

UNIT IV

Business Etiquettes

The basis of business etiquette is about building strong relationships in your field by fostering better communication. This can only happen when those you work with feel secure and comfortable. Although basic business etiquette may vary from country to country, some principles stand the test of time and geography.

(i) Arrive on Time

In the business world, it is best to observe the old rule, “Five minutes early is late.” Allow yourself enough time to arrive promptly, take off your coat, and settle in a bit. Arriving at a meeting exactly at the appointed time can make you feel rushed, and you will look it. Time is a commodity; by being punctual, you show you respect others.

(ii) Dress Appropriately for Work

While appropriate dress certainly varies from field to field and climate to climate, some things remain the same. Clean, pressed clothing without any loose threads or tags and relatively polished, closed-toe shoes are a must. Look at the people around you for ideas on what sort of clothing is standard.

The adage, “Dress for the job you want, not the job you have,” is a good rule to follow. When in doubt, ask human resources personnel when you get the job or discreetly ask someone you work with.

(iii) Speak Kindly of Others

Taking care to greet your co-workers and remembering to say “please” and “thank you” make a tremendous difference in the way they perceive you. Your good manners show that you acknowledge those around you and are considerate of their presence. Avoid discussing political or religious matters.

Keep the conversation focused on noncontroversial topics, so your co-workers find you easy to talk to. That sort of diplomacy is the basic idea of business etiquette.

(iv) Avoid Gossip

Gossip and eavesdropping are childish behaviors that have no place in the workplace. If you hear a rumor about someone in the workplace, do not pass it on. People don’t always know or remember who starts a rumor, but they always remember who spreads it. If you walk into an area, and it seems your co-workers don’t know you are there, make sure to greet them politely to remove any chance that you accidentally eavesdrop on their conversation.

(v) Show Interest in Others

Showing interest goes beyond business etiquette into general politeness, but it bears repeating: When speaking with someone, show you are truly engaged. Do not play on your

phone or computer, and if you have to answer a communication say, “Excuse me one moment; I’m so sorry.”

Maintain friendly eye contact. Listen. People will remember how you make them feel, and nobody wants to feel as if they are ignored.

(vi) Watch Your Body Language

In the Western world, a handshake is still the typical greeting. Say hello with a firm but quick handshake. This handshake is the extent of how much you should ever touch a co-worker – when in doubt, just don’t touch. Hugs or other types of affection that you share with friends and family are out of place in the workplace.

(vii) Introduce Yourself and Others

Sometimes you can tell people do not remember your name or position. Introduce or reintroduce yourself quickly if that seems to be the case. If you are with a co-worker who is new, take the time to introduce him to others. It helps to have a friendly person make you feel comfortable in the office.

(viii) Don’t Interrupt Others

When you have a great idea or suddenly remember something important, it can be tempting to blurt it out. Do not do this. Interrupting the person who is speaking sends the message that what she is saying isn’t as important as what you have to say. Demonstrating you are an attentive listener is the backbone of diplomacy.

(ix) Mind Your Mouth

Using vulgar language is a surefire way to become unpopular in your workplace. Vulgar language includes swear words and judgmental language. Business etiquette requires being constantly mindful that you are in a diverse environment with people you do not know on a personal level. Speak as though someone from human resources is always listening.

(x) Consume Food and Drink Correctly

If you attend an after-hours work event, do not drink too much alcohol. When at work, take care not to bring particularly malodorous foods that everyone in the office can’t help but smell. Don’t make noises during or after you eat; no one wants to hear that.

At the heart of these 10 basics of business etiquette is diplomacy. Taking care to treat everyone as the valuable people they are, says a lot about who you are as a person. That is the kind of care people notice and want to be around. Embrace the basics of business etiquette to become a lasting employee or to advance through the corporate ranks.

The Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Business Communication

Cross-cultural communication occurs when a person from one culture sends a message to a person from another culture. Cross-cultural miscommunication occurs when the person from the second culture does not receive the sender’s intended message. The greater the

differences between the sender's and the receiver's cultures, the greater the chance for cross-cultural miscommunication.

Cross-cultural communication has become strategically important to companies due to the growth of global business, technology and the Internet. Understanding cross-cultural communication is important for any company that has a diverse workforce or plans on conducting global business. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate and perceive the world around them.

Cross-cultural communication in an organization deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high-context vs. low-context cultures, nonverbal differences, and power distance are major factors that can affect cross-cultural communication.

Geography

In a time of international corporations and foreign outsourcing, business teams are spanning continents. Employees in the Americas may find themselves working closely with people in India, Japan and France all at once. Finding common ways of working together can be challenging especially when communication is primarily through email and occasional video conferences. Companies that elect to outsource and operate international offices have to consider guidelines, protocols and significant education on communication and working together. Otherwise, employees can easily find themselves struggling to work together, and productivity suffers.

Considerations

When conducting business internationally, entrepreneurs learn that cultures have different expectations and protocols when it comes to meetings and interpersonal discussions. Cultures such as those of Japan and China have strong power distance values, and much of the speaking and interaction is done by the most senior member of a group. In fact, it may be inappropriate for someone lower in your organization to speak to a leader in theirs. Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian cultures consider socialization and getting to know one another a very important part of in-person meetings. Therefore, the American standard of "getting down to business" may hit a wall with cultures that consider building trust between parties essential to the business process.

