



The

ONLINE MARKETING
ETIQUETTE
MANUAL

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Intro

Etiquette.

The word seems kind of “olden-days” doesn’t it? Do people even take etiquette classes anymore? Is that a thing? I find myself at a loss when it comes to proper etiquette because I think in some ways it is a lost art, or quickly becoming one.

What about on the internet?

Things are even foggier there. The internet is still a relatively new presence in society, so a lot of etiquette hasn’t even been established yet. Worse yet, with the anonymity the internet provides, it is probably the most hostile environment to politeness and etiquette we have ever witnessed.

By no means am I a stickler for etiquette, but having worked extensively online for the past 5 years, I know there is room for improvement in this area.

I have kept a running list for these past 5 years on certain activities and actions that I believe are proper etiquette when working online. I don’t feel this way because they are “morally right”. I am not talking about morals here. I am sharing these tips, because these are all things that personally annoy me, waste my time, waste your

time, have gotten me in trouble with others or have directly impacted my bottom line in a negative way.

Simple as that.

I know that not everyone will agree, but I also know if everyone followed these rules the online business world would be a far better place. If **you** follow these tips, you will build online relationships faster, network more effectively and build your brand with integrity.

In order to best show why these tips are so important, I wrote this from my perspective. As if the etiquette transgressions were against me. The “I” in this guide is universal – it could be anyone’s reactions to these common etiquette problems.

Introducing **The Online Marketing Etiquette Manual...**

Email Etiquette

Ahh, the mighty email. Even with text messaging, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, etc... Email is still widely used by just about every professional on the planet. While email use may be dipping slightly, it is still a very effective communication tool, and this is doubly true for those of us who work online.

I know you are already thinking of annoying things people do with emails that crowd your inbox, or make communicating with them a chore. I hope they are addressed below. I am also sure that as you read, you will come across things that you do and might have never realized was super annoying, time consuming or confusing.

Check out these email etiquette tips:

- ▶ **Be Concise** – Don't beat around the bush. Be concise and get to your point quickly and straightforwardly.
- ▶ **Simple Layout** – Keep the layout simple. The most styling I would use would be bullet points to break down the main reasons/questions for your email.
- ▶ **Answer All Questions** – There is nothing more frustrating than emailing someone 3 questions and they email you back an answer for just one of them.

- ▶ **Lay Off All Caps** – I get it, you are excited or angry – but unfortunately I can't tell which one and it just seems like yelling to me. Avoid it.
- ▶ **Keep The Message Thread** – If you are in a back and forth email conversation, keep the message thread in tact. This makes it easier for the person receiving.
- ▶ **Edit Your Email** – No one is going to blow a gasket over a typo, but make sure you try your best to eliminate any spelling or grammatical errors from your emails. Consistently sending someone poorly written emails, will look bad.
- ▶ **No Chain Letters** – C'mon, I am trying to work here. I go through hundreds of emails a day, I won't even open that crap.
- ▶ **Keep Style Simple** – Oh cool you found out how to make your emails a light pink font on white background. No, not cool! Stick to black type on a white background.
- ▶ **Chill on Attachments** – Of course you can send attachments, but if you are planning on sending one large enough to clog my email up for the next decade, please warn me so I can be prepared. Limit attachments to 2 per email as well please.

- ▶ **Compress Attachments** – Use .rar or .zip to compress your files before you send them. It will save time, space and bandwidth.
- ▶ **Respond in a Timely Fashion** – No one expects you to be sitting refreshing your mail client, but try to respond to important emails as soon as you can.
- ▶ **Don't Freak Out** – That said, don't freak out if you don't get an instant response. Don't forget that real life exists.
- ▶ **Don't Reply All to a BCC** – If I BCC'd you it is because I don't want you on the list of recipients. If you reply all, you are revealed as recipient. I learned this the hard way when I did it to a friend...drama ensued.
- ▶ **Don't Overuse Reply All** – So you just wanted to say thanks to the sender? That's nice, but the rest of us you replied to didn't need to see it.
- ▶ **Introduce Yourself** – If it is your first time emailing someone, introduce yourself. Don't use this as a time to take the stage. Be quick and concise. Don't come off as a jerk by listing 3 paragraphs of your accomplishments.
- ▶ **Be Careful With Privacy** – Don't mention anything in an email that could get you in trouble, or embarrass someone

else. Never know what will come back to haunt you. This also relates back to “reply all”, don’t reply all with private information.

