

Essential Etiquette Tips for You & Your Business with Laura Akano

Frances Barrett: [00:00:00] Business etiquette is probably something that we don't realistically think about when we think about our business. It is just something that we do naturally, but actually it's about giving it a really great first impression to you and to your brand so that people get to know you, the individual behind the business, in a professional capacity.

Hello. If we haven't met before, my name is Frances and I'm the Head Brain of The Social Brain, and this week I'm going to be joined by Laura, who is an etiquette coach.

Now this is take two. Last week we had some issues with the sound and with joining on the Instagram Live. So fingers crossed this week. It works. Laura, I can see your beautiful face. So thank you so, so much for joining me this week.

If you would like just to take a few moments just to introduce yourself and what you do and who you help to my followers so we can get to know you a little bit more.

Laura Akano: Okay. Thank you for inviting me, Frances. [00:01:00] My name's Laura Akano. I'm an etiquette and social skills coach. I work with children, I work with teenagers and I also work with adults in a professional capacity or even just socially because we, we all mix with people whether professionally or socially.

And I believe that the skills in terms of etiquette, knowing how to conduct yourself, how to present yourself, makes a big difference. And maybe not necessarily just because you are meeting other people, but it's the confidence that it gives you as well, knowing that, okay, I'm going for a networking event or, or my work have a, a social event on.

I would know how to have a conversation with people, what questions to ask, what questions not to ask. So that's really why I feel etiquette is essential, although most people tend to think of it as maybe, just for certain people within society or the royal family, but it's actually a day-to-day thing that we, so many rules of [00:02:00] etiquette are around us, but most of us don't think of it that way.

So for me, it's about learning to be respectful towards other people. And etiquette in essence, is all about kindness, respect, and consideration for other people, plus the confidence it gives you as well, knowing how to present yourself and just, you know, behave in different situations.

Frances Barrett: Absolutely. And you know, I love that. I love the fact that you've, you've kind of linked it to confidence quite early on because I think when you, when you take away that nervousness of how you are going to appear to different people within a networking situation or even at the school gates, right? You, you have that element of not knowing what's gonna happen, yes. But when you know how to react in a particular way. That is what gives you that, that confidence in going forward, right? So, yeah, I I love that. That's, that's so incredible.

Laura Akano: Thank you. Thank you. It, it really does. Cuz most people, especially adults, oh yes, the young people need it, they do this. But [00:03:00] I, I observe a lot of adults as well, whether it's table manners, whether it's how they've spoken to someone, oh, we could all do with a little bit of polish.

Frances Barrett: Yeah, absolutely. I know I can, I know I can. I I could always do better. I get that. So what are kinda your biggest tips when it comes to practicing etiquette? Etiquency? Is that the right word?

Laura Akano: No etiquette. Yes. Etiquette, yes.

Frances Barrett: Yes. Practicing etiquette within a business setting, because obviously my audience are mostly business owners.

So what are kind of your top tips when it comes to practicing etiquette in, in, in a business.

Laura Akano: I mean, whether you are self-employed or you work for a company, one of the first things I always would say is how you present yourself, your appearance. Mm. And, okay, so we might meet people physically in at a networking event or a meeting or at work.

You might do that, but there's also, when we look at first impressions, perhaps [00:04:00] the first time you speak to a client or, or business partner or someone for the first time, you speak to them on the phone or perhaps you send them an email or write a letter. That letter, that message, that telephone call, could just be the first impression they get of you.

How did you speak? How did you come across? What sort of language did you use? When you communicated with people and more so when you are meeting someone face-to-face, I believe it's so important to take pride in our appearance, and I'm not talking about people investing in the high end designer clothing and things like that.

No. Whatever you can afford. Just making sure that you are well turned out, your clothes are ironed. They're not crumpled, they, you haven't got holes in them, they're not faded. And that in itself helps you to feel comfortable and confident when you are meeting people. So I think the appearance and you can do all of that and then, perhaps you've [00:05:00] got chipped fingernails or your fingernails are shaved, or they're D or they're dirty or, or something like that.

Or you've just had lunch and you've left, you know, you've not checked your teeth and you've got food stuck between your teeth. They're just these little things that's so important that can make or break a first impression. I, I believe so. People should really pay attention to how they come across, so we can look at our parents.