Misconceptions

Phrases and ideas don't always translate. Numerous companies have found that selling their products in foreign markets has meant changing slogans and branding strategies to meet the tastes of a new target demographic. For example, in many third-world countries, fast-food restaurants are actually expensive to the local population. The low-cost and good value strategies often used in the United States have to be changed to present fast food as a premium product. In another example, products that may be sold with sexually themed or suggestive marketing in North America and European countries may have to be revamped for sales in Middle Eastern and Asian countries where such messages are offensive.

Effects

A diverse population means adapting sales and marketing communications to the various populations that make up the United States. Many companies recognize that varying demographics in different cities, regions and even neighborhoods mean having to come up with different communication approaches. As a result, you may notice billboards in Spanish in some neighborhoods or a national retail chain using more television advertising in one region and more print ads in another.

Impact

Misinterpretations: Expressions and thoughts don't generally decipher. Various organizations have discovered that selling their items in remote markets has implied changing motto and marking procedures to meet the flavors of another objective statistic. For instance, in some underdeveloped nations, drive-through joints are really costly to the nearby populace. The minimal effort and great esteem procedures regularly utilized in the United States must be changed to exhibit inexpensive food as a top-notch item. In another model, items that may be sold with explicitly themed or suggestive promoting in North America and European nations may be patched up for deals in Middle Eastern and Asian nations where such messages are hostile.

Consideration: When leading business globally, business people discover that cultures have different desires and conventions with regard to gatherings and relational dialogues. Cultures, for example, those of Japan and China have solid power separate qualities, and a significant part of the talking and connection is finished by the most senior individual from a gathering. Indeed, it may be wrong for somebody lower in your organization to address a pioneer in theirs. Center Eastern and Southeast Asian cultures think about socialization and becoming more acquainted with each other a significant piece of face to face gatherings. Thus, the American standard of "getting serious" may reach a stopping point with cultures that consider building trust between gatherings basic to the business procedure.

Barriers to Effective Multicultural Communication

Obviously, not all cultures are similar. Some find the daily challenges of responding to another culture to be too stressful and overwhelming. If possible, such individuals will choose to return to their cultural origin; if they cannot do so, various kinds of maladaptive adjustments, or even mental illness, can occur. People misunderstand each other for a wide variety of reasons, and these misunderstandings can occur between people who are culturally similar as well as those who are different and for the communication to be effective it is important that message should be decoded with the perception of the encoder.

Reasons

1. Formation of "US" and "THEM" Groups

The step in the development of stereotypes is the categorisation of people in to two groups: "us" (in-group) and "them" (out-group). This happens all the time, and we often don't realise it. The groups are formed along a wide variety of diversity dimensions such as race/ethnicity,

gender, age, nationality, religion, geographic location, family status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and physical characteristics.

1. Preference for the In-group

The second step consists of the natural tendency to prefer the group of which one is a member (in-group). It makes sense that we would come to prefer the group that we are constantly a part of. These bonds are usually drawn based on geography and the community.

1. Illusion of Out-group Homogeneity

The third step is where actual stereotyping takes place. Simply stated, we tend to perceive members of out-group to be more like one another than members of our in-group. This is probably because we have the opportunity to directly experience the diversity within the in-group while we have limited experience interacting with members of the out-group.

2. **Lack of Understanding:** Another major barrier is the lack of understanding that is frequently present between people from different backgrounds and this barrier is very common among the cross-culture people. Because people may have differences in values, beliefs, methods of reasoning, communication styles, work styles, and personality types, communication difficulties will occur. In order to avoid this barrier, each party must have a clear and accurate understanding of the thoughts, feelings, ideas, values, styles, desires and goals of other person and many of us are not very effective at getting to understand the ways in which others may differ.
3. **Judgmental Attitudes:** The third major barrier includes the judgmental attitudes of us have when it comes to interacting with people who are different. Because all the time we interact with other culture people; we set the standard of our culture and compare with it. Most of us would like to believe we are open minded and accepting. But in reality, a great many of us find discomfort with those who are different in terms of values, beliefs and behaviours. We may then evaluate them in a negative light. This is the essence of ethnocentrism, where we evaluate good and bad, right and wrong relative to how closely the values, behaviours and ideas of others mirror our own. We must suspend judgment about their ways, and try to get to understand them from their perspective.

High- vs. Low-Context Culture

The concept of high- and low-context culture relates to how an employee's thoughts, opinions, feelings, and upbringing affect how they act within a given culture. North America and Western Europe are generally considered to have low-context cultures. This means that businesses in these places have direct, individualistic employees who tend to base decisions on facts. This type of businessperson wants specifics noted in contracts and may have issues with trust.

High-context cultures are the opposite in that trust is the most important part of business dealings. There are areas in the Middle East, Asia and Africa that can be considered high context. Organizations that have high-context cultures are collectivist and focus on

interpersonal relationships. Individuals from high-context cultures might be interested in getting to know the person they are conducting business with in order to get a gut feeling on decision making. They may also be more concerned about business teams and group success rather than individual achievement.

