

# Student Orientation Course

*[Organised by the student committee]*



# Office Etiquettes

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9<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Mulund



The Chamber of  
Tax Consultants

# Something about me



- CA, DISA, FIFA, CPA (Colorado, USA), AMP (from ISB, Hyderabad)
- 23 years exposure in the field of accounting, controls, taxation, audits, due diligence reviews, process re-engineering, training
- Price Waterhouse, Citibank, KPMG (India, UAE, USA), P&O Nedlloyd, Standard Chartered Bank – from trainee to senior management level
- Have attended learning programmes on soft skills, leadership, team building
- Have been associated with certain committees / groups at ICAI - Research committee, GMCS committee, Bank Audit guidance note; Chembur CPE Study Circle of WIRC, BFSI & Capital Markets Study Group
- Have led sessions at various seminars, workshops (at ICAI, IMC, Marcus Evans, SNDT, Study circles - Chembur, Andheri, Thane, Pune, Ahmedabad); authored articles on topics such as bank audits, risk based audits, risk management, Basel reporting, accounting standards, career planning, student orientation, presentation skills, communication skills, etiquette management, effective meetings, knowledge management, johari window, work life balance
- Mentor younger CAs, impart soft skills training
- Passionate about photography and traveling
- Live in Chembur, Mumbai

A stylized red signature or logo consisting of several loops and curves, resembling a calligraphic monogram.



Any usage of names, brands, logos, methodology, images are purely for representational purposes and ownership thereof rests with respective owners.

This presentation has been tailored to meet specific needs of the CA students who have enrolled for the 3 days orientation course organised by the CTC Student Committee. Accordingly certain elements of office etiquettes are highlighted here, albeit in brief. If any student wishes to learn more, he/she can refer to literature available in public domain or procure specific learning material on soft skills.

I have used my personal experiences to share my awareness with the CA students. I have also sourced certain related material accessible in public domain.

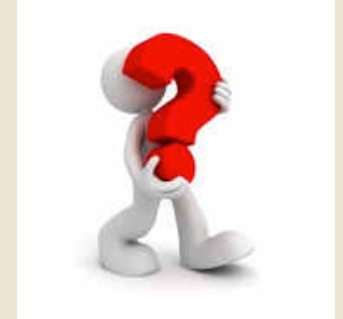
# Your EXPECTATIONS



First time in  
office

Challenges  
perceived

*120 minutes*



Why are **YOU** here???



# Are you ready for?



Office rules

Formal  
attire  
&  
grooming

No Canteen

Regulated  
leave

T E A M

Time  
management  
&  
deadlines

Reporting

No bunking

Study +  
work

Travel

# The journey



Background,  
culture &  
customs

Education

Experience

Etiquette





## Presentation



Dressing  
 Perception management  
 Behavior pattern

## Communication

### Oral

One on one  
 One to many  
 Many to one

Telephone  
 Face-to-face  
 Meetings

### Written

Correspondence  
 Documentation

Work profile

Industry

Opportunity

- Telephone etiquette
- Digital etiquette
- Meetings
- Corporate attire
- Personal grooming
- Social etiquette
- Fine dining etiquette