Do your clothes always fit as well? Do do you wear clothes that fit? Because some people would put on a really nice dress, but perhaps the shoulders are too, too wide, or it's just too baggy on them, or it's too tight, you know, all these little things, and then you, you go to an event and then you're having to keep pulling down your dress or pulling down your skirt, and I see a lot of ladies do that as well. Mm-hmm. So again, it's, it's very important how you come across. So whether you are meeting someone physically or you're speaking to someone for the first time on the phone, and one tip I have, particularly when you're talking to someone on the phone, it could be an interview.

Or it could just be [00:06:00] a business meeting, someone you, you, you that might potentially be your client. I always suggest that when you're speaking to someone, stand up and try and smile. When you are speaking on the phone, the tone comes across quite different. Mm-hmm. And when you're standing up as well, you seem more confident when you're, when you're talking, as opposed to when you're sitting down.

Frances Barrett: Mm-hmm. That's so, so interesting. I suppose that's to do with power stances, right. And really feeling power.

Laura Akano: It's certainly does, does make a difference. So these, these little things, you know, I, I do often suggest to people who come on my course. So,

the ladies in particular, if the skirt is a bit too big or too tight or the, you know, you have a size that you, you've bought, just get it altered so that it fits you better.

You know, we, most of us will shop off the peg from a shop and not, quite often the dimension are, are not always perfect. So, and another tip I'd like to give ladies also is if you can take the time, look at where you buy your [00:07:00] clothes from. There's usually you would find two or three shops that you can just pick up an item and it would fit perfectly and you don't have to alter, you don't have to do anything to it.

Mm-hmm. That is a good thing to do. If people can invest their time in that you, there would always be a brand, a few brands, maybe two or three that you can, you know, if I'm desperate for an outfit, I can go there and I don't have to worry that the waist will be too big or, or the shoulders, it's just going to fit nicely.

Mm-hmm. And then you can still shop in other places, but then sometimes, you know that for it to fit nicely, I'd probably have to get it altered. So I think appearance is definitely very important professionally. And, and especially for business, business people. Sure. But going into that as well, when we first meet people, how do we know?

Do we shake hands correctly? Particularly ladies, we've been told that handshakes can be a bit weak. So we, we need to all try and be [00:08:00] conscious, especially if you're shaking hands with a male in in particular. Make sure you put some energy and when people are shaking hands, you need to remember that you shake web to web.

Okay. Not like, not just a tip of the f of the fingers. So that's something I notice a lot of. Some men do it as well, so do ladies, but just be aware that you need to be shaking hands, web to web, and really make sure that you give a firm handshake. Making eye contact when you're greeting people or when you're talking to people and trying to smile.

Obviously. If it's a serious conversation and, per, perhaps it's even someone telling you a story that's maybe not such a happy story, then you're not going to stand there grinning all the time. But try and have that warmth in your voice and people are speaking to you. You're making eye contact. You're nodding, you're, you are listening, showing that you are listening attentive, attentively rather.

So tho, those are the initial things I would say in terms of first impression and your first impressions, and more importantly, [00:09:00] your posture. Mm. Yeah. Posture really, really matters. How you carry yourself, how you walk.

A lot of people tend to lean forward or, or just, just come across in, in a, in a way that's not too confident and looking, thinking about your body language. When you're talking to people, you normally just cross your hands across your chest. That's not a very. That's not a positive body language when you're, when you're meeting people.

So again, think, what am I doing with my hands? Am I paying attention? Am I tapping my feet? Am you know, am I really paying attention to the, the people around me? Or is someone talking to me and I'm scanning the room to, to see if you know, if, if someone else is there or who else I can talk to. So just be aware of these, these little things in, in terms of first impressions that I think that's, I would leave you there for now.

Frances Barrett: Sure. And, and just in term, and I've got a couple of questions, so bear with me. Okay. Just. So if, if you are quite introverted when it comes to just your personality type, [00:10:00] you, you, you do just a little bit shy. You're a fly on the wall, but you're starting this business and you, you wanna get out there and networking.

Is there a, a kind of tip if you are sort of closed in your body language, if you are kind of hugging yourself, if you do have that habit of, oh my goodness, I'm nervous, I'm gonna keep, keep clicking my pen. I know I do that when I'm nervous. Click, click. So do you have any tips with how to overcome that?

Is there a fake it until you feel more confident sort of strategy here? Or is it just getting into the habit of practicing how you stand?

Laura Akano: I would. Have to say probably a little bit of both. And you probably wouldn't believe me if I said to you, that is just me. You've just described.