Jack and Yamato ran into some difficulties during their business negotiations. Jack spoke quickly and profusely because he wanted to seal the deal as soon as possible. However, Yamato wanted to get to know Jack, and he felt that Jack spoke too much. Yamato also felt that Jack was only concerned with completing the deal for his own self-interest and was not concerned with the overall good of the company. Jack's nonverbal cues did not help the negotiations either.

Nonverbal Differences

Gestures and eye contact are two areas of nonverbal communication that are utilized differently across cultures. Companies must train employees in the correct way to handle nonverbal communication as to not offend other cultures. For example, American workers tend to wave their hand and use a finger to point when giving nonverbal direction. Extreme gesturing is considered rude in some cultures. While pointing may be considered appropriate in some contexts in the United States, Yamato would never use a finger to point towards another person because that gesture is considered rude in Japan. Instead, he might gesture with an open hand, with his palm facing up, toward the person.

Etiquettes: Meaning and Types

Etiquette in simpler words is defined as good behaviour which distinguishes human beings from animals.

Etiquette is the set of conventional rules of personal behaviour in polite society, usually in the form of an ethical code that delineates the expected and accepted social behaviors that accord with the conventions and norms observed by a society, a social class, or a social group. In modern English usage, the French word *étiquette* (ticket) dates from the year 1750.

Human Being is a social animal and it is really important for him to behave in an appropriate way. Etiquette refers to behaving in a socially responsible way.

Etiquette refers to guidelines which control the way a responsible individual should behave in the society.

Need for Etiquette

- Etiquette makes you a cultured individual who leaves his mark wherever he goes.
- Etiquette teaches you the way to talk, walk and most importantly behave in the society.
- Etiquette is essential for an everlasting first impression. The way you interact with your superiors, parents, fellow workers, friends speak a lot about your personality and upbringing.

- Etiquette enables the individuals to earn respect and appreciation in the society. No one would feel like talking to a person who does not know how to speak or behave in the society. Etiquette inculcates a feeling of trust and loyalty in the individuals. One becomes more responsible and mature. Etiquette helps individuals to value relationships.

Types of Etiquette

Social Etiquette- Social etiquette is important for an individual as it teaches him how to behave in the society.

Bathroom Etiquette: Bathroom etiquette refers to the set of rules which an individual needs to follow while using public restrooms or office toilets. Make sure you leave the restroom clean and tidy for the other person.

Corporate Etiquette: Corporate Etiquette refers to how an individual should behave while he is at work. Each one needs to maintain the decorum of the organization. Don't loiter around unnecessary or peep into other's cubicles.

Wedding Etiquette: Wedding is a special event in every one's life. Individuals should ensure they behave sensibly at weddings. Never be late to weddings or drink uncontrollably.

Meeting Etiquette: Meeting Etiquette refers to styles one need to adopt when he is attending any meeting, seminar, presentation and so on. Listen to what the other person has to say. Never enter meeting room without a notepad and pen. It is important to jot down important points for future reference.

Telephone Etiquette: It is essential to learn how one should interact with the other person over the phone. Telephone etiquette refers to the way an individual should speak on the phone. Never put the other person on long holds. Make sure you greet the other person. Take care of your pitch and tone.

Eating Etiquette: Individuals must follow certain decorum while eating in public. Don't make noise while eating. One should not leave the table unless and until everyone has finished eating.

Business Etiquette: Business Etiquette includes ways to conduct a certain business. Don't ever cheat customers. It is simply unethical.

To conclude, etiquette transforms a man into a gentleman.

Business Etiquette

Business etiquette also goes by the moniker business etiquettes. However, English language does not stipulate any plural form for the word. Hence, the term etiquette is generally taken as correct.

Online Business Dictionary defines business etiquette as "Expected behaviors and expectations for individual actions within society, group or class. Within a place of business, it

involves treating coworkers and employer with respect and courtesy in a way that creates a pleasant work environment for everyone.”

Further, business etiquette is also defined as a set of manners that are needed or practiced in profession. Sometimes, they are vaguely termed customs or traditions.

Every person following that trade or profession is expected to follow these manners. Indeed, violating accepted manners or customs is considered uncivilized. Additionally, such violations can cause loss of business.

However, the term business etiquette is often considered vague: While it does imply how you deal with your customers, associates and others, it is also useful within the office.

Business etiquette helps foster responsible and respectful behavior among staff and also sets pace for better communications. This translates into higher productivity and efficiency.

Business etiquette makes everyone feel comfortable. It helps forge relationships and builds loyalty. In fact, business etiquette is extremely vital for your business, regardless of its size. Success or failure of your business depends heavily upon etiquette you and others display to one-another and to others.

Business etiquette and corporate culture

Business etiquette is integral part of corporate culture. Rather, it is considered the very foundation of corporate culture. Understandably, corporate culture sans business etiquette is ersatz.

Business etiquette and corporate culture are braided. Meaning, one cannot exist without the other.

Types of business etiquette

Understandably, this is sufficient to mystify you. There are several types of business etiquette that you need to practice and implement, for having a successful business. Alternatively, great business etiquette can also help you stay ahead of peers and competitors. Broadly, you need to apply business etiquette in five main spheres:

1. Email business etiquette

Nowadays, emails constitute bulk of every business communications. Hence, it is imperative to inculcate excellent business etiquette while sending or responding to emails. Good business etiquette for email includes

- Avoid mass mailing. Such emails usually end up in spam. Further, they indicate you are only interested in making money, with scant respect for individuals.
- Explicitly mention subject of your email. This leaves no space for ambiguity and clearly informs the recipient, what the email is about.