Confidence buildup

Self initiative

It is no longer about you but “the firm” whom you represent

# Do you agree?



Remember: You are being OBSERVED

Be responsive

Follow guidelines / protocol

Buy time

Alert your supervisor

Anticipate



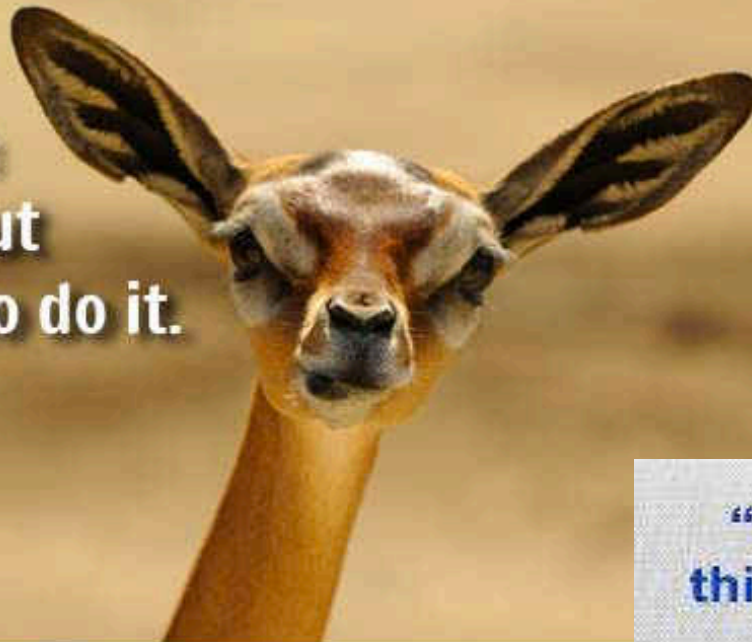


# Difference between 'hearing' and 'listening'



**Listening is  
a positive act:  
you have to put  
yourself out to do it.**

*David Hockney*



**“The most important  
thing in communication  
is to hear what  
isn't being said.”**

*~ Peter Drucker*

# Stakeholders



- Client sourcing and connectedness activities (networking)
- Client service activities (attestation, advisory, value add)
- Practice management activities (people, processes, admin)
- Business sustenance and continuity planning (branding, visibility, recall value, succession planning)
- Various representations (committees, regulators, conferences, meetings)

# We are recognised for



TRUSTWORTHY

HARD  
WORK

EYE FOR  
DETAIL

KNOWLEDGEABLE

CONTROLS

ETHICAL

TIMELINESS

ASSURANCE

Apart from ACADEMICS

Apart from Technical awareness

# Skills set wish list



- Leadership
- Communication
- Presentation
- Etiquette management
- Time management
- Knowledge management
- Cross-generation work

WHAT

HOW

Package  
yourself

M A D



There is no regulation but tailored guidelines & best practices

# Opportunities for staff members



- ✓ Execution
- ✓ Client interface / meetings
- ✓ Value add conversations/publications
- ✓ Business opportunity interaction
- ✓ Audit reports, opinions, tax advisory
- ✓ **Audit committees**
- ✓ **Interaction with regulators**



Business  
understanding

Technical  
knowledge

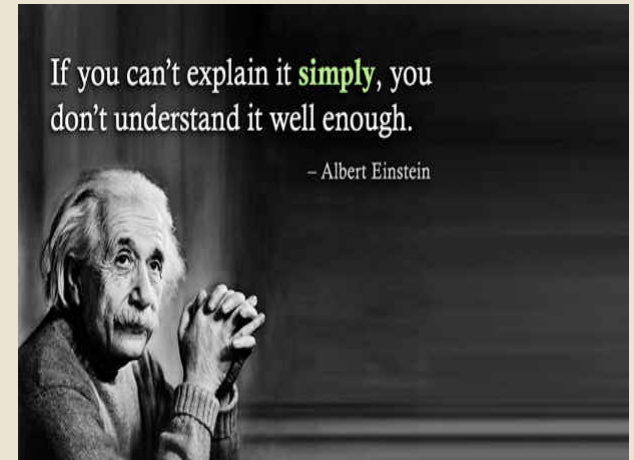
Networking



# Some of the challenges perceived



- Verbose or lack of brevity
- A sentence for a word
- Too much data
- Does not keep things simple
- Not going straight to the matter
- Not highlighting the key matters
- Lacks value add
- Lengthy discussions
- Too many caveats and disclaimers



Tone

Body language

# Communication

It is said that between 60% to 80% of communication occurs non-verbally.

This means that how you hold your posture, the intonation of your voice and your eye contact convey much more than your actual words.

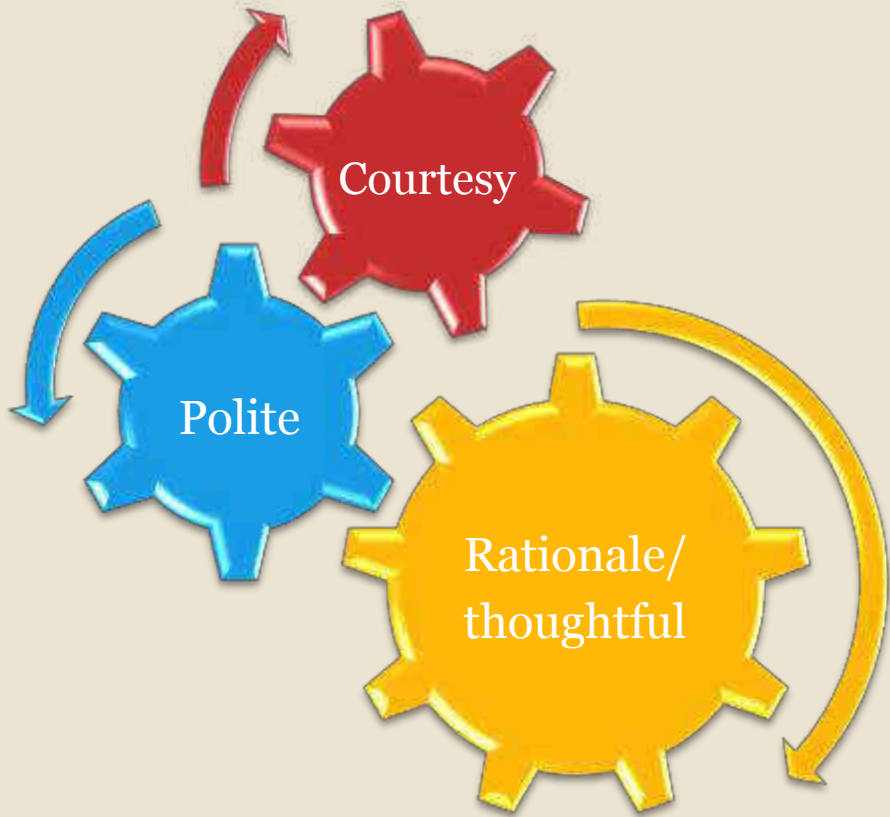
Also remember that Aggression is not same as being assertive



