

8 Etiquette rules for the farm

Smooth manners are becoming at least as valuable on the farm as anywhere else

BY HELEN LAMMERS-HELPS

WE ALL KNOW THE FEELING, like when we're at a meeting where we don't know anyone and we're feeling awkward about starting conversations. Or maybe we're new on a board or a committee, and we aren't sure how formal or informal it's meant to be. Or when we've been invited to an event but we don't know what to wear. What exactly does "business casual" mean anyway?

She actually did write the book about it. Dr. Patricia Tice of Adel, Iowa, has compiled advice for the above situations and many others in *Agri Manners: Essential Etiquette for Professional Success*. Tice has combined her formal training in psychology and human behaviour with her experience and training in manners and etiquette to create a comprehensive guide covering just about every scenario you might encounter.

Below, she shares tips on some of the most common etiquette conundrums.

But first, she encourages us to think a bit about the value of good manners. While the rules of etiquette tend to be more relaxed than in times past, Tice agrees, "People are more comfortable when they know what to expect." Few of us really like free-for-alls, she explains. They make it harder for us to contribute and to make connections.

That helps explain why there's a real payoff to having good manners, Tice says. "Well-mannered individuals often have a more fulfilling and satisfying career and life."

To get your share, try these eight tips.

1 INTRODUCE NEW PEOPLE

Make a point of introducing people. "It becomes uncomfortable if introductions are not made, especially at a formal dining table. Take the time. People will appreciate it," says Tice.

When introducing someone, Tice says the order does matter. She says you should introduce younger people to older people, junior-ranking professionals to senior-rank-

ing professionals, family members to business professionals when attending a business function, and guests to the host.

"In other words, as a sign of respect, introduce those of a lower status to those of a higher status whether it means social or professional status... as archaic and unfair as it sounds," says Tice.

However she warns: "Under no circumstances should you use introduction rules to define people of another race, colour, religion, or sexual preference as someone of a lower social status. This is just not OK."

When you meet someone new, shake their hand with a firm grip and say, "I'm pleased to meet you," along with their name. Tice says repeating the name will help you remember it. If the name is not one you are familiar with, ask, "Am I saying that right?"

Try to use the person's name two or three times in the first few minutes of conversation to reinforce it. Wearing your name tag on your right side will make it more visible when people shake your hand, she adds.

If you are given a business card, jot down a few notes about the person on the back of the card, such as where you met them and a few key things they said. "This will help you remember them and continue the relationship," says Tice.

2 GET BETTER AT SMALL TALK

Many people dislike small talk but Tice says it has an important function in establishing relationships. Following a few simple strategies can make small talk enjoyable rather than disagreeable.

Tice recommends formulating open-ended questions and statements that start with "what," "how," or "tell me about that." For instance, "What brings you to this event?" "What kind of work do you do?" or "What do you like best about your work?"

Avoid questions that have "yes" or "no" answers. Encourage conversation when meeting new people by making sure your body language is welcoming. Make eye contact and give the person your full attention. Avoid crossing your arms over your chest or fiddling with your glass. If food is being served, never speak with food in your mouth.

When it comes to navigating conversational groups, Tice says if you see someone you would like to talk to but they are already engaged with another group, approach the group, wait for a pause in the conversation, then say hello to your acquaintance and the rest of the group. If you do not know anyone in the group, make eye contact with someone in the group and then ease into the conversation when an opportunity presents itself. Once you have started interacting with the group, you can introduce yourself.

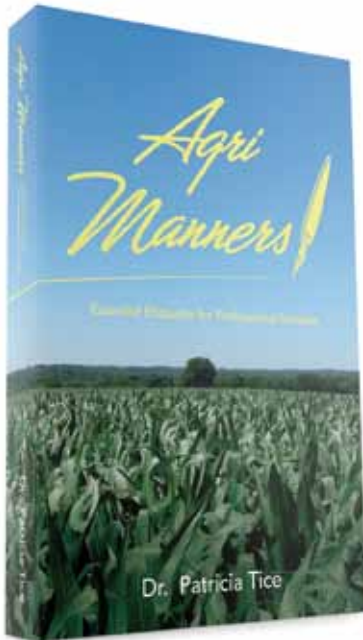
3 CHOOSE THE RIGHT WORDS

Tice contends our conversation tells people more about ourselves than anything else. Choose your language carefully. Avoid using slang, slurring your words, using profanity, speaking too loudly or talking only about yourself.

Also, don't overshare. Avoid talking about personal issues or family problems. "Some issues are private, keep them that way," says Tice.

Tice has some pet peeves about the language we use. In her opinion, we do not say "thank you" enough. Too often in the service industry people say "Have a nice day" when they should be thanking us for our business, she laments.

When we are thanked, she says we should avoid saying "no problem." Tice contends that when we say "no problem," we



Author Dr. Patricia Tice has combined her formal training in psychology and human behaviour with her experience and training in manners and etiquette to create a book that is an effective resource for dealing with people, different attitudes, behaviours and manners in the world of agriculture.

Agri Manners is available at www.AgriMarketing.com. Click on the "Bookstore" link.

insult the person who has thanked us. She says a better response is: "Glad to help," or "You're welcome."

Other words she'd like to see people stop using include "Hey" in place of "Hello." Tice says "Hello" is much more civilized and opens the way for a friendly conversation. She would also like to strike "whatever" from our vocabulary since it suggests the speaker is frustrated and doesn't care.

4 DRESS FOR THE OCCASION

If you aren't sure what to wear to an event, err on the side of caution and dress one level up from what you think people will be wearing. Tice says you will never go wrong being slightly overdressed. Make sure your appearance is neat and tidy, your clothes are clean without any tears or rips, shirttails tucked in, and wear a belt if your pants have belt loops.

5 BE MINDFUL OF THE CLOCK

Be on time. "When you are late, you are stealing time from someone else and that is not fair to them," explains Tice. Respect others by showing up on time or a bit early. If you are running late because something unexpected has happened, call or text to say you are running late.

6 PRACTICE RANDOM ACTS OF HELPING

"Be aware of what is going on around you as you run your daily errands," says

Tice. Watch for purposeful ways to help others, such as holding a door open or helping with heavy bags.

7 BE CAREFUL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Think twice before posting on social media since it all becomes public information, advises Tice. Increasingly, she warns, companies check out new people they are considering doing business with to see if they have posted anything that may be embarrassing to the company. "Don't post anything on social media that you wouldn't say in person," Tice adds.

8 SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE

If someone does something nice for you, take the time to send a handwritten note. Tice says people love to receive thank-you notes. "It's the least you can do for someone who has taken the time to think of you," she says.

What do you do when you someone is behaving rudely?

First off, she advises, remember that the majority of mistakes are unintentional. Someone butting in front of you in line or speaking loudly on a cell phone in a restaurant probably isn't aware of how their behaviour is affecting others, she says.

If you are the one who is at fault, Tice advises admitting that you made a mistake and apologizing. "Saying sorry goes a long way," she says. **CG**

This is a great opportunity to learn from great, powerful women in Ag and other industries. Sometimes it can be easy to forget all the possible connections we can make, so getting into a room with 570+ women really helps!
— Jamie Y., Regina, Saskatchewan, AWC Delegate

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