- Mention the recipient's full name with appropriate suffix. This personalizes the email. Add Mr., Ms, Mrs., before the name. It is polite. Follow this with 'Sir' or 'Madam' according to the receiver.
- Do not write long paragraphs. Remember to limit your paragraphs to two or three sentences only.
- Be concise yet precise in your message. Meaning, do not beat round the bush. Come directly to the point and mention what you wish to say.
- Express gratitude. You could be dealing with a petulant customer or business associate. Do not take umbrage. Instead, thank the sender and acknowledge the email. End by thanking the sender for cooperation and time spent on reading your email. This dents the sender's fury. Follow this practice for your regular business emails too.
- Never add CC and Bcc unless extremely essential. Every recipient prefers to deal with a single point of contact. Adding more people to an email tends to widen the scope of respondents and can inadvertently confuse the recipient.
- Above all, immediately acknowledge every email you receive. This implies your company is proactive. Further, it builds a great confidence level with the sender.
- Add your digital signature if possible. Also, mention your name, designation and contact details clearly while concluding the email. While mentioning phone numbers, also state timings when you can be called.
- Provide a link to your website, tacitly directing the recipient to explore your company's offerings.

You can distribute a standard template for official email among your staff. This ensures consistency in email communication across the board.

2. Social media etiquette

Thanks to proliferation of Facebook and Twitter, an increasing number of companies are now taking to social media. Firstly, Facebook allows you to post fun stuff on your corporate page while Twitter helps reach out to clients and business associates speedily. It also helps companies listen to their customers- both satisfied and unhappy.

- Judicious use of smiley. Meaning, use a smiley that suits the comment. Try to avoid use of 'Laugh' or 'Angry' smiley since it can offend the person posting the comment. Worse, you may draw ire from the entire community for using inappropriate smiley.
- Respond politely to every adverse comment. Never get into the proverbial 'tit-for-tat' mode while handling clients or business associates on Facebook. Similarly, never go all out to appease someone who has made an adverse or negative comment about your offerings. Remember, your comments can go viral within minutes and severely sully your brand.

- Respond at the earliest. This is the secret of staying ahead of competition. Every person who comments wants a response at the earliest. Doing so increases the chances of getting more 'likes' for your Facebook page.
- Get genderless. Obviously, you lack the means to know whether a person making comments is female or male. Therefore, respond in a manner that appeals to all genders.
- Never tarnish competitors and rivals. Nor should you allow your 'friends' to post negative remarks about them. Delete such comments or posts, as soon as you notice them. You could unwittingly fall prey to a tactic by rivals or land in a war of words.

3. Customer service etiquette

Another integral part of business etiquette is how you deal or interact with customers. Here, it is essential to bear in mind that customer is the core of your business. Admittedly, some customers are cantankerous and hard to please. Yet, that is no reason for showing disrespect.

- Greet all customers with a smile. Guide them to a seat if possible. Offer a drink of water. Such etiquette calms down even the most rancorous visitor.
- Be very patient. Not all customers are there with grievances. Some may have excellent suggestions that can help your business flourish.
- Speak amicably. Meaning, never get into an argument with a customer either on or away from your premises.
- Avoid raising your voice at all costs. The person can feel humiliated and will pay for revenge. You could end up with a lawsuit on your hands. It also sends ugly signals to others, including your staff. Should you encounter a boisterous visitor, lead away to privacy of a room and chat amicably.
- Offer a beverage such as coffee, tea or a soft drink. Invariably, this tact cools down even the most incensed customer.

4. Business associate etiquette

Generally, this means the entire system of how you deal with your business associates. Of course, no businessman or executive will treat a business associate shabbily. However, modern businesses require a chic, proactive approach. Here is some vital business etiquette essential nowadays

- Fix meetings at mutually convenient venues, date and time.
- Be present at the venue well in advance.
- If you are playing host, ensure that stationery, water bottles and cups as well as other essentials are in place.
- Ensure that all files and documents relevant for the meeting are available at the venue.

- Have someone meet, greet and escort your business associates to the meeting room. If possible, do so yourself. Greet your associates with a bouquet.
- Never keep your business associates waiting.
- Ensure you are not disturbed by phone calls.
- If a business associate drops by uninformed, ensure you meet them without much delay.

5. Workplace etiquette

Charity, education and all the good stuff starts at home. So does workplace etiquette. Unless your staff and you have excellent workplace etiquette, you cannot enforce them effectively for business. Workplace etiquette stems from office decorum. Here are few things you can do for improving workplace etiquette:

- Inform all staff about 'do's' and 'don'ts' at the office. This means, strict ban on cuss and swear words.
- Encourage a system of greeting one-another, especially when one arrives for work or leaves for the day.
- Create an atmosphere of confidence, where employees at all echelons can share views openly, without fears of retribution.
- Nip unhealthy gossip.
- Maintain a proper dress code. Smart attire is fine but also ensure your staff do not arrive in sagging clothes that stink of stale sweat.
- Promote avenues for healthy interaction. Never allow personal disputes to erupt into verbal duels at workplace

6. Telephone etiquette

A telephone is important extension of your business. It allows people from afar to connect immediately. The advent and booming popularity of mobile phones has not diminished the significance of a landline phone. Every major company has landline phones where business associates and customers can contact.

