

LISTEN! UP

Lunch Matters

Tips for Hosting the Business Lunch

Thank you for your interest in this eBook.

You have my permission to post this on your blog or email to friends and colleagues who you feel would benefit.

A special thank you to my business partner, Teresa Dawn Simons, without whose help this eBook would not have been possible.

Good Morning,

Donald Wayne McLeod

Founder

LISTEN UP LLC

P.O. Box 1011

Chardon, OH 44024

Cell: 216 210-5420

www.LISTENUP.biz

Email: DonaldWayneMcLeod@LISTENUP.biz

www.linkedin.com/in/DonaldWayneMcLeod

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You need to understand the importance of your lunch or dinner meeting and how valuable it is for you to make a great impression. You are an extension of your company. You are constantly being perceived by everyone you meet. What you say and how you say it speaks volumes about you and your company. Every time you open your mouth you are giving a speech, act like it! Be enthusiastic.

I watch people crash and burn on a daily basis when it comes to forming interpersonal relationships and they never even realize it. This is exactly why I wrote this eBook. You do not need to crash and burn. Let me help you.

Remember most people listen in black and white. You are only getting 20% of what someone is trying to tell you and vice versa. Understand you do not understand what others are trying to tell you no matter how basic the premise. You need to ask questions to fully understand someone. Don't be afraid to ask questions, they prove you are listening and that you want to fully understand what is being said.

While hosting the business lunch or dinner, you are there to show your guests how professional you are and how professional you will treat anyone they refer to you. As far as what outfit to wear it is better to overdress than under dress. You can always remove a tie or sports coat much easier than putting one on. Ladies please show some common sense when it comes to dress. You want your interested party interested in one thing and that is your business.

Your conduct during the meal will determine your professional success. If you handle all the small details correctly and make every effort to see that your clients have a pleasant evening, they will assume that you will handle their business affairs the same way. Believe me you are constantly being perceived. The good thing is you can positively influence how others perceive you and your company.

Be Prepared

Know your audience. What do you know about them already? Learn as much as you can before you meet with them. **Be truly interested in them** it will benefit you.

Do not make the mistake of meeting at a restaurant that you have not personally experienced. You are trying to stack the deck and you do not need any hidden surprises. You need to be certain that the food, service and setting will all be conducive to your meeting. Do your homework. Do not walk into a restaurant for the first time only to find it is crazy loud, their food bland and their service terrible. Who does that reflect on?

From the moment you invite your guest be in control. When inviting your guest do not say, “Would you like to join me for lunch” or “Let’s do lunch.” You need to say, “I would like to invite you to be my guest for lunch / dinner to discuss” ... and be specific in regards to why you want to meet. This clearly defines who will be in charge and paying the tab. Make sure your guest is clear about the purpose of the meeting so they can prepare for the meeting as well.

Remember to confirm your appointment with your guest the day before hand. We all have busy lives; do not assume your guest will remember. All the preparation in the world is meaningless if your guest fails to show up. While confirming your meeting, reiterate the fact that you are looking forward to seeing them.

Arrive at least 20 minutes early for reasons we will discuss and PLEASE drive a car that is clean inside and out. You may end up parked next to your guest. You do not need an embarrassing situation on your hands. What would happen if for some reason you needed to give your guest a ride? Look sharp, your car is a direct reflection of you. If your car is filthy, full of garbage or in disarray what does that say about you? Think about that the next time you get into your car.

Turn your Server into your Advocate

You have arrived early so you can ask the hostess to assign you their best server. Get, remember and use your server's name often. This is worth repeating. Get, remember and use your server's name often. Make sure they know your name by telling them several times. Let them know this is an important meeting for you and that you picked this restaurant because of the wonderful service they are known for. Tell them you understand how essential a great server is for a successful meeting then thank them in advance for their help. Watch them take ownership of your meeting and facilitate you anyway they can. A healthy relationship with your server will pay big dividends throughout the meal and can assure you that your guest will not drink more than you deem appropriate.

To alleviate any awkward presentation of the bill give your server your credit card before your guest's arrival. Inform them that after the meal you will be walking your guest to the door you will then return to settle up with them. Remind your server to serve you last; they should know this already but never leave it to chance. Remember your server can be a tremendous advocate. Don't underestimate the importance of exceptional service; it can make or break your meeting. Your guest will be noticing how well you communicate with the server, so again stack the deck.