- ▶ **Don’t Be Fancy With the Subject** – If you are working with a mailing list you can test different subjects to find the best open rate, but when you personally email please match the subject to the message. It allows me to quickly prioritize my inbox.
- ▶ **Plain Text When In Doubt** – Worried about what I use to receive emails? Well if so – go with plain text. Every email client and platform can handle plain text.
- ▶ **Explain Forwards** – Include your own message if you forward something. This will allow me to instantly know if it is a spam forward, or something important. Also nothing more annoying than having to read a forward 5 times to figure out what the heck it is in reference to.
- ▶ **End With Thanks** – Ever have that awkward moment when you try to decide how to end an email? Go with Thanks.
- ▶ **Include Contact Info** – If you want me to contact you, leave me your info. Easiest way to do this is with an email sig. The easier it is for me to get back to you – the more likely and quicker I will do it.

Message Board Etiquette

The message board (or forum) is almost a self contained community of it's own. There are usually a group of regular contributors to each board who know each other's quirks, personalities and posting patterns. This type of familiarity can lead to a lot of head-butting.

Just about any interest you have (and yes I mean ANY) is represented by a message board online. They are great places to find current information, network and even make some money.

One problem, even the most heavily moderated message boards will have annoying issues. Most of these issues come down to a simple lack of online etiquette. If you want to be the most effective message board member you can be, while maximizing your networking opportunity – read the tips below:

- ▶ **Avoid All Caps** – You will get used to this tip. I can't believe people still have to be reminded. It is annoying, strains the eye and it is rude.
- ▶ **Type Properly** – You can ruin your credibility if you have lots of typos or use lot's of web-speak. If your goal is to network – put your best foot forward.
- ▶ **Search Before You Start A Thread** – This is so annoying and really clogs up busy forums. If you are looking for an

answer to a question, do a forum search first to see if it has already been answered.

- ▶ **Don't Thread Bomb** – Don't rain on someone's parade for no reason. I was using a thread to sell something once, when someone who didn't even buy it left a negative message that was wrong and had nothing to do with our offer. It hurt sales momentum and there was no reason he couldn't have private messaged me instead.
- ▶ **Private Message – Private Info** – Speaking of which, private matters are dealt with by private messages. That is basics.
- ▶ **Consider Lurking** – Before you dive into a forum, guns blazing, maybe spend some time lurking. This way you will get an idea of what is and isn't acceptable and some of the personality quirks of individual posters.
- ▶ **Introduce Yourself** – Most forums have an area especially for this. Introduce yourself. Tell people a little about what you do and why you are there.
- ▶ **Read The Guidelines** – Almost all forums will have a set of rules specifically created for them. Read these and understand them. Avoid breaking any of the terms or you will end up being banned.

- ▶ **Fill Out Profile** – Nothing worse than when I see a post I like, I check out the profile and it is completely blank. This causes red flags because I instantly think spammer!
- ▶ **Ask Before Battle** – Sarcasm is hard to project with just the typed word. So is tone. In fact it is very easy to confuse someone's intention. Make sure you ask for clarification before you engage in a full blown argument.
- ▶ **Post In The Right Categories** – A message board has categories for a reason. For example, if you are selling something – then go to the buy/sell forum. Makes it easier for me to find if I want to purchase.
- ▶ **Don't Hijack** – Don't hijack someone else's thread – it can lead to the original poster not getting his question asked. Nothing worse than asking about something, then someone else comes in and steers the thread towards a question of their own.
- ▶ **Don't Be a Phony** – You will lose all credibility if you act like a phony. Don't pretend to promote your own product or something lame like that. Also, never create other aliases to help you argue. You will not only lose credibility you will probably be laughed off the board.

- ▶ **Don't SPAM** – Posting tons of affiliate links will just clog forum, they will get erased anyways and you will just cause general disruption for no gain.

Facebook Etiquette

Facebook is probably the world's most popular website. If you are working online, you don't need to have a presence on there, but considering that millions of people of just about every demographic use it – **why not?**

One issue with Facebook is that so many people use it, you are forced to deal with annoying issues. I know as you read this you instantly compiled your own list of annoying Facebook behavior. If you can't think of 5 annoying things right away – be wary because you might be the person perpetuating these problems!

Facebook is one of the best networking tools ever available to people. Ever. Don't waste your opportunity here by acting like a tool.

Read the tips below to make sure you use Facebook properly, and more importantly, **effectively.**

- ▶ **Take it Easy** – Please stop clogging up my news feed with your constant status updates. You don't ever need to do five right in a row.
- ▶ **Don't Spam Offers** – yeah I know people can make money spamming affiliate offers on Facebook – but I will delete you from my friends right away. Feel free to share affiliate

links, but don't shove them down my throat.