Usually, your telephone operator will come well versed in etiquette. However, the problem begins once the call gets passed.

- Ensure the call is handled promptly, even if the called person is not on desk.
- Apologize for the called person's absence but ask if the caller requires any assistance.
- Wherever possible, ask the caller's name and contact number and assure the called person will respond back at the earliest.
- Find if you can be of any assistance or whether the call can be diverted to another staff who could help.

- Always answer with a polite 'hello' instead of a curt 'hi' or other word.
- Be very selective in use of your words. Sometimes, it could be your boss calling for some work.

7. Visitor etiquette

Visitors to your office need not necessarily be your business associates or customers. Mailman, delivery staff, maintenance crew and motley other people also visit your office almost daily.

These visitors are equally vital for your business as the millionaire banker. Often, some such visitors may lack proper etiquette or manners while dealing with some senior executive. This is no reason to fly off your rocker. Instead, here are things you can do:

- Have the visitor led to a person concerned with these works.
- Make the visitor feel welcome to your office by offering a seat and a drink of water, if possible.
- Engage such visitor in small talk for a minute or so. Remember, such talk greatly serves to relieve the stress of a mailman or electrician.
- Never dismiss such visitors as menial. Instead, accord them the same welcome as you would a business associate.
- Never admonish a worker for some work left incomplete or wrong repairs. Hurting their ego will not serve your purpose. Au contraire, it can prove counterproductive.

8. Business party etiquette

Once again, this includes a list of do's and don'ts, whether you are playing host or attending a business party. Interestingly, lots more work gets done informally during business parties rather than routine meetings.

To make your attendance or hosting a success, here is some good etiquette:

- Always send an RSVP if invited for a business party, regardless of whether you attend.
- Ask for RSVP when sending business party invitations.
- Business party invitations usually stipulate a dress code. Ensure that you adhere to this dress code if invited. Specifically mention the dress code if you are playing host.
- Ensure you mention whether the invitation is for your business associate only or includes the spouse. This will save embarrassment to both, host and guests.
- Invite people who share common interests and can provide life to your party. Calling people with diverse interests causes formation of small groups. This leaves some guests feeling lonely or in wrong company.

- Have a very affable staff watch over your bar and buffet. This is not to watch over your guests but ensure that drinks and food flow is well maintained and smooth. A staff with condescending looks, however effusive, can be a deterrent to enjoyment.
- Never segregate staff based on their positions, during a party. This is a clear signal that your firm discriminates between high and low rung employees. Such feelings can adversely impact your organization's image. It is party time and everyone has right to enjoy.

Mock Interview

A mock interview is an emulation of a job interview used for training purposes. The conversational exercise usually resembles a real interview as closely as possible, for the purpose of providing experience for a candidate. It can help a job applicant to understand what is expected in a real job interview, and can help an applicant improve his or her self-presentation. Mock interviews can be videotaped; the candidate can view the tape afterward, and get feedback.

A mock interview process helps candidates gain confidence with the chance to reflect on their non-verbal and verbal communication abilities. It also provides an opportunity for interviewees to make mistakes and work on correcting them in a safe atmosphere.

There are coaches who can provide feedback on aspects of the interview process. Mock interviews are most common for job interviews, but may also be used to train public figures to handle interrogations by journalists, as well as help candidates for office prepare for debates. Some organizations schedule mock interview events to help many students prepare for job interviews. For example, some schools have mock interview training days, often organized by career and guidance counselors. While the usual sense of the term is an exercise done as a form of preparation prior to applying for jobs, there is another sense of the term which describes a playful or non-serious interview. Mock interviews can help a person gain confidence for real interviews, as well as provide the interviewee with information about how to handle an upcoming interview.

Benefits of Mock Interviews

The mock interview approach is excellent for developing the candidate's performance at job interviews and avoiding repeating the same mistakes in the future. Here are some of the skills the interviewee can improve during a mock interview:

- Confidence
- Effective responses
- Familiarity with the course of an interview
- Verbal and nonverbal communication

Interview, Group Discussion

Interview

Preparing for the Interview

- **Set aside enough time.** Dedicate specific time, conducting the interview in an appropriate location, uninterrupted by email, telephones or other employees. This will allow you to concentrate, while also giving a good first impression of your company to the applicant.
- **Read the resume first.** Make sure you have carefully studied each resume ahead of time. Of course, when meeting with a candidate, you should have a copy of the resume on hand for reference, but this is not the time to ask, "What have you done?" Know the resume so you can use the time to dig deeper.
- **Write a good job description.** Having a specific and thorough outline of what a candidate would do on the job makes it easier to assess applicants, says Derek Gagné, CEO of HR consulting firm Talent Edge Solutions. "Know what it is you're looking for: the must-haves and the nice-to-haves. Some things you can handle later with training."
- **Know the intangibles.** A resume can't indicate some of the intangibles that an employee can bring to the job. Says Gagné, "Ask yourself, what are the behaviours you want? You could have someone who's a point-of-sale wizard but may be a bad team player." Identifying these intangibles ahead of time will help you probe for them.
- **Write some specific questions.** Don't just take the candidate's resume and wing it, says Gagné. "Have 10 or 12 questions that you will consistently ask each candidate. This is particularly important if you will be interviewing multiple applicants and want to compare answers later. It doesn't mean there won't be one-off questions. A skilled interviewer knows when to move off the script."

