

Smartphone Chatting or Texting Etiquette at Work



8 guidelines for smartphone etiquette in the workplace

Personal communication devices are glued to the fingers or ears of many people in today's office. For some people they are vital and necessary tools to facilitate job functions. We recognize that a sales professional, customer services representative, technical support specialist or other employee may need to have their smartphone at the ready all of the time. However, that does not negate the fact that all of these devices create a lot of noise that can be dangerous distractions in many instances.

The HR Insider has created many resources that include examples of policies you can implement to help manage the use of cellphones and other devices at work. However, addressing the annoyance or distraction of another person's mobile phone usage is not governed by policy as much as by etiquette.

8 Workplace Smartphone Etiquette Rules:

1. Acknowledge People First

When a ring or notification occurs while you are engaged with other people, do not look at your cell phone. Acknowledge that you have received a notification and ask if the other people around would mind if you stepped away and checked the message.

2. Speak Softly and Add Distance To The Situation

If you must speak on the phone you should try to speak in a soft voice and add distance. Using ear buds or headphones may actually result in speaking louder (because you do not hear your own voice as well). Stay 3 meters (about 9-10 feet) away from the other person when talking on your cell phone. Do not head into the bathroom looking for a private space. Not only will it amplify the sound, it is poor etiquette to monopolize the bathroom for a phone call.

3. Keep The Conversation Professional

In tone and content all calls in the workplace must remain professional in nature, even calls to children or significant others. If you must take a few minutes for a personal call, which is frowned upon, remember to use your professional voice and

demeanor.

4. Be Mindful of Your People Priorities

Customer or client meetings, team meetings and meetings with the boss are places where you should turn off all devices. Prioritize the time and give people your undivided attention. If you cannot go at least one hour without a call, schedule shorter meetings. If you are expecting a highly sensitive or important call, inform the other people of this possibility at the beginning of your meeting. Be wary of using this regularly as a ploy to avoid meetings, as it will appear inconsiderate and unprofessional.

5. Don't Look Down

Hiding a smartphone in your lap to read emails or send texts is not fooling anyone. When you are present with other people your eyes should be up and looking at them.

6. Keep it Brief

If you must take a call or send a text, keep it brief. Even if it is a scheduled or work-related call, it is important to be respectful of people in your environment. How brief is brief? Five minutes may sound like a short phone call, but be aware that it will feel longer to the person beside you who is waiting for you to hang up the phone.

7. Be Discrete; People Are Listening

This is not a reference to CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service), but a reference to clients, customers, the public or other employees who may be within earshot. Even if you are on a legitimate business call during working hours, you must abide by the rules of confidentiality. It is poor etiquette to discuss customer business around other people, no matter how trivial the issues may seem. Names and other personal information may be revealed to people in your vicinity.

8. Apologize For Oversights

If your phone rings, if you take too long to get off the phone to speak to a waiting customer, if you leave your phone on vibrate and it annoys your coworker for several minutes due to a repeated call from someone, or if you fail to follow any of the etiquette guidelines – apologize. In unique situations, such as the birth of a child, you may choose to share the happy news to mitigate any hard feelings. However, in most cases, justifying an inappropriate phone call indicates a lack of respect for the other person's time. Apologize and attend to the needs or questions of the person in front of you.

The chances are great that you have survived in the past without instant access to your smartphone or tablet device, and you can survive it again. Etiquette is usually common sense, and it does not require a tremendous amount of effort to treat others with respect. It does require you to be mindful of the situation and other people at all times, something everyone would benefit from remembering.

Resources:

[Cell Phones and Liability Part 2 – How to create an effective cell phone ban \(includes model policy\)](#)