- ▶ **No All Caps** – This seems to be a pattern doesn't it. When online, keep your caps lock off.
- ▶ **Do Not Invite Me to Apps** – I guess once in awhile I don't mind, but please don't invite me to every app you decide to use. I don't care what song was #1 on my birthday, and I don't care who has been looking at my profile. Please, pleeeeeeeaaase don't ask me to join anything with "Ville" in the title.
- ▶ **Ask a Question Once** – The new poll feature on Facebook is handy, but if you have already asked me the question, or see I have already answered, then don't ask again.
- ▶ **No Pokes** – I can not wait until they remove this feature. I never check my pokes and hate having to clear them.
- ▶ **Tag Pics Lightly** – So we went out last night and had a blast right? Cool, but please don't tag me in the picture where I am standing on a cop car flipping the double bird. Keep it classy with the tags. If i want to tag myself in something outrageous, I will.
- ▶ **Public Facebook Wall is Not For Private Info** – Have an issue with me? Want to share some personal info...send me

a message. The Wall is no place to air dirty laundry.

- ▶ **Don't Tag Me for Promotion** – Just because I have a large friends list, doesn't mean you can tag me in your promotional updates just to get eyeballs. Do that even once and I may drop you.
- ▶ **Reply to Comments** – You don't have to reply to every comment you get on a post, but it is good manners to reply to questions. It is also good business to keep a running dialogue with your followers. Commenting on their comments is the best way to do this.
- ▶ **No Domestics** – Leave the “baby mama drama” at home. I don't want to work with people who might end up on Maury.
- ▶ **Beware Status Updates** – Status updates can be pretty public info, avoid slagging off a coworker or client. Besides the fact it could get back to them, it just seems tactless.
- ▶ **Don't Facebook Every Tweet** – I know there is software that does this, but trust me, no one on Facebook wants to see every one of your tweets.
- ▶ **Don't Hijack My Posts** – Please, if you have an offer of your own, or want to promote something – then send me a

message or status update. However, if I make an update, don't comment with your own promotion. Classless.

- ▶ **Be Real** – Social media users are savvy – we can sense a fake a mile away. Being a phony will kill all future credibility.

Twitter Etiquette

After Facebook, Twitter is probably the next most popular Social Media site on the web. While the two are often compared, Twitter is much different than Facebook. In fact it is so different, than it has it's own list of etiquette.

Twitter really has a love hate relationship in the online marketing world. People love the real time nature of it, as well as the huge pool of people who use it – but they often hate that they can't simply spam links and make money.

Twitter has a pretty savvy user base for the most part. While it grows in popularity this might change, the fact is most of the people currently using Twitter can spot the fakes. Not only that, they have low tolerance for annoying behavior.

Twitter becomes much more helpful when you reach certain plateaus. While hundreds of followers won't help your bottom line much, tens of thousand of followers (good ones) will.

You will never have the chance to reach those numbers, unless you learn some basic Twitter etiquette:

- ▶ **No SPAM** – See another pattern. No one minds promotional messages if they are used sparingly and properly. Setting up an affiliate link to bomb out every ten

minutes is neither.

- ▶ **No All Caps** – I think at this point I am sick of mentioning this. Has it sunk in yet?
- ▶ **No Auto Response To a Follow** – Nothing makes me want to unfollow someone quicker than getting a soulless auto response when I follow them.
- ▶ **Don't Mention Me in Objectionable Tweet** – My brother had a friend @mention him in a Tweet that included a racial slur. It was completely against what my brother believes but once it was on Twitter he lost followers – all because someone ELSE was an ignorant fool.
- ▶ **Keep it Short** – Twitter is all about brevity – in fact it limits you to just 144 characters. If you have to send me a message in 4 separate tweets – forget about it and email me.
- ▶ **Private Issue Thing** – Just like everything else we have discussed – private messaging exists for private information.
- ▶ **Contribute** – Twitter is only as good as it's members. You won't be able to gain really good followers unless you contribute in some way. Don't just take, take, take....give.

- ▶ **Retweet Others** – One of the easiest ways to be a part of the Twitter community is to retweet other people's links. it builds good spirit.
- ▶ **Complete Bio and Avatar** – I can't tell if you are a spammer, a bot or real unless you fill out your avatar and include a picture.
- ▶ **Truncating is OK** – If you want to retweet my message but it is too long, feel free to edit it. Please keep all links and twitter names intact though.
- ▶ **Leave 20 Characters** – If you have a tweet that you want to get retweeted, leave about 20 characters free so people don't have to worry about editing it to fit.
- ▶ **Take Advantage of #FF** – If you want to build good will – use Follow Friday to mention some of your favorite tweeters. This will not only help you network, it will help good people get followed as well.
- ▶ **Tweet Regularly** – I often use tools to find people who don't tweet regularly and remove them from my list.
- ▶ **Test Links** – It wastes time and looks bad if you send out a tweet with a dead link. Test your links before you tweet.