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Now that you are well prepared, you are in a position to conduct a productive interview. If you are uncertain of your interviewing skills, you can always learn more by contacting your local chamber of commerce, taking courses at the community college level, or seeking the assistance of companies like Talent Edge Solutions

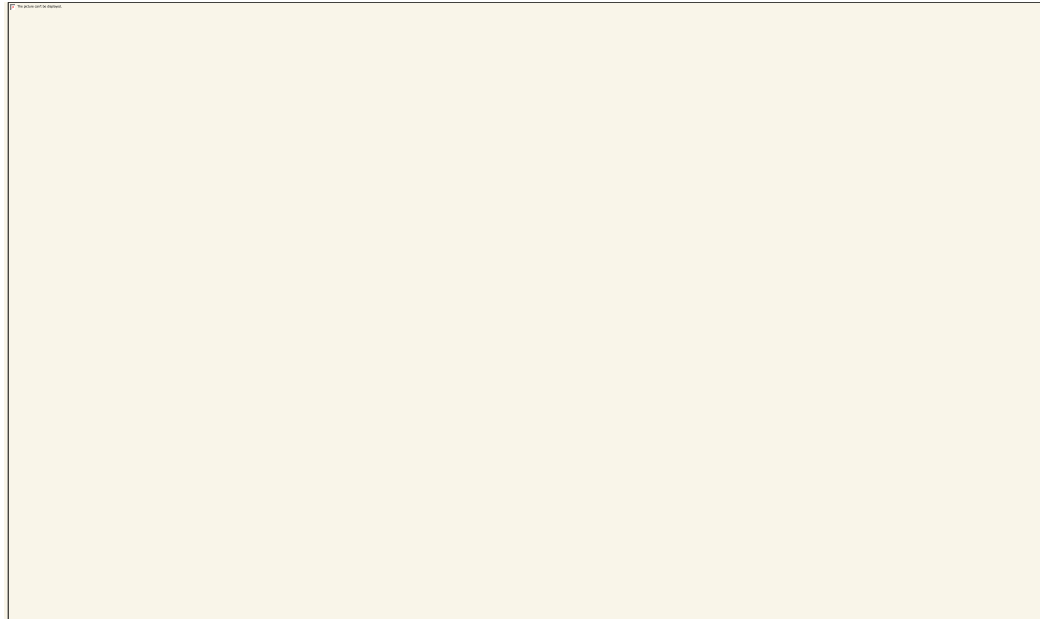
- **Introduce yourself.** Greeting candidates courteously shows respect for them and will help put them at ease. Tell them something about yourself and the company. This is the first impression the candidate will make of you, so present a tidy office and turn off your cell phone.
- **Set the stage.** Set the tone by telling the applicant what to expect for the next half hour or so. Remember, you too are being observed. Your behaviour will set the tone for the interview. If you come across as being too casual, an applicant may take the interview less seriously. But being too serious will likely make the candidate more nervous. In either case, you're unlikely to bring out the best in the individual. How you conduct yourself during the interview must also reflect the image and values of your business.

- **Review the job.** Spell out what the position involves in more detail than was outlined in the job posting, so candidates can make sure the job is right for them. Let them know what the core duties and responsibilities will be, and any working conditions that may affect them. Say whether the position is permanent or temporary, or on contract.
- **Start with generalized questions.** Begin by asking a few questions about a candidate's background and interest in the position. Get candidates to tell you about how they see themselves in relation to the job and what they can contribute.
- **Review the applicant's resume.** Ask candidates about specific positions on their resume that relate to the position you are hiring for. Ask them about job details, responsibilities, what they accomplished, pressures they encountered. Ask about any inconsistencies or gaps in employment or education, as there may be a simple explanation. Ask about the candidate's reasons for leaving a past or current job.
- **Ask some consistent questions.** Use a specific set of questions for all applicants. This will help you to compare candidates and find the one whose skills and abilities most closely match what you're looking for.
- **Vary your questions.** It's important that you ask questions on skills specifically related to the duties and responsibilities of the position. This will help you uncover candidates' strengths and weaknesses. Don't forget that open-ended questions are best during interviews, such as "What was the most difficult challenge of your last job?"
- **Give candidates a chance to ask questions.** Confidently answering any question thrown at you means knowing all aspects of the position and being able to clarify your expectations, in addition to listing the benefits of working for your business. Applicants should be given the chance both to answer your questions and to ask questions of their own to determine if the job and the company are right for them. Their questions can help you assess whether candidates have adequately prepared for the interview and are genuinely interested in the job. An effective strategy is the 80/20 rule: You do 80 per cent of the listening and 20 per cent of the talking.
- **Provide a timeline.** Always provide an estimate of the length of time until final selection will be made. Provide an indication as to when candidates might expect to hear back from you regarding the final outcome or the next step in the recruitment process.

What is Group Discussion? (GD), Objectives, Types, Prerequisites, Steps

What is Group Discussion?