Frances Barrett: I don't believe you at all.

Laura Akano: Definitely an extrovert. Sorry, introvert. I like, I like my own time, my own, my own company. But having got gotten into this, that confidence has come. But that does not mean I'm [00:11:00] still, I'm no longer an introvert cuz I, I still can feel a little bit, you know, I just don't want to be here. I want to be on my own.

And you know that, that is fine. What people need to learn if you are that way inclined is preparation. So I'm going somewhere, I know where I'm going. What outfit or which outfit am I going to pick out that I feel really comfortable and confident in that's really going to make me comfortable or that I don't need to think about it.

You know, sometimes you dress up and you think, yeah, I look really good. Maybe that's one of the occasions you need to do that when you're going to meet people.

Secondly, it's about preparing. Where are you going? What type of people will, will be there? Try and draw up a few questions that you ready, that you can ask people, conversation, small talk that you can start off with people and begin practicing, introducing yourself as well.

And it's just as simple as about going up to people, [00:12:00] introducing yourself, your first name, your last name, and you might just, if it's companies or things like that, you might just want to mention which company you, you work for, or someone might say, okay, what? You know, what do you do? Ideally, that's not the first question you should ask someone at a networking or meeting event when you meet someone. That would be wrong.

But at least if you've prepared, you've got a few questions, you know a little bit about the venue, you are prepared to go into that situation. You've practiced, you've got your questions ready, you know where you're going. Also making sure you give yourself enough time to get there.

There's nothing worse than you are late for an occasion or an event and you're going to meet people and it's a business environment and you, you get there and you are all flustered and that already puts you on a bad footing, especially if you're an introvert. Mm-hmm. So again, it's about planning and preparing ahead and practicing.

A quick tip also is about using [00:13:00] open-ended questions when you ask people, when you're talking to people, like how and when. A good point also is to meet, when you meet someone, start off with a compliment.

Frances Barrett: Mm-hmm. Oh, I love that tip. Yeah, I, I, I, cuz it just makes you feel, or the person who's receiving the comp, the compliment feels so much more comfortable within your company, right?

Laura Akano: That, that is such a great thing to do when, you know, you meet someone, you've introduced yourself and you just pay them a compliment. But if you are going to do that make sure that the compliment is about them, not about you. So for instance, someone's got this lovely red bag and it, it just looks fabulous on them.

Make sure that, oh, that bag matches your, your, your jacket or your coat. You know, it looks fabulous on you. Not that, oh, I, I love your bag, or I love your, make it about them because you're paying them a compliment.

Frances Barrett: I love that tip because I think I'm quite guilty of saying, oh my God, I love your insert, whatever it is here. [00:14:00] Yeah. And making it all about me. But that's a really, really great tip to flip it back onto them so I love.

Laura Akano: Flip it back on onto them. Yes. And so, or, you know, you could, you could compliment the, the venue. Or if it's a, if, if it's a business lunch, you could talk about the, the, the restaurant or the decor something.

So just be prepared. Once you prepare in advance it, it helps you a lot. You feel more confident when you get there. Yeah. And when you go and, go to these networking events and things, also think, why am I going? What am I hoping to achieve? That really helps as well in terms of you being comfortable, being confident, you know why you're going, you know what you want to achieve, and that will really make a difference.

Mm-hmm. It doesn't matter if you're an introvert or not. When you are prepared, you know exactly why you're, you're going, you, you might not, I mean, you're not going to be the one that's doing most of the talking, cuz most introverts, they're not. Yes. But again, the best communicators I, I, I read enough about it, are the [00:15:00] people who listen more than they talk because you learn a lot more about people for sure. By listening again more than being the one that's always talking. But that does not mean you don't ask questions. That does not mean you don't contribute to the conversation.

Frances Barrett: Yeah. And and I love that. And, and I think everything, like everything that you do, business, life, whatever, it all comes down to that planning beforehand.

And when you are more planned, you are more composed, you are re you are just ready. You're ready.

Laura Akano: You are. And, and that that is the difference. Mm-hmm. That is, that is the difference. I mean, some people are great communi, well, I wouldn't say necessarily great communicators cuz because you can talk does not mean you're good at communicating.

But some people can talk their way through anything. But if you know that's not you. Then preparation is very important.