- ▶ **Use Hashtags Properly** – Don't use improper hashtags. I have search columns set up for certain terms and misuse of hashtags really clog those up. Only use relevant hashtags.
- ▶ **Be Social** – Remember Twitter is all about conversations between people, not Shakespeare–esque monologues.
- ▶ **Have A Sense of Humor** – Take things with a grain of salt. Twitter isn't completely formal, people swear, joke and etc...

Instant Messaging (IM) Etiquette

Instant messaging is an integral part of the online marketers daily life. I think I have an account with just about every major one out there. I have a business account, a friend account, old accounts, etc...

Instant messaging is just a great way to quickly discuss an issue with a client or partner – remotely. I don't even have to leave my computer, just send a quick message. I have some form of instant messenger running at all times.

Just like anything though – using IM wrong can be problematic. First off you can look very unprofessional to potential clients and/or partners. Secondly you can waste a lot of time.

If you want to make sure you look professional and don't waste your's (or other's) time then read these tips below:

- ▶ **No All Caps** – Sigh, I only repeat this because people still don't listen. You know why by now.
- ▶ **Use Status Effectively** – All IM clients allow you to set your status. Use it properly. If you are going away, switch it to away. If you are busy, set it to that. You can also hide out in invisible or away mode if you don't want interruptions.

- ▶ **Use “BRB”** – If you have to leave the computer for any length of time and you are mid-convo, tell the person with a simple BRB (be right back) or AFK (away from keyboard).

- ▶ **Say Goodbye** – There is nothing worse than talking to someone and they just disappear. It can be an infuriating feeling. I never know whether I should move on, or wait for them to come back from a disconnection. Obviously things happen and sometimes you might have to rush and leave, but in general try to give the people you are chatting to, a heads up.

- ▶ **Respond in a Timely Fashion** – Don’t leave me hanging – if you are at your computer and in a discussion with me please respond in a timely fashion.

- ▶ **Give Me A Sec** – That said, if I don’t respond instantly, please don’t ask 17 follow up questions. Let me respond to the first question and we can move on from there.

- ▶ **Keep Font Simple** – A lot of IM clients allow you to change color and font. Keep it simple. Pale yellow on a white background will give me a headache long before we can finish a discussion.

- ▶ **Be Professional** – I am really laid back, I have no problem with hilarious IM convos. However, if you are contacting

and chatting with people for online networking – remember they could be saving your convos. Don't say anything that you could come back and bite you.

- ▶ **Stop Buzzing** – Please never “buzz” or “nudge” me. I hate that these even exist on instant messengers. Talk about annoying. I have an audio alert when I am message I don't need a shaking screen and buzzing noise.
- ▶ **No Audio Emoticons** – I have stopped using MSN Messenger because of this. I had people who a typical smiley wasn't enough, they would have audi enabled ones that would greet me with joyous “boings” and “aaaa-oooooo-gaaaas”. No thanks.
- ▶ **Don't Send A File Randomly** – One of the great things about IM clients is you can share files. While that is great, randomly messaging me out of the blue with a file transfer is weird. Are you hacked? Is this attachment safe? Give me a heads up before you start a file transfer.
- ▶ **Don't Stack One Liners** – I don't know how else to explain this one. Basically, avoid the type of messaging where you write your thoughts one line at a time and they are all separate messages. You come off like an emo teenager.

- ▶ **No All Day Convos** – If the conversation we are having is going to take some time – maybe it is time to just call each other, or *gasp* hang out.
- ▶ **Knock First** – If you are messaging someone out of the blue, it is always nice to start with a “Hey can you chat?” That way, I can let you know if this is a good time, rather than just ignoring your out of the blue question.
- ▶ **Establish a Relationship First** – I am not a big fan of the instant message from a stranger out of the blue. I think that building some sort of relationship first is a good move. You can ignore this if you can’t possibly form this relationship, but don’t be surprised if you are rebuffed.

Miscellaneous Etiquette

This section is home to random online etiquette tips that fit in categories that aren't quite large enough to require their own section.

These different types of etiquette will be categorized where applicable.

