



## The Birmingham News

### **Let's bring back the**

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News staff writer

During an 18-year career that has included jobs as a hotel concierge, sales manager and meeting planning consultant, Dallas Teague Snider has learned that having good people skills is a necessity.

Last month, Snider became certified as a corporate etiquette and international protocol consultant, learning skills she now shares with others to help them succeed in the workplace.

She shares why good manners are essential to business success. Do you feel there has been a decline in etiquette in the workplace?

I have been disheartened to witness the lack of respect and courtesy shown in the workplace. This has even been seen in the hospitality industry where we claim to be hospitable.

What happened is that we lack the self respect to show respect to others. Let's bring back the common courtesies that make people say that the South is the home of hospitality. Proper etiquette is not about being stuffy, but about making your best impression.

Can good corporate etiquette and protocol in the workplace make a difference in terms of success on the job?

Absolutely, etiquette and protocol intelligence positions someone to distinguish themselves from their competition. Etiquette and protocol can be described as an art and a science.

Etiquette involves the art of how we behave in a given circumstance and protocol are the rules that apply to the situation. The service and products available in today's global market are so comparable that buyers look for the cutting-edge difference - courtesy, image, trust and perceptions of reliability.

Etiquette and protocol intelligence are tools that give you that edge to cultivate long-lasting relationships.

What are some etiquette and protocol no-nos to avoid?

Avoid the 'bone crusher.' This is an aggressive handshake that is a trait of someone that is insecure and trying to establish dominance.

Avoid the 'glove handshake.' This handshake is also referred to as a politician's, a minister, or a sympathy handshake.

It appears condescending when the initiator turns the recipient's hand over in a horizontal position. Use this handshake only with those you know well. It is not appropriate in the business environment.

In a social networking event, avoid drinking and eating simultaneously. Choose one or the other. You are there for business and should be able to shake hands at any given time.

Be sure to eat before you arrive so that you are not tempted to make this mistake which could cost you potential business.

You've been in the meeting planning and sales business for 18 years, including a stint at the Birmingham Convention Bureau. How important are the new hotels and entertainment district planned for downtown?

The new hotels and entertainment district are essential to allow Birmingham to compete in the marketplace. I recently booked a 2,100-room convention in Columbus, Ohio, and the downtown hotel package which offered various price points and entertainment options within walking distance were the deciding factor.

Groups are looking for locations that offer these types of conveniences. Since there are many cities that do, not having this to offer has been a great disadvantage.

How does what you do now compare to your previous jobs as a hotel concierge and sales director?

My previous jobs in the industry have more than prepared me for my current role. The main difference is that I now work for the client.

I have always had a service heart, but when you work for a company, you work for the company. When I worked with the Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau, my job was to book national, regional and citywide meetings within Jefferson County.

With ConferenceDirect I am no longer limited by market segment, hotel property or city. As I consult with my clients, I provide an industry expertise that can assist them in making the best decisions for their particular meeting or event.

What is ConferenceDirect?

ConferenceDirect is a worldwide provider of outsourced meeting planning solutions. The company was founded in 1998 to offer the white-glove-level service in this growing segment of the meeting industry.

ConferenceDirect consists of former hotel and meeting planning executives that outsource their services to companies and organizations worldwide. Ninety-five percent of our business is site selection and contract negotiation.

I am a national account director with ConferenceDirect, an entrepreneur who partners with ConferenceDirect to provide my clients with the tools and leveraging of an industry leader.

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