Frances Barrett: Absolutely. No, completely and honestly, I, I, I honestly, that is like, I'm my mantra. Always, always, always plan. Another question that I had from what you'd said earlier is it's [00:16:00] about handshakes.

So obvious, and this is, you know, so, , I, I, I think a lot of people are still a little bit nervous about after the pandemic, things like that. So, , are, are, are you seeing that people are still necessarily shaking hands or is there a workaround that you could use instead? Like, what are your thoughts if, if you are going to one of these events and you are nervous about hand shaking or you, you want to kind of introduce yourself in another way. Do you have any tips around that?

Laura Akano: Okay. I know we don't have a lot of time and I was just teaching a group of ladies at the weekend and this came up. From my experience people are still shaking hands. Okay. So you can either decide, okay, I'm going to sanitize my hands beforehand or after.

If you've shaken hand with people. Mm-hmm. So people are still shaking hands as long as you do it correctly. If you don't feel comfortable, comfortable enough to do that, another way is ideally to just put [00:17:00] your hands behind your back, approaching the person. With a smile, making eye contact. And that's straightaway the moment you're approaching them, you're saying, good morning, good afternoon, Laura Akano, how do you do. Whatever greeting you want to greet. You're still smiling. Your hands are being behind your back straightaway. They know you're not going to shake. I mean, they, you, they can see that you're not going to shake their hands. And if they stretch out their hands, unfortunately, perhaps the polite thing might be to try and shake their hands.

But most people, if they're sensitive to it, they would realize that. Okay. This person does not want to shake their hands. And then o o of course, during the pandemic there were so many ways you could, you know, put your hand, just over your, your chest and the, the people who copied the, the, that, the Asian style of greeting as well.

So there are other ways, but generally I would prefer just to put my hands behind my back as I, you know, once I approach the person. Oh, good morning. How are you? I'm still greeting you. I'm still making eye contact. I'm still smiling and that should be fine. But more and more people, I, I would say [00:18:00] are definitely going back to handshakes, and I just don't think that's going away anytime soon.

So, as I said, either have your antibacterial wipes to hand or your anti, you know, have your gel with you. And once that's finished, just, just put some hand gel on. Okay, if, if that's what you want to do. But I still think it's, it's good if you can shake hands with people, it's, it's just, yeah.

Frances Barrett: Amazing. Okay. And I, I suppose it all just falls, it boils down to body language, right? And how you read people and, and just making sure that you are very, very aware of what other people are, what other people are doing, what they're comfortable with, and just asking questions.

Laura Akano: Yeah. I mean some, some people might tell you, I, I've not come across that I am, you know, but suddenly during the pandemic someone might say, oh, I don't feel comfortable enough yet to shake hands, which is great if, if they don't want to want to shake hands, but most people were avoiding it at that time.

Mm-hmm. But now with some of [00:19:00] the events I've been to, I've seen people shaking hands or maybe people who really know each other, they might hug each other, what, you know, whatever. So it's really about what you're comfortable with or, or as I said, you can just put your hand over your, your heart and say good morning and, and maybe a nod as well.

Frances Barrett: Yeah. Amazing. I, I, I just wanted to kind of, cuz there is still. I, I go to networking groups. I go to networking groups quite frequently, but I know these people and I'm hugging and everything else.

Laura Akano: That's different. Yes. That's different to an environment where you don't really know the, the know the people. So it's likely people are going to want to shake hands.

Frances Barrett: Mm-hmm. Amazing. Okay. And when it comes to kind of, your language, I just wanna kind of touch on this before we kind of wrap up because I think, again, that is something that we sort of overlook. And I think social media is to blame with that because we want to, and I'm guilty of this too, I, I wanna come across as friendly, personable, you know, down to earth.

What are kind of your guidelines when it comes to [00:20:00] using your language when, when thinking about etiquette and representing your business in the best way for, for you and for your business?

Laura Akano: Well, I would say writing proper sentences as opposed to slang or abbreviations, especially if you're posting on social media and even messaging.

I, I feel it quite strongly, and it's quite shocking. A lot of adults, professionally and in business will send you a, a message, for instance, instead of, okay, a y for okay they would put ok and, and, I have had some text messages from businesses and I think seriously, you know, you need etiquette training in your company.

