

The Finer Points of WAH Etiquette

By Dan Reinhold

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Business etiquette is vitally important in the corporate world...and more so when you work at home. Here we at WAHumor present a basic primer on the finer points of WAH etiquette.

Proper Telephone Etiquette:

When answering a WAH business phone, you must first and foremost must answer it yourself. The most pleasing and eloquent message on your machine proves useless when your three-year-old proudly announces to your befuddled caller, "I MADE POTTY TOOOOODAYYYY!!!"

An easily recognized signal to quiet any outstanding clamor is most essential. A snap of the fingers, a ring of a bell or the sharp report of an airhorn may prove adequate. If not, consult your local Army/Navy surplus supplier for...ummm...unadvertised specials.

It is also imperative that you answer in the correct manner - it's not so much what you say as how you say it. Although you may have had a mad scramble with several youngsters experiencing Double Stuf Oreo-induced psychosis, upon answering your voice must be perfectly calm and your breathing even. Asthma attacks are very poorly received and could cost business.

In the event of severe noise, a tranquilizer dart gun is not thought unseemly.

Entertaining Clients:

For the purpose of entertaining clients, always use a small, secluded room away and well insulated from sounds emanating from the main living area. Should such a room be unavailable, build a shed.

Clearly mark the pathway to your chosen meeting place. Be sure to provide the quickest possible access to respect your client's time and avoid children. Consider installation of an extra large vacuum chute of the kind once used to transport mail in office buildings.

Have suitable refreshments on hand to be certain that you will not leave the room, thereby leaving said client alone and unprotected. If something should spill during the meeting, clean it up promptly and discard it in a large waste basket under your desk. If your client requests something that is not on hand, politely affirm that you have none - even water.

Unexpected Guests:

Use an intercom to ascertain the identity of the visitor, By this method, you may avoid opening the door and the risk of inadvertently inviting them inside. It is crucial that you use this approach at all times - even when the front door is open and the visitor is plainly visible behind the screen door. Feign blindness.

Provide an unwelcoming atmosphere at the entrance - no coat racks, tables, chairs or ironing boards that could hold coats. Should the visitor enter, assume the military "at ease" stance with your hands clasped behind your back. Maintain this position so that the visitor cannot hand their coat to you.

If guest still enters and wants to sit, prepare furniture by placing large, angular rocks under the cushions. Hide old rotten half-eaten bananas and unfinished yogurt cups (with children, there is always a constant and abundant supply on hand) in strategically chosen areas of the furniture to soil your visitor's clothing so that you may hurry them off to the dry cleaner and resume work.

We at WAHumor hope that you will find this basic primer to be of some use and always be mindful of the importance of proper etiquette for the work at home lifestyle.

With two boys, a dog, a cat, a wife and a household to keep together to boot, Dan Reinhold is the editor of WAHumor to hang on to his sanity by showing how insane the work-at-home community can be. Work at home? You deserve a laugh!

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