Technology Etiquette in the Workplace

Overview: Most of us take technology for granted most of the time, but technology drives modern life. In your personal life, you depend upon it for your survival (electricity, plastics, modern agriculture, etc). In your professional life, it facilitates communication between your company and their clients. However, only when your use of technology improves upon your ability to connect with others are using it effectively, and thereby substantially contributing to your success in the workplace.

Communication is 99% listening. When thinking about the various technologies described herein, think about how to use these tools to be a better listener. For example, when giving a presentation about the latest outbreak, you are educating your audience while being cognizant of why they are there to learn about it, and how they are feeling. Your talk should address the central question of your audience, “Why do I need to know this now?”

Living in the information age, people have a decreased attention threshold adapted to sorting through the overload. People tune in to what is important and disregard the rest. How many times have you pushed a door when you should have pulled, blind to the sign at eye-level? Your message must be relevant, pertinent, and delivered in the right style for your audience.

What determines if your message is effective requires addressing the following: Does your message answer their question concisely and simply? Does your style work for your audience? Is your delivery engaging? Does it motivate your audience to learn more, change their approach, or integrate new ideas?

Tools to enhance your presentation style: create curiosity, use humor, more pictures instead of text, body language, eye contact, slides with motion, gif images, etc. See references.
Always remember your manners in all communication: Please, thank you, and I’m sorry.

1) Introductions
   a) Generally, it is preferred to introduce yourself to someone you have not met before in person since E-mails can be interpreted widely and the advantage of information provided by non-verbal cues is lacking. However, if not possible or practical, consider using the telephone instead of email. If you determine that email is best, be sure to include some background about yourself and a description of your role within the organization.
   b) “Remember this hierarchy: first the meeting, then the phone call, then the voice mail, then the e-mail.” (5). Your workplace culture may alter this general rule.
   c) Follow up in-person and phone call intros with an email providing your contact information, thanking the person for their time and expressing interest and enthusiasm for future opportunities to work together.

2) Online etiquette

3) Email etiquette
   a) Subject line should be meaningful, searchable
   b) Until certain it is okay, include an appropriate salutation in all emails and replies (either “Dear Ms. Anderson” or “Hi Toni!”)
   c) Know when it is appropriate to use E-mail, versus phone, and in-person meetings.
   d) Know the 11-Email commandments (see “Don’t Push That Send Button”)
   e) Be polite: Please, thank you, I’m sorry.
   f) Use reply-all sparingly.
   g) Before you hit “send”, be sure it isn’t something you would not mind the whole world reading.
   h) The emotion conveyed in an email, if any at all, should be positive 99% of the time. The remaining time, use for expressing compassion (sympathizing, empathizing, apologizing) or uncertainty (“I am not sure about this…”). Using email to express dissatisfaction, distress or anger is almost never appropriate (“Can you believe it happened again!?” or “What are you talking about?!”)
   i) Check spelling, grammar.
   j) Be aware of the tone in your email. Use all caps sparingly and for emphasis only when absolutely necessary.
   k) Punctuation and emoticons: Use exclamation points and emoticons thoughtfully, generally best to avoid.
   l) “Never reprimand, reward, or fire someone who reports to you via e-mail.”
4) Resolving conflict in the workplace (many references included on this topic)
   a) Be aware of when you are feeling tired or emotional. Never send an emotional email.
   b) Email is never okay for resolving or communicating conflict. If you receive an angry email, reply “I am so sorry <name>. Would you like to talk about this?”
   c) Listen, empathize, apologize, create calm. Be vulnerable but don’t get trampled. Be willing to postpone expressing your point of view until there is calm and a fresh perspective (2 hours min. to 2 days). Observe your thoughts and emotions, but table acting on them/expressing them until you have given yourself ample time to consider them.
   d) Sorry can be used as an expression of empathy, without being an acceptance of fault.
   e) Never forget your manners. Always be respectful. Never act out to punish or hurt or embarrass. Allow your opponent to save face if they were wrong by offering forgiveness with sincerity and humor to minimize the impact on their ego, while not diminishing the lesson.
   f) Getting Past No, William Ury
      i) Don’t react, go to the balcony
      ii) Disarm them by stepping to their side
      iii) Change the game: Don’t reject – reframe.
      iv) Make it easy to say yes.
      v) Make it hard to say no.

5) When to pick up the phone

6) Conference calls
   a) See meetings.
   b) Be on time.
   c) Identify yourself before speaking.
   d) In cases where people have been invited to call in, notify them immediately if they are on speaker phone and introduce them to others listening in.
   e) Use the mute button when not speaking.
   f) Keep statements or questions brief.