Formal

Informal

# Fundamentals

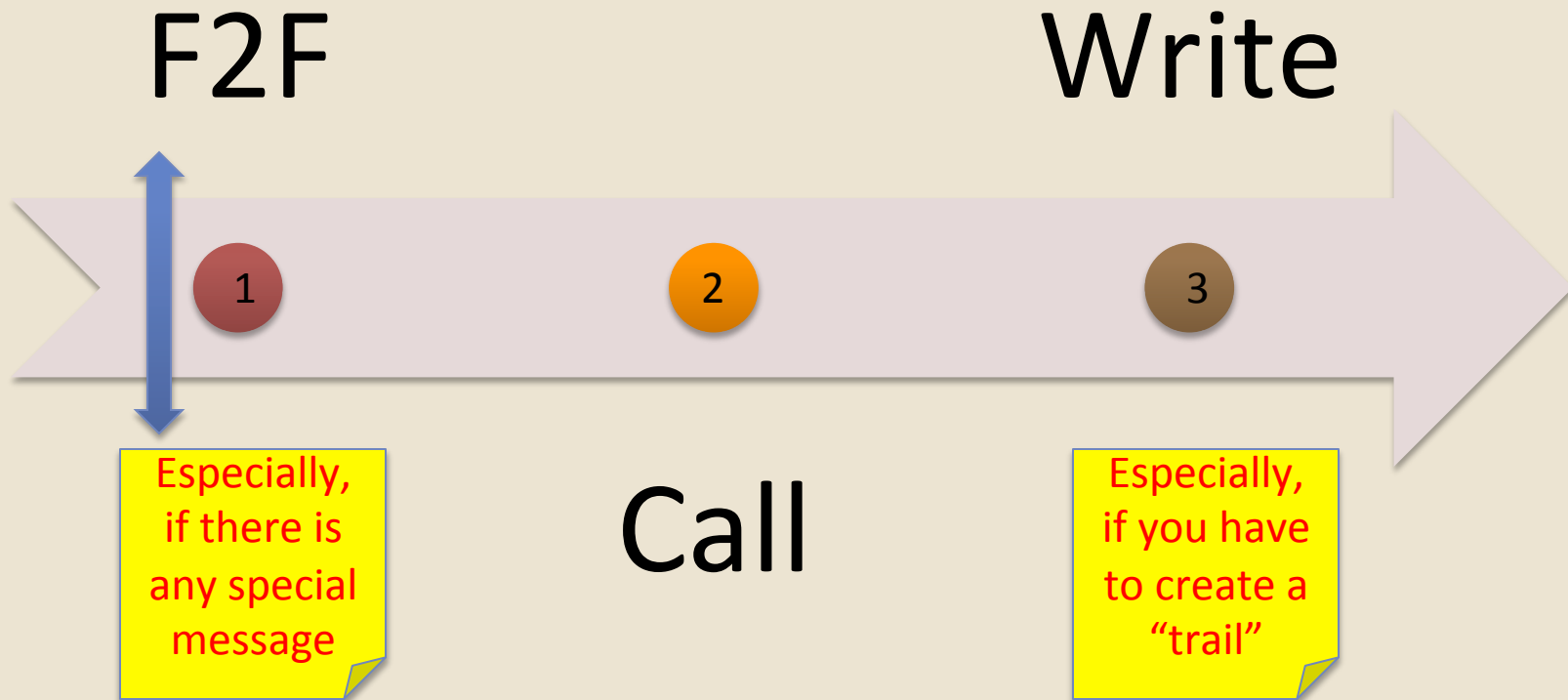




# Generic protocol of communication

This approach will:

- Save time
- - reduce bureaucracy



# Thumb rules for oral communication



- Speak clearly and with confidence
- Sound approachable
- Speak slowly, modulate, pause at appropriate stages
- Do not rush, or speak out of turn (unless in a debate!)
- Display appropriate body language (e.g. body stance, gestures, eye contact)

# Thumb rules for oral communication



- Refrain from using avoidable “prefix” pauses (e.g. ah, uh, hmmm, by the way, basically, actually)
- Avoid - you know what I mean, do you understand me, are you with me, is that clear, that’s not what I meant – this could be annoying and / or demeaning to others
- In case of conflict, end with an amicable solution, including ‘agreeing to disagree’
- Escalate if required – follow protocols

# Thumb rules for written communication



- Leverage standard templates (e.g. engagement letters, management representation letters, audit findings/reports, work paper, spreadsheets)
- Image system
- Identifiers – Headers, footers
- Size (stay consistent)
- Bold (only to draw attention)
- BLOCK LETTERS (avoid)
- Colour

# Thumb rules for written communication



- Executive summary
- Brevity, Relevance, Paragraphs, Subject
- Language, tone
- Salutation / closing
- Name appropriateness
- Relevant references to technical literature/regulatory framework (foot notes)
- Key pointers and details (maybe as an Annexure)
- Clarity (e.g. scope of work, fees, out of pocket spends, taxes, timelines, overruns)
- Terms and conditions (e.g. caveats, T&C, scope limitation, liability clause, legal jurisdiction)

# Making a Presentation – some thumb rules



- Cover slide, contents, summary/recap, end slide
- 2 - 3 minutes per slide
- Ideally 5 X 5 (not content heavy; surely not verbatim); legible font, not too crowded, white space
- Header & Footer, Branding
- Effective usage of technology (slide change, hyperlinks)
- Sum up, seek feedback, Q&A
- Rehearse

# Emails



- Respond within a reasonable timeframe (including any holding response)
- Take due care while using generic email tools/apps
- Addressee - To, Cc, Bcc (especially for mass emails)
- Subject clarity
- Usage of short forms (avoid sms/WhatsApp language!)
- Draft, read again before sending

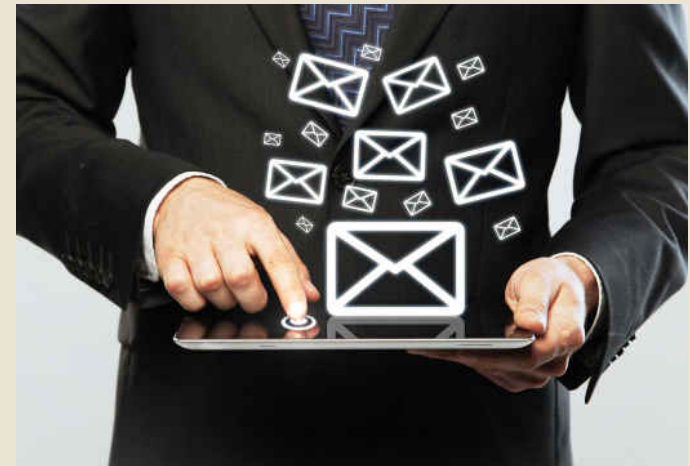
# Emails



- Structure (similar to any letter)
- Size (length)
- Attachments (including awareness about size limit)
- Signature, branding, message
- Caveat, notice to reader
- Options (delivered, read, forwards, reply all)
- Keep inbox refreshed
- Out of office response



# Using smart devices – stay SMART!



Remember – just a touch is enough!

