be interviewed." Or, "I got your message. I don't want to be bothered." Or, "Thanks, but no thanks." Or whatever!

Employers and their representatives will say they are swamped with applicants, and they'd need to hire extra staff just to respond with a courteous "No" to all of the unsolicited inquiries they receive. To that, I say: Even a form "splash" is better than no "splash" at all.

I'm not going to publicly embarrass the businessmen, educators, athletes, clergy and others -- many of them well-known -- who haven't bothered to acknowledge, in any way, my repeated efforts to reach them. What would that accomplish?

But I do believe a particular exception to this rule is instructive, and thus worth sharing.

I sent an email to one of the more prominent figures in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s as I researched Eddie Robinson's life and career. I had been told that this leader had visited the Grambling campus in northern Louisiana as a young man, and I couldn't imagine him doing so without meeting the famous Eddie Robinson.

I wrote that I would like to interview the man about his experiences with, and view of, Coach Robinson.

I was thrilled to receive a prompt reply, and encouraged by his courteous tone. But I was disappointed, ultimately, by his answer.

"Thanks for your message.

Sadly, I must decline.

I am one of the most sports-averse persons I know -- I do not follow any professional or amateur sports".

Of course I knew of Coach Robinson but nothing beyond what a casual, non-sports page reader would know.

I replied immediately that it didn't matter if he was a sports fan. I wanted to know what civil rights leaders such as he thought about Eddie Robinson's approach to the Movement. When he assured me he would be of no help, I tried once more -- as any good reporter would. Again he declined, acknowledging that he had spoken at Grambling but telling me that he had no recollection of meeting Coach Robinson. The campus speeches all ran together, he said. There were so many of them.

I admit that I was frustrated by his unwillingness to allow me to chat with him. I was sure he would have told me something that I would have found very useful, even if he didn't consider it significant. But I thanked him, and stopped pressing for him to give in.

It wasn't until months later, after my biography of the legendary Grambling football coach was published, that I appreciated the contrast between this experience and the countless instances when my polite requests were totally and rudely ignored.

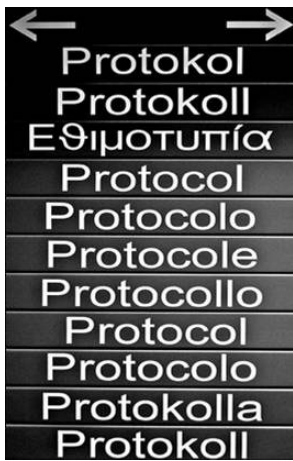
At least he took the time to graciously decline. And he remained courteous, though unbowed, in the face of my persistence.

In this age when too few rocks make a splash in the well, a lot of Americans can learn a valuable lesson from this example.

Whether it's someone looking for a job or someone trying to do their job, they deserve a "splash." That guy or gal or kid who rings the doorbell, trying to sell replacement windows, house siding or the latest discount coupon book, or even that telephone solicitor who is invading an otherwise tranquil evening at home "to ask a few questions," all deserve a moment to try to do some honest work. And if no other courtesy, at least a polite "No, thank you."

Emails, letters and phone messages at least deserve a response, even if the answer is not what the sender or caller would like it to be. "Thanks very much for getting back to me," I replied to someone who *did* answer my email recently, adding: "You'd be surprised how often people don't take the time to respond."

"Communication is important to me," the man responded, "and the fact that you were thoughtful enough to write will always get a response from me."



Books, links, and other resources:

Dictionary	http://dictionary.reference.com/
Websters	http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/
Urban Dict.	http://www.urbandictionary.com/popular.php?character=A
Un-encyclopedia	http://uncyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/UnBooks:Diary_of_a_Caveman

Cross Cultural Cosmos
business@crossculturalcosmos.com
crossculturalcosmos.com
We encourage you to contribute articles, thoughts,
ideas, resources to the next issue of
Our Business Times.

INTERCULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS

1. Upon being met at the office of a potential Indonesian client you are met with very personal questions about your job, education and salary. Why?

These questions are just part of the getting to know you process.

These questions are meant to establish your rank.

These questions are thought to be of importance in your own country, so are being asked out of politeness.

2. During intense negotiations the Russian negotiation team keep pressing you on a particular point you absolutely cannot budge on. You have politely indicated your position to no avail. They are insistent. Which of these options would be most advisable?

Keep politely insisting you are unable to offer any leeway. The Russians will eventually understand.

Drag your negotiation team out of the room dramatically. The Russians will then appreciate concessions on this point are unlikely.

Concede slightly. The Russians will then feel they have gained some sort of concession and move on.

3. Which of these statements is true?

German decision making can be very slow.

Germans take a casual approach to punctuality.

Germans expect humour in a business context.

4. During negotiations in Italy two of the Italian negotiation team keep taking phone calls. Why?

This is a sure sign they have little interest in your proposal.

This is a well know tactic to make foreigners feel uncomfortable and expose weaknesses.

They are probably taking calls from superiors; to not answer would be rude.

5. When meeting with the French in a business environment, which of these is best to avoid?

Personal questions

Eye contact

A formal demeanor

6. At the end of your negotiations with a Chinese firm, the negotiation team suddenly demands you drop your prices or they may have to pull out of any agreement. What should you do?

Stand firm. They are merely trying to test your resolve and gain some last minute concessions.

Ask for time to speak to your superiors.

Agree. The Chinese would not do so unless there is a good reason due to the need to save 'face'

1. These questions are meant to establish your rank; 2. Drag your negotiation team out of the room dramatically. The Russians will then appreciate concessions on this point are unlikely; 3. German decision making can be very slow; 4. They are probably taking calls from superiors; to not answer would be rude; 5. Personal questions; 6. They are merely trying to test your resolve and gain some last minute concessions.