7) Vocal personas and rhythms
   a) Be aware of your tone, style and vocal rhythms. Remember Alyson Hannigan who played Michelle Flaherty in American Pie? The valley girl/cheerleader vocal style is often viewed as immature in the work place. For both sexes, the overuse of the words and phrases “like”, “you know what I mean”, and “um” are distracting for your audience.
   b) Be aware of trends in speaking patterns and don’t take on others’ bad habits. For example, in research, beginning a reply to a question with “So…” has become so
habitual, it has become comical. “At the end of the day…”, and many others. Avoid traps like these which diminish your authenticity and bore your audience.

8) Meetings
   a) Meet only when necessary.
   b) Keep meetings brief and focused.
   c) Include an agenda in advance and minutes to follow.
   d) Allow time for input from each on your team.
   e) Encourage attendees to contact you with follow up ideas or questions.

9) Webinars/Teleconferences
   a) Check the day before that you have the projector, cords, etc.
   b) Set up everything 30mins ahead of time.
   c) Plant questions to get greater participation from your audience.

10) Seminars (effective public speaking, use of PowerPoint)
    i) Arrive early.
       (1) Be sure microphones, computers and projectors are working. Set up enough chairs and take time to arrange them.
       (2) Plan how to control lighting and traffic (people coming and going) during your presentation.
       (3) Rehearse. Rehearse. Rehearse (but don’t practice in front of a mirror, makes you self conscious).
       (4) Make small talk with those that arrive early to relax yourself and begin connecting with your audience.
    ii) Listening to your audience
       (1) Crafting your message to your target audience
          (a) How your audience feel before you start talking? Tired? Bored? Frustrated? Take their emotional temperature and adjust your style accordingly.
          (b) How you want them to feel or think at the end of your presentation?
          (c)
       (2) Overcome fear of public speaking. Learn how to be clam, relaxed, and pleasant to listen to, like talking to a friend over a cup of coffee. Have fun and effuse positive energy. Be passionate. Be confident. Be spontaneous. Add humor where appropriate. Have a dynamic and engaging delivery style. If you are boring, your message will be ignored.
       (3) Minimizes text, articulate concepts, use simple visual aids. Be brief by omitting information that is not critical to your talk. Be detail savvy.
       (4) Tell stories, use vivid images, specific examples,
       (5) Reading slides to your audience is boring, paraphrase instead.
(6) Face your audience when speaking, don’t talk to the screen.
(7) Memorize your presentation, using the slides as cues.
(8) Leaving ample time for questions. Encouraging questions/feedback.
(9) Paraphrase questions before answering them in large auditoriums.
(10) It should also build upon what your audience already knows or believes (meet them where they are) while adding something novel, or it will be disregarded as unimportant.

11) Cell phones and personal calls

12) Social Networking Sites at Work

13) Your online persona, professional and personal

14) We all make mistakes
   a) In a fast paced world of communication, we react almost instinctively, often creating awkward situations which, had we taken the time to reflect appropriately, could have been avoided. Etiquette, when overlooked, creates opportunities to remember the importance of manners in the workplace and why it is important to slow down despite pressures to the contrary. Similarly, we must remember this when others trip up and understand that they are learning too.

15) Recommended Reading
   2. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Erving Goffman
   4. The One Minute Manager. Kenneth Blanchard.
   5. One Minute Manners. Anne Marie Sabath.
   7. Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. Stephen Covey.
   8. The 12 Bad Habits That Hold Good People Back: Overcoming the Behavior Patterns That Keep You From Getting Ahead. James Waldrop and Timothy Butler.
   11. Don't Push that Send Button! Nick Morgan
   12. Getting Past No, William Ury
   13. Getting to Yes, Roger Fisher
   15. Am I the only sane one working here? Albert Bernstein.
17. Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work. Jack Canfield
19. Surviving the Toxic Workplace: Protect Yourself Against Coworkers, bosses and work environments that poison your day. Linnda Durre
20. Perfect Phrases for dealing with difficult situations at work. Susan Benjamin
21. The One Minute Manager. Kenneth Blanchard
23. The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs. Carmine Gallo
24. The non-designers presentation book. Robin Williams
25. The exceptional presenter. Timothy Koegel
26. How to deal with emotionally explosive people. Albert J. Bernstein
27. Games at Work: How to recognize and reduce office politics
28. Toxic Workplace!: Managing Toxic Personalities and Their Systems of Power