

# The 10 Golden Rules of Professionalism

(How many of them are you breaking?)



Dr Isabelle Cunningham

In my role, I am blessed on a daily basis to communicate and work with some extraordinary people. The people I work with are healers and teachers, dedicated to assisting others to live happier, healthier lives.

They are passionate, caring and often immensely committed. I love working with them all, to assist them in achieving their big dream (life's purpose, even) of running their own successful holistic wellbeing business.

Time and again I see examples of why so many people don't do as well in achieving this goal, as they could. So often I literally cringe when reading emails or seeing the way some of these, genuinely beautiful and amazing people conduct themselves in the business world. Certainly not through lack of ethics, or positive intent...but through lack of education in the business world.

We are healers after all and that is our focus. Many have missed the part about how to create a professional business image. This causes them to fail where they deserve to triumph and so I am going to give you the ten most important rules to professionalism.

## 1/ Timing

When someone makes an enquiry via email or leaves a message on your phone, respond to them as soon as possible. If you can't respond to them swiftly when they are just thinking about spending money with you, how do you think they will feel you will treat them once you have their money? Show them you are organized and available. Let them feel valued and worth your time and attention.

If you have said you will get back to them by a certain time, do it. If it's impossible, at least send them a quick email to let them know you have been held up but are thinking of them and will get the information to them as soon as you possibly can....and then do that.

## 2/ Email etiquette

1. Always address the email to Dear Whoever. Don't just write Hi, unless you have swapped several emails and have started to build a friendly repartee.
2. Edit your emails before you send and take out anything that isn't relevant or to the point. Don't babble or have a rave. Be concise and stay on point.
3. Use simple fonts and colours... **Colourful, wacky fonts** do not scream 'professional!'
4. For pitty sake, use your sspell check!
5. If you are sending your email to more than one person, put the email addresses in BCC not CC – The recipients will not be able to see who else the email went to. People often don't appreciate you sharing their email address with people they don't know.
6. If you are sending an attachment, tell them the attachment is there and make sure you remember to actually attach it.
7. Use a professional signature every time. Make sure your signature includes your Name, your title/position, your business name, your email address, your telephone number, your web site address and your logo.

## 3/ Telephone etiquette

1. If at all possible, have a separate phone for your business.
2. Do not answer your business phone if you are not in a position to really speak to the caller. For example; don't answer if you are driving your car, if you are in a meeting with someone else, if you are being woken by the phone ringing or if your toddler is having a tantrum. Only answer your business phone when you are switched on and ready to present yourself professionally.
3. Never let anyone else, who is not involved in your business, answer your business phone.
4. Make sure there is a professional, well-spoken message on your answering machine. Not, "hey there, I can't get to the phone so leave a message." Something like, "Thank you for calling (your business name). I

(we is even better) am unable to come to the telephone at the moment but your call is important to us, so please leave a message after the tone including your telephone number and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you (and maybe I wish you a beautiful day or Namaste or whatever feels right for you).

5. Stay on track. Don't babble or have a rave. Don't fall into a big ol' chat about your life or their life. Be friendly and polite but you are the business person, so keep it on business.
6. Don't cut people off when they are speaking.
7. When people ring to ask you for information, don't download on them. Give them space to ask the next question. Ask them what it is they are actually looking for and then listen.
8. Listen, listen, listen, listen. Seek out what the caller is really looking for and allow them to feel heard. It's not about you. It's about them. Once you really understand what their motivation is for calling you, you can tell them how you can fill their needs.
9. Smile! It may sound silly as your caller can't see you, but there is a lot of research about how smiling changes your voice (you can hear a smile even if you don't register it consciously). Smiling also helps to switch you into the moment and makes you feel like you are having fun. Use the same facial expressions and body language as if the caller was standing in front of you.
10. Be present. Be really, really present.

#### **4/ Face-to-face etiquette**

The rules of Face-to-face etiquette are the same as for email and telephone etiquette with a few extras.