Use eye contact while speaking to or thanking your server throughout the meal. Most people don't acknowledge their server even when thanking them. I took a private survey and servers have told me that less than 15% of people they are serving ever look them in the eye. Remember a thank you without eye contact means nothing and that is exactly what your thank you means without eye contact; nothing. Remember it is a two-way street, if you treat your server with respect they will be encouraged to perform at their highest level.

Please keep in mind if your server comes up while your guest is speaking to you, don't take your eyes off your guest until he or she is finished speaking. Remember while your guest is speaking, he or she is the most important person in the world.

Nothing should distract you from listening to them. The server or any other person that may walk up on you will wait until you acknowledge them with your eye contact before they start talking. If you do take your eyes off your guest while they are talking to you they will feel a mental slap across the face and guess who just delivered it? This particular listening skill takes practice but will definitely differentiate you from the crowd.

If on the other hand, you are speaking when your server walks up to you, feel free to say excuse me to whomever you were talking to and address the server.

Seating strategy

Another reason for arriving early is to work out the seating arrangements before your guest(s) arrive. Make sure the guests have the best seats... those with a view of the water or skyline, for example. You don't want your guests facing the wall, kitchen or restrooms. Make a mental note of where you will seat each guest. If the table isn't suitable, don't be bashful about asking for a better one. You have arrived early to control the things you can. Round tables work best for parties of five or more. This arrangement allows everyone to see everyone at all times.

RULE

When someone's hand is in your hand, your eyes shall be on their eyes... period!

When to turn off your Cell Phone

You should leave your cell phone on in case your guest needs to contact you regarding being late, etc. Once they do arrive remember to turn your cell phone off and consciously bring your energy level up three notches. IT'S SHOW TIME!!!

They're here!!!

Once your guests arrive, remember you are in charge. You have roughly ten seconds to make an impression, make it a GREAT ONE! Stand and walk towards your guests, greet them with a firm hand shake and plenty of eye contact. The simple act of moving towards them will ensure you are perceived as welcoming.

Get, remember and use your guests' names immediately. Get the exact pronunciation. Nothing will kill a relationship faster than mispronouncing someone's name over and over again. Make sure you get it right the first

time and do not be afraid to ask them to repeat it. Use the guest's first name either at the beginning or at the end of the statement. For example, "Thank you for taking the time to get together today, Robert."

If you need to complete a group of introductions, highest rank rules over gender. So use peoples' proper titles when introducing them. Thank them for coming and let them know you have been looking forward to spending time with them. Address them by name as you direct them to the seats you have already envisioned for them.

Be looking for something to comment on. Perhaps a guest is wearing a college ring, wedding ring, special pin or a tie that you can compliment them on. If you are accompanied by your spouse or business partner use their name often so your guests will have an easier time remembering them. Purchase a nice name tag for yourself and wear it. This will keep your name and your company's name in plain view which is free advertising and it works.

Don't be interesting, be interested. It's not about you. Listening is the nicest thing you can do for someone. Your guest will notice whether or not you are a good listener. (Do not be the person who never shuts up.) If you use your listening skills by the end of the evening your guest will think they had a wonderful conversation, because it was all about them. Remember any names of kids or pets that come up in conversation and write them down ASAP. You will want to add them to your guest's profile afterwards.

You are in control

Do not sit down until all your guests have been seated. Immediately after sitting down remove your napkin from the table, do not pop it open above the table, do open it under the table and place it on your lap. This will signal the beginning of the meeting. Use your napkin frequently to wipe your mouth. The only time your napkin should be placed on top of the table again is to signal the end of the meeting at which time you place it loosely to the left of your plate.

Remember

Do not sit down until all your guests are seated.

If you must leave the table for any reason, loosely leave your napkin on your chair to signal the waiter you will be returning shortly. If you drop your napkin on the floor, do not pick it up; ask your waiter for a new napkin instead.

You are in control, when you speak, be sure you look at and include everyone who is listening to you at the table. I cannot stress this enough.

DO NOT LOOK AROUND WHEN YOU ARE LISTENING TO SOMEONE. Stay focused on the speaker. Do not take your eyes off of the speaker until he or she is through. If your server walks up on you he will wait until you acknowledge him.

Remember

Look around when you speak and include everybody.

First Rule: Get your order ready

Do not start a long conversation before you order. Remember you should not bring up business until the entrée is finished and the plates removed so start things moving in that direction. Get your orders in and out of the way so you can start to freely converse without interruption. While perusing the menu make a few suggestions. This indicates the price range and opens the evening to appetizers and an appropriate wