



# What's Your Social IQ?

An etiquette brief on *Social Intelligence* by Civility Experts Worldwide

## Introduction

Because humans are social animals, we interact with each other on a daily basis. In addition to needing to maintain our primary relationships (which incidentally applies to being polite to ourselves too), we need to be able to get along in the world and to communicate respect and consideration through how we look, act, speak, etc.

More and more the world is a busy, stressful place, particularly the work-world. So...knowing how to leverage your social IQ, that is- using your knowledge about how to make others comfortable, to represent yourself (and your company) at a high standard, and to communicate effectively, is a relatively easy, but very powerful, (and positive and productive) thing to do.

For an expanded lesson plan including activities and answer keys, please visit the shopping cart at [www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com](http://www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com)

### **Lesson K3L1: WHAT'S YOUR SOCIAL IQ? (Excerpt)**

You only get one chance to make a first impression. In spite of your best efforts to do the right thing, a lack of Social IQ can result in you doing exactly the wrong thing. Increasingly sensitivity to diversity issues and an awareness of how to respond appropriately with different people in different settings is an essential skill.

According to experts at Civility Experts Worldwide, “etiquette” is “The guidelines/rules” for expected and respected behaviour. Etiquette is contextual and situational- because there are so many possible factors and scenarios, the best approach to etiquette is to adopt an attitude of civility- and to choose to consistently exhibit high personal standards for behaviour. The extent to which a person understands what the etiquette is for a particular situation, and the more consistent he/she is in making appropriate choices for behaviour- the higher that person's Social IQ is.

Social and business trends impact the way we do things and in some ways can predict decreases and/or increased need for Social intelligence. . For example a decline in casual attire has led to an increase in formal events, (which means learning more table manners) and increased formality in communication styles (which means learning proper grammar and how to write a proper letter).

An increased desire to balance our lives and manage our time has led to greater awareness of where we waste time and an increased intolerance for lateness.

Increased global awareness and diversity in the workplace has led to a need for increased knowledge of cultural issues and better communication skills. As social attitudes change, the rules (etiquette) for how to behave in various social situations also changes.

And lastly, technology has dramatically changed how we communicate- and these changes are not all positive. For example, when we grow up, and/or work in a world that revolves around television screens, cell phones, and computers, it's not surprising that many of us lose our interest and ability in communicating effectively face-to-face. And when we get used to an “etiquette-free” zone such as the Internet, it's easy to presume that the old rules don't apply to traditional environments such as school, out in the community and at work, as well.

Although many of us are unaware of it, civility affects us in many ways. Every day we apply guidelines for behaviour. (Some of us more than others and some of us more deliberate in doing so than others.)

For example:

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- being quiet when someone else is sleeping
- putting our garbage in bags and into receptacles
- asking if someone wants something when we get up to get ourselves a snack
- saying hello or good morning
- putting on clothes
- following the rules of the road when driving
- returning telephone calls
- flushing the toilet
- trying to be on time for appointments
- and what else.....?

And, almost daily there are stories about issues related to etiquette in the news. For example:

- bullying
- crime (the height of incivility)
- misbehaviour of public figures
- theft
- communication issues
- poor customer service

Not all etiquette/civility oriented news is bad news, for example there are positive behaviours illustrated every day as well:

- altruistic, kind helping people who help others
- giving to charitable organizations
- mentoring and leadership
- entertaining and celebratory events
- gift giving
- acknowledgement of the accomplishments of others
- thank yous

If you pay attention to what is going on around you and in the world in general, you can often see how trends (social, cultural, world-wide, in business etc) impact us in terms of civility. For example one trend called “the mobile executive” suggests that more and more people are working on the go- that is using laptops, PDA's, their cars, cell phones, etc to work anytime and anywhere. In many cases, executives and many entrepreneurs don't have typical permanent offices anymore. Working out of a mobile office changes the way we communicate, for example, no land lines for telephone calls, less reliance on “gate-keepers”, and more informal conversations (it's hard to find a quiet place to talk when you're in transit) as well as more informal meetings (meetings would more likely be in a coffee shop than in an office).

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One other very significant social trend relates to a return to traditional values. People want to be around and work with people and companies who share similar values and put meaning on the same things that they do.

People are also living in the now- we want what we want it, exactly when we want it- and time is the most valuable commodity.

Another trend is towards “experiential” encounters- people are looking for something memorable, something individual, and something tailored specifically to them. Addressing this trend means changing how we interact, and where, it impacts gift-giving, entertaining, our office spaces etc. Specific to etiquette, this trend means paying more attention to details, personalizing things, using monograms, sending handwritten cards, and hosting smaller more intimate entertaining.



### Terms to Know:

**Karl Albrecht describes Social IQ as “*Social knowledge*”, which includes awareness, ability to interpret situations, knowledge of social expectations, and application/adaptation of those expectations in any situation. Social IQ serves to establish minimum standards of behaviour for interacting with others in a positive way.”**

There are three core elements of Social Intelligence: Social Radar, Social Style, and Social Knowledge. To learn more about these as well as how to assess your own social intelligence and how to build Social IQ, please see the expanded version of this Brief. Available at [www.culturalcompetence.ca](http://www.culturalcompetence.ca) (Click on the shopping cart.)

### STATISTICS SAY:

- NEW YORK (CNN) - Call it "office rage" -- 78 percent of workers say aggressive and disrespectful behavior in the workplace has gotten worse, according to a survey conducted by the University of North Carolina.
- We're all under a lot of stress and feel pushed to the edge: one study shows that 9 out of 10 of us are highly stressed most of the time (Rose Medical Center, Denver CO)

It seems we may have what's called "Hurry Sickness"; we're impatient – and when someone slows us down, we get rude and angry.

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Think about why you behave inappropriately. For example, are time constraints, feeling stressed, feeling uncomfortable, a lack of competence or knowledge some of the excuses they use to explain why they are rude on occasion? We are often quick to judge others when they behave inappropriately and unfortunately just as quick to rationalize our own behavior. The reality is that we all need to focus on improving our own attitudes and behaviour first, and worry about what everyone else is doing second. heart disease)

IMPORTANT Social IQ applied to the workplace is most often called "professionalism"

There are many way to Leverage or build on your Social IQ strengths including:

1. Always think about what the other person may want, or think, or need, or how he/she might react before I do something.
2. Don't make assumptions about what others expect, ask them if I don't know.
3. Try not to make hasty decisions or judgment when someone else fails to do the right thing in terms of Social IQ.
4. Learn more, expand my knowledge and increase my Social IQ.
5. Clearly define my expectations (as a parent, or supervisor etc) for what I expect and respect and then lead by example.
6. Be consistent in exhibiting my Social IQ. Show others that I am respectful, aware, concerned and interested. Maintain a high personal standard.

**If you would like an expanded version of this brief, please visit [www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com](http://www.etiquettetrainingtoolkits.com) where you can purchase this and 140+ additional civility and etiquette lessons and other materials.**