1. Always dress in a way that makes you feel good. It doesn't matter if that's a business suit or a rainbow tie-dyed kaftan! As long as you feel comfortable in your wrapping. Don't try to look a certain way to project an image, if it's not who you really are.
2. Shake people's hands firmly when you meet them and look them in the eye. If they are huggers, let them initiate the hug. You may be a big first-time-meet hugger but many people can feel their personal space has been intruded on, if you go for the hug without invitation.
3. Be present. Give them your full attention.
4. Don't tell them your life story, or your problems.
5. Be relaxed and calm. Breathe and think before you speak. Just take your time.
6. Be confident and friendly.

## **5/ Promise small & deliver big**

This was a very important lesson for me. I have big plans, huge dreams and massive intentions! So I used to talk a lot about what I was going to do. I used to promise big. Then the reality of time and what one woman, without actual superpowers, can really do would catch up with me. Then I would deliver small. Next I would have disappointed people yelling at me because I had promised more than I could deliver. Not through wanting to mislead anybody...but because I wanted to deliver more than I realistically could. Then I learned (mostly) to promise small & deliver big. Don't tell people what you are going to do, only promise what you can deliver now and then surprise them with a better service than they expected.

## **6/ Never get personal**

Do not share your personal life with your clients or potential clients. Its fine to say things like. 'yes I can relate to that' but if you are in a professional role, keep the lines clear.

## **7/ Never say or write anything you wouldn't want published**

My Nanna gave me this little gem. If you wouldn't want it printed in the newspaper or played over and over again on the radio; don't do it, say it or write it!

It isn't what you tell people about yourself that shows them who you really are...it's what you tell them about other people that shows who you really are. Make sure that's always nice.

Good advice from a small rabbit:

*"If you can't say something nice don't say anything at all."*

Thumper

## **8/ Run your own circus**

Have you ever heard the saying "not my circus, not my monkeys"? Learning to mind our own business is one of the greatest things we can do for ourselves both professionally and personally.

We have to know where the line is between what is our responsibility and what is not. When we try to control things that are beyond our power to control, we waste energy; we fill our lives with dramas that don't belong to us; we lose sight of our own goals and we make ourselves look like control freaks rather than professionals.

Every time you start to feel like you have to get involved in something check in on how that feels. If it 'feels' unpleasant ask yourself. "does the resolution of this situation really depend on me?" If you feel it does, then think carefully and sit with it or meditate on it before you act. If it doesn't depend on you, mind your own business.

## **9/ Do NOT bag your competitors...ever!**

This is the most destructive thing you can do to your own business. Just don't do it. When you speak ill of others you show the listener that you are (1) threatened by the person you are bagging (2) not trustworthy (3) judgmental (4) unprofessional. Even if they appear willing to jump right into a big old gossip session about how bad the person you are talking about is, they will walk away with a negative opinion of you.

If you are competing for business with someone (even if you believe they really are all that bad) instead of talking them down, talk your own business up. Tell people about your point of difference. Let them know why you are so worth working with. Show them that you are absolutely the professional.

## **10/ Don't burn bridges**

If you are communicating with someone and you are hoping they are going to do business with you, then they let you know they won't be going ahead after all, respond politely. They will talk about you to others (who may want to do business with you). They may also have a change of mind or circumstances and if you didn't bother to respond to their last message (because there was nothing in it for you) they will feel they have seen your true colours. They will know that you are only interested in giving them your time when you think you are going to get some money out of them. So, leave doors open and remember the customer you missed out on today could turn into five or more customers tomorrow.

## **11/ Be Love** (*This one is a bonus!*)

Intent is everything. If you strive to come from love (and in this context I am using the word love to encapsulate; respect, consideration, attentiveness, presence, oneness, kindness, forgiveness, gentleness, honesty) you will be operating from the essence of your truest self.

Everything you do will come from the best and most genuine part of yourself and you will not only project a professional image, you will radiate a rare quality in the business world; authenticity.

Authenticity speaks louder than any words, actions or images you could ever fabricate for the sake of creating a professional image. It is your unique authenticity people will connect with, which will inspire them, beyond the thinking mind, to want to associate and align themselves with you.

More than anything if you strive to master the skill of being present in every single moment, you will be living from your authentic self; switched on, tuned in and awake!

Namaste  
Isabelle