# Net etiquette



- Refrain from sharing on social media platform - any firm and / or client related information
- Do not copy or share any client information other than if required for office purposes (be very careful while carrying client data on portable storage devices such as pen drives or external hard disks)
- Refrain from using personal email for official communication
- Refrain from using social media and personal emails while at work

# Telephone etiquette



- Number of rings
- Introduction, greetings (beyond “hello”) – it says a lot about you!
- Optimise caller ID function
- Missed calls (make a note and call back)
- If answering somebody else’s phone (e.g. office extension)
- Mobile phone etiquette (leverage silent mode feature)
- Smartphones (potential misuse e.g. cameras, voice recording)
- Use of speaker phone feature

# Telephone etiquette



- Blackout time (be cognizant of global time zone)
- When calling someone unscheduled, check for availability (e.g. Is it a good time to speak?)
- Putting on hold
- Messaging (SMS, MMS, WhatsApp)
- When in group
- When in meeting
- When commuting, especially with somebody or in public transport

# While commuting



- Be careful on what is spoken with the general public and/or driver around. They understand some of the aspects of the communication.
- If you need to speak, be discrete
- Do not speak about any information which only you are privy to (e.g. financials, audit issues)
- Drivers have a tendency to speak with each other about what they “heard”



# Text Messaging



- SMS, MMS, Whatsapp, Social media chat
- Refrain from using for professional purposes unless it is an “accepted” practice
- Do not share client confidential information over Whatsapp groups
- If the communication is relevant, save and share via email as a communication trail / evidence

# Documentation



- Name of client
- Location
- Assignment
- Period of work (e.g. year ended.....)
- Date of work
- Work done by
- Work reviewed by
- Cross references between synopsis and details

Ownership

Responsibility

# Documentation



- Work steps undertaken (e.g. audit programme, checklist, agreed upon procedures)
- Labeling, tagging, numbering, sequencing
- Separators
- Hole guards
- Stapling, binder clips/rings
- Portrait / landscape mode
- Access control (physical and logical access)
- Storage and Retention policy
- Be always “peer review” ready



# Meetings



- Logistics (time, travel time, venue, support)
- Agenda
- Minutes & circulation thereof in a timely manner along with action plan & responsibility
- Usage of gadgets (speaker phones, video conferencing, skype, whatsapp, facetime)
- Within the frame (screens, smartphones, tablets); clear visibility, greetings & introductions, restrict movements, remove clutter, dress well
- Keep eyes facing the camera, be aware of time lag, mute button, usage of radio buttons (e.g. WEBEX), be aware of end time (hence summarise towards the end)
- Small talk
- Elevator conversations

# Gatherings / client parties



- Do not over drink / eat (familiarise yourself with basic dining etiquette)
- Adhere to dining etiquettes)
- Maintain personal space
- Do not talk garbage – maintain self and firm's reputation
- Network appropriately
- Thank the host
- Accept / give gifts as per firm's gift policy

# Body posture



- Arms in pockets
- Arms on waist
- Fig leaf position
- Arms behind hips
- Arms folded at chest level
- Fidgeting with hair, watch, belt, ring, pen, mobile phone
- Facial expressions & gestures also speak
- Hand shakes say a lot



# Office attire = formal attire



## Wear what is appropriate and not brands!



# Clothes

DRESS  
ETIQUETTE 

- Nature of industry (hotel, banking, manufacturing, software development, BPO)
- Nature of job (office, factory, client facing, back office)
- Climate conditions
- Culture (e.g. burkha, pagdi)
- Formal dressing (e.g. tie, suits, scarf) (shirt, trousers) (salwar / churidar / leggings – Kurta; sarees)
- Friday dressing; Weekend dressing
- Accessories (e.g. neck tie, socks, belts, footwear, jewellery, hairclips, watch, tie-pin, cuff links, perfume, pens, office bag)
- Fitting, length, ironed, colour coordination, protocol
- Avoid bulging pockets, tight clothing, see through, short, non-flashy, torn/broken buttons

# Take care of – personal / hygiene care

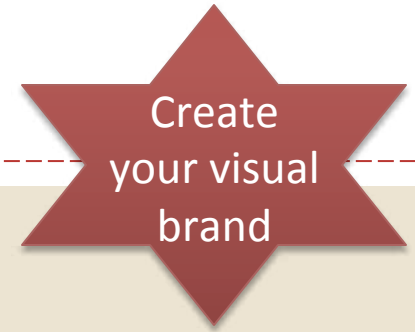


- Breath
- Smoking
- Tobacco
- Nails (including colouring)
- Hair
- Body art
- Overall health (especially stress levels)



Take a break.  
**You deserve it!**

# Sum up



- ✓ Make a difference
- ✓ Create high impact
- ✓ Leave first impressions
- ✓ Enhance recall value
- ✓ Enhance self and client confidence
- ✓ Build bridges and never burn them
- ✓ Be positive
- ✓ Smile
- ✓ Work ethically

# Reference material



My article on Etiquette Management is available on CTC web site. There are various other useful articles of mine on non-technical topics too.



# Thank you

Hope you found this 'presentation' useful



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