

# You Can't Leave Your Communication Skills behind Just Because You Are at Lunch

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Many professionals conduct business outside of the office over lunch. The atmosphere is often more relaxing and conducive to discussing important matters privately. However, the business lunch can erode the impression of you as a consummate professional if you leave your communication skills at the office. To avoid eroding your relationships, remember these basic principles:

- **Always look people in the eye.** People will notice when you are looking over their shoulder or at others in the restaurant. Not only is it distracting, but it is also rude.
- **Don't interrupt.** It is human to want to share your views, but when someone is speaking, show respect and refrain from interrupting. You don't want to leave the impression that your idea is more important than theirs.
- **Don't change the subject to suit your interest.** What is important to you may not be important to your lunch mate. Introducing an entirely new subject inappropriately may make you seem uninterested. A polite lunch person will ask permission to change the topic. *"Ted, there is something I want to bring up, if it is ok to change the topic."* Because you have asked, most people will now be receptive to what you have to say.
- **Listen.** Don't dominate the conversation. You will get a reputation for being self absorbed. It will make others at the table uncomfortable. People expect that a lunch meeting will be a give-and-take, rather than one-sided.
- **Don't try to out-do the other person.** It's not about you. Resist the temptation of "one-upping" with your own stories or examples. People will feel insignificant or stop talking. When a person says, "I have a problem," just listen.

- **Do not answer your phone or look at your watch.** You will frustrate your lunch partners. They will feel you would rather be elsewhere or that they should end the conversation quickly.
- **Cursing.** While lunch conversations are more relaxed, it is not a good idea to curse or use banal language. Your partner may not comment, but he or she will notice, particularly if it is repetitive.
- **Avoid talking to people at other tables.** Again, the focus should be on your lunch mate. If you do notice someone you know at another table, a wave will do. You can always stop by their table on the way out.
- **Always introduce your lunch mates.** If someone does stop by your table or if you see someone you know, be sure to introduce your colleague. *"Hey, I would like to introduce you to Jack. He is my broker and watches my investments like a hawk."* OR *"This is Sarah, the newest member of our team. She comes to us from Crane and Crane and has been in the business for 18 years."* Introductions are a great way to show you value the other person.

A dynamic business lunch is a terrific opportunity for people to get to know you. With strong communication skills, you will leave the right impression and gain people's trust. They will want to do business with you in the future and will look forward to the next luncheon.

*Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, [www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com](http://www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com).*

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