Group Discussion (GD) is a technique where the group of participants share their views and opinions on a topic for a specific duration. Companies conduct this evaluation process because business management is essentially a team activity and working with groups is an essential parameter in organisations.



What is Group Discussion

GD is an opportunity for an organisation to evaluate a candidate's communication skills, knowledge, leadership skills, listening skills, social skills, ability to think on the spot and improvise. A typical GD has about 8-12 participants and 2 or more assessors. The assessors sit where they can clearly see and hear all the candidates.

They record the behaviour of participants during the group discussion. Then, they evaluate the recorded observations against the desired traits and finalise a few candidates from the group.

Group Discussion (GD) Definition

Group discussion is a communication process that involves the exchange of ideas, information, and opinions among a group of people. It is a powerful tool for problem-solving, decision-making, and generating new ideas. – **Stephen P. Robbins, author of “Organizational Behavior”**

A group discussion is an interactive process where a group of individuals come together to exchange ideas, opinions, and information on a specific topic. The goal of a group discussion is to arrive at a collective decision or solution that is acceptable to all members of the group.” – **The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)**

Group discussion is a method of communication in which a small group of people come together to discuss a topic or problem. The group members share their ideas and perspectives with one another in order to arrive at a solution or decision that benefits the group as a whole.” – **The American Psychological Association (APA)**

Group discussion is an effective means of exploring and analyzing complex issues, generating creative ideas, and arriving at consensus among participants. It provides a platform for individuals to express their views, clarify their understanding, and learn from the perspectives of others.” – **The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)**

Objectives of Group Discussion (GD)

Group discussions are conducted to serve various purposes. It is a two-way communication process through which recruiters get to assess the soft skills of candidates, while the candidates can gain clarity about their own thoughts, opinions and views.

The following are some of the [objectives of a group discussion](#) activity:

- To collect data
- To breed fresh ideas and take inputs from a particular group
- To perceive the common ideas of people on a particular topic

- To identify the solution of a specific problem or issue
- To select a candidate for hiring in a company
- To select candidate for admission in an educational institute
- To arrive at a consensus regarding a common concern

Types of Group Discussion (GDs)

A group discussion delineates how a candidate participates, behaves and contributes in a group. There are three main [types of GDs](#):

Topic-based GDs

These are based on certain practical topics, such as the harmful effects of plastics on the environment or the need of college degree for entrepreneurship. These GDs can be further classified into:

- **Factual GDs:** These are informative GDs that require comprehensive knowledge about a subject. For example, the economic growth of India since independence.
- **Controversial GDs:** These GDs are based on controversial topics, which test the ability of a candidate to handle a situation, control anger, display patience and think critically. For example, arranged marriage vs. love marriage.
- **Abstract GDs:** These GDs are based on certain conceptual topics that are used to evaluate a candidate's creative thinking and analytical ability. For example, challenges before humanity.

Case-based GDs

In these GDs, a case study is presented to group members to read and analyse in a given period. Candidates need to discuss the case study among themselves and reach on a common consensus to solve the given situation. This helps to evaluate their problem solving, analytical ability, critical thinking and creative thinking skills.

Article-based GDs

Candidates are presented with an article on any field, such as politics, sports, or technology, and asked to discuss the given situation.

Prerequisites of Group Discussion (GD)

There are some essential requirements for gaining success in a group discussion. The following are some important requirements to be fulfilled by a candidate in order to ensure a successful GD:

Prior knowledge

A candidate with in-depth knowledge and command over the topic initiates the discussion. He/she gets noticed and usually selected in a group discussion. However, starting the discussion does not guarantee the selection and also it does not show the leadership qualities.

Therefore, one should start a discussion only when he/she is well acquainted with the topic. In case, one is not well acquainted with the topic, he/she should first listen to others and then speak.

Active listening

Only good listeners can be active participators in a discussion. Such persons listen to others and remain attentive and active throughout the discussion. Therefore, a listener is more likely to imbibe knowledge than a speaker. By listening carefully, a candidate can contribute by formulating his/her own thoughts that can be verbally delivered.

Effective communication

Candidates should have good communication skills and they should take care of the overtones. One should be able to understand other participants' perception and thoughts. Then, accordingly, Agree to or refute the ideas or viewpoints presented by other candidates.

Therefore, healthy and clear thoughts should be exchanged while pursuing a group discussion to gain attention of the assessors.

Appropriate body language

Gestures, facial expressions, eye contact and tone of voice show the amount of interest a candidate has in a group discussion. It is important to maintain eye contact with the evaluator(s) when starting a discussion. The coordinator notices the body language of the candidates to assess their confidence level.

Steps of Effective Group Discussion

A GD is a method used by organisations to analyse the skills of candidates and decide whether their personality traits are desirable for the job or not.

While facing a GD, the following steps should be performed:

Initiate

If you want to quickly grab the attention of assessors, then start the GD. However, you must have good knowledge or understanding of the subject being discussed. To make your speech more interesting, you can start with a relevant quote or a short/interesting story; but keep track of time.

Lead

There might be a situation when you do not have enough knowledge to start a discussion. In that case, wait, watch and listen to others. As soon as you get an opening, jump in and take charge. Move the conversation forward to make it impactful. However, remember not to over-drag the topic. Sometimes, less is more.