Just because these tips aren't in their own section doesn't mean they are any less important. Make sure you treat them as seriously as the above sections.

Joint Ventures

After you have worked online for awhile, you will probably learn about joint ventures. Without getting too deep into, basically this is working with another online marketer(s) on different offers or launches. There are a couple things to keep in mind:

- ▶ **Have an Idea** – Don't approach someone with a JV and have no plan. I don't have the time to develop my own offering and yours. Contact me ready to roll, with a concrete idea of your own.

- ▶ **Be Flexible** – Don't get too caught up in how you want the joint venture to work. Joint ventures may require compromise from both individuals, so make sure you are willing to bend a bit.
- ▶ **Keep it Civil** – If I can't work with you for some reason, keep it civil. If you get angry or offended, I may never work with you. Sometimes people working online will be in the middle of something else, stay classy – don't burn bridges.
- ▶ **One Successful Venture Doesn't Automatically Equal More** – One successful JV isn't enough for people to expect all of their potential offers to be accepted. I choose my JV partners based on quality and usefulness to my list. If your next product doesn't address both of these, I may pass.

Support

The section is actually about how to deal with support from product creators and membership site owners. While as a customer you do have certain rights, there are ways to go about things that will make life easier for everyone involved.

You will get your answer quicker and it is more likely to be correct if you follow these tips:

- ▶ **Check Forums/Faq** – If there is a support forum or FAQ on the site you are having an issue with – check it first. If you are having an issue someone may have already had it, and you won't have to wait for a response from support if it is already posted.
- ▶ **Don't Email Angrily** – I think 80% of the angry emails I have gotten were straight up wrong. Either they were doing something wrong, or they were mistaken. The other 20% is usually dealt with quickly. In both scenarios the angry emailer feels embarrassed and apologetic. Avoid that – be polite.
- ▶ **Give All The Info Needed** – Many times a website's support portal will ask you to include information with any support requests. Include everything they ask for. You might not care that they want to know your Operating System, but it will allow them to diagnose your problem much more clearly. If you don't include all the info, you can bet your first response from support will be them asking for it again.
- ▶ **Read The Emails We Send** – Read AND Respond to everything asked of you. If support responded with 3 things to try, or three questions – please answer them all! If you don't, we just have to resend them.

- ▶ **Don't Ignore "Obvious" Advice** – You know how every time you call the cable company about a problem the first thing they tell you to do is to "Power Cycle" the receiver? The reason is because this fixes like 90% of their calls. When support gives you obvious advice, don't be angry – it is because that is what people usually need.

Disputes

There are times when no amount of support will do. You have an issue with a product or service and you want a refund. If you have gotten to this point here are some etiquette tips to remember...

Note: I understand etiquette is the last thing you are thinking of when you want a refund, but keeping these tips in mind will actually help you reach a resolution quicker and easier:

- ▶ **Contact The Seller** – Before you go to Paypal or another third party, contact the seller directly first. Any reputable seller or webmaster will have an easy way to contact them.
- ▶ **Understand The Refund Policy** – Make sure you understand the refund policy before you contact the seller. You might only have a limited time to request a refund, and

in some top heavy jobs there may be no refund policy.

- ▶ **Go Easy on Paypal Disputes** – Don't be so trigger happy on Paypal disputes. Paypal doesn't have a great reputation in the online marketing world (and vice versa). Even an unfounded dispute could lead to a suspension of a Paypal account. Then **no one** can get any money. Contact sellers before Paypal disputes!
- ▶ **Include Purchase Info** – If you are emailing asking for a refund, please include your purchase information in the email. Your original purchase email invoice is perfect. This will allow the person to give you a refund ASAP. If they have to try to figure out what you bought or who you are – then it will take a much longer time. Some people even email from a different email address than they bought with – which adds to the confusion and time.
- ▶ **Save The Trash Talk** – If someone truly rips you off (and it happens!) then feel free to let loose on social media or forums. You could save others from being ripped off. **Make sure though you got ripped off.** You will look and feel bad if you trash talk people and then find out it was a misunderstanding, easily fixed or worse – your own fault.

Conclusion

There you have it, a long (but I am sure not all encompassing) list of online marketing etiquette.

I will be honest, you don't need to follow this list to succeed online. I am sure a lot of complete jerks make money online. In fact after 5 years I know that for a fact.

However, it will certainly help you ease your way into the online marketing community. You can go to a dinner party, pig out, be rude and leave having ate the most food, but you aren't getting invited back.

Following the online marketing etiquette guide will ensure that you get "invited back" and your networking efforts will be their most effective.