So I would say when you are, whether it's email messaging, text messaging, or on social media, anything you write, anything you write about, please use correct spelling, punctuation. Just do your best to make sure that you write as clearly as possible [00:21:00] without shorthand, without abbreviations, because again, what impression are you given in, in, you know, in, in terms of your business or professionalism as well in, you know, if you are a professional and as we know with interviews, more and more nowadays, employers can go online and, and just look. Try and see if they can find you what they can, you know, if they can get a pick into your personality or what you do outside of work.

So I think language is very important, particularly in business from sending an email check. You know, I always say triple check before you play, press send what you know, read it once, read it twice. By the third time, chances are each stage you've read it, you're making adjustments actually. Mm. That's, that's what I find.

So people really need to be careful how is it coming across, and that is, how are you coming across with the choice of words and the language you use when you write or even when you speak to people.

Frances Barrett: Mm-hmm. Amazing. Yeah, I think, , I, I, I'm kind of the spelling police when it comes to writing, [00:22:00] writing emails and writing, seeing things on social media, and having that element of etiquette on your social media as well as, as you, as you said, you know, these employers, these clients, suppliers, whoever can find you.

Laura Akano: They can can find you if they want to.

Frances Barrett: Yes. There's a lot of information out there that we put out there, so make sure that your, even your, your lockdown Facebook profile is still showing you in a, in a good light, Absolut, absolutely.

Laura Akano: It's so, so important. It's also important because this, just a small thing can lose you, that client or lose you that position.

So I, I, I think the persona or the person that they see you, you really need to be aware of how you're coming across and that a lot of that can be seen in the language that you use, in the way you write and in even just comment when you comment on people's things. Do you, do you take the time to write properly?

Do you, do you take the time to think about what you've written as well? So I, I, yeah. That is really important.

Frances Barrett: Yeah, [00:23:00] absolutely. Oh, great. You know, I could talk to you about this stuff all day, but we are so limited on time. You'll have to come back and have another chat with me.

Laura Akano: Fantastic. I'll be happy to do that.

Frances Barrett: All right. Absolutely. Welcome back anytime. But if, if, if my followers wanted to find out more about you and the work that you do, how can they find you? How can they work with you?

Laura Akano: Well, they can follow me on, on Instagram and, , I have a website. It's just polishedmanners.co.uk so people can contact me there.

I'm on Facebook as well as Polished Manners, so yes, they can, they can find me on, on social media.

Frances Barrett: Amazing. Thank you so, so much for joining me today and for giving all those useful tips. So, so amazing to talk to you.

Laura Akano: Thank you for inviting me. It's been my pleasure. Thank you.

Now, if I want to talk to you a little bit about my upcoming workshop, which is an in-person workshop in Sheffield in Essex at Create Business Hub on Monday the fifth, and Tuesday the 6th of June.

It's called InstaBrains and it's all about Instagram and marketing. So we are going to [00:24:00] break through all of those different strategy and marketing strategy points when it comes to goals, audience listening. Content engagement, optimization and the different content types. We are also going to be talking about protecting your mental health while you are using Instagram, which I think is a really important point.

Right now, we are all guilty of falling down that comparison I to to where we need to see somebody else's highlight reel. And we are just like, why is my life not like that? I know that I am not guilty, and we're gonna be talking about how you can protect your mental health when it comes to feeling like that.

I'm going to show you how I create a 12 weeks of content within one day so you can go away and practice what you've learned. There are a couple of bonuses, so one bonus is a never seen before, anywhere else workbook that goes through everything that we've worked through and of my encyclopedia of Instagram.

There's gonna be a lot, a lot, a lot of stuff in there for you to go away and practice yourself after having those teachings in the session. You are [00:25:00] also going to get access to my Excel Strategy Planner, which is also available on Amazon and retail for 29 99 on Amazon, and that is an undated planner where you can go ahead, you can plan in all of your content, and you can make sure that you are one in line when it comes to your content strategy.

Lunch will be included as well, and there is a payment plan option available if you are ready to get started with your Instagram strategy and Instagram marketing and just kind of get some more results from Instagram, right? Are you still hearing crickets when you post on Instagram or you only get a like from your mum?

Then go on over to thesocialbrain.co.uk/instabrainsworkshop and all the information will be there. Now with Instagrams live. There are only a maximum of 10 available seats, so these spaces go really, really quickly. So please, please, please, if you do want to [00:26:00] upscale on your Instagram and marketing, don't delay.

Check it out today and if you have any questions, just let me know. You can always book in the 15 minute chat with me and we can see if that's going to be the right option for you.