Summarise

Closing a GD is another opportunity to get the attention of the evaluators. Recap the discussion, connect the dots, highlight the key points and summarise them. Make sure that the summary includes both the positive and negative viewpoints on the topic presented by the candidates.

Do's and Don'ts of Group Discussion

In this section, we will discuss some Do's and Don'ts to be taken care of by all the candidates who wish to perform well in a GD.

Some Do's to be kept in mind during a GD are:

- Be a good listener by being patient.
- Acknowledge everyone else and what they say.
- Articulate views in a way that is comprehensible to others.
- Structure your thoughts and present them logically.
- Read newspapers, current affairs, essays and articles to develop thought structuring.
- Respect others for what they are.
- Be open-minded and acknowledge the fact that people think differently about issues.
- Train your mind for analytical thinking by taking all aspects into consideration.

It is also important to avoid doing certain things while participating in a GD. Some Don'ts to be aware of while pursuing a GD are:

- Avoid irrelevant talk.
- Avoid interrupting others while they are talking. If you need to cut short a speaker, then do so politely and with due apology.
- Avoid dominating the conversation. Ask others to contribute. Acknowledge their viewpoints.
- Avoid getting into an argument. Try to express clearly in a healthy manner.
- Do not show lack of interest and negative attitude.

- Avoid stating only your viewpoint.
- Avoid dwelling only on one aspect of the GD.

Group Discussion Evaluation Criteria

Each group discussion exercise is assessed by one or more individuals who are trained to observe and assess behavioural traits relevant for a specific job. The four main behavioural traits assessed through a group discussion are shown in Figure

Let us discuss these behavioural traits in detail.

Communication skills

These skills are judged on the basis of how a participant is getting his/her message across, how he/she is using his/her body language and also listening skills.

Analytical and interpretative skills

Assessors draw conclusions about a participant's interpreting and analysing skills by observing how he/she uses facts and data, considers complex problems and issues, suggests solutions, etc.

Interpersonal skills

Assessors observe the participants' interactions with one another, how they allow one another to express themselves, etc.

Persuasive skills

The influencing skills of participants are assessed based on how well they are able to persuade one another, convince others about a viewpoint or impact others' behaviour.

Organising a Group Discussion

A Group Discussion generally involves a group of 8-10 participants who are evaluated by a selection panel. GDs are used to evaluate whether a candidate is a perfect fit for an organisation or not. Be it college placements, MBA courses, job interviews or general researches, GDs are conducted almost in every field to gauge whether the candidate possesses the required skills and personality traits to be a part of the concerned institution. A facilitator has to take care of all the nitty-gritties of organising a GD.

In order to conduct a successful GD, the following aspects need to be taken into consideration:

Objective of conducting a GD

Every GD has a specific purpose such as selecting deserving candidates for admission in professional course or gaining new talented employees in an organisation. Therefore, the objective of a GD should be clear to all the members of the selection panel in order to select the most deserving candidate.

Venue setup

An appropriate venue should be set up to conduct a GD. The venue should not be overcrowded, which may make the participants feel uncomfortable. The space selected for conducting the GD should be well-ventilated, equipped with proper lighting and should have a proper seating arrangement.

Time

A stipulated time limit should be set for each participant to present his/her views. Firstly, participants are given a topic and some time to understand the topic and organise their thoughts. Thereafter they start presenting their views and opinions over the given topic. The time provided to the participants should be logical and it should start at that time only with no delay and waiting.

Pre-instructions for participants

Prior communication with the participants should be properly conducted along with mentioning the time allotted to one participant to speak. The topic of discussion should be specified clearly along with the instructions and timings of when to start and stop. Big MNCs have their well-panned GD guide that provides instructions to the participants.

Defined parameters for selection

There are various parameters based on which a candidate is evaluated. Some of these parameters are listening power, level of confidence, decision-making ability, analytical skills, leadership skills, etc.

Role of assessor/evaluator

Candidates can speak whatever they like on the subject under discussion. The assessors note down their observations for each candidate. Once the discussion is over, the assessors review the information

recorded against the desired behaviour. Therefore, a proper evaluation sheet should be maintained for writing down observations so that no errors occur while the selection of candidates.

Clear communication of results post GD

The results should be announced clearly post the GD. The facilitator should ensure that the participants should not be made to wait for too long for the results.

The following are some points that you should take care of while preparing for a group discussion:

- **Ensure your contribution to the group:** Candidates need to make sure that they contribute to the conversation. Candidates having avoiding behaviours or actions do not contribute to the discussion's outcome. Such behaviours need to be avoided and involvement in the GD is necessary to make a mark.
- **Manage conflicts effectively:** In case of any disagreement with members of the group, ensure that you persuade them without getting rude and aggressive. Assessors will pick such arrogant behaviour and highlight it as your negative aspect.
- **Manage your time:** Candidates need to stick to the timeline allotted for the discussion as the same would suggest that they are punctual and follow the timeline persistently.
- **Include others:** Encourage those who do not speak up during the discussion and urge them to give their opinions. This will gain assessors' praise and group members appreciation.
- **Be a team player:** Generally, group discussion exercises require that the members come to an agreement on the topic being discussed. However, ensure that you do not impose your ideas on others. A better way is to include everyone's ideas and centre it around the organisation rather than express something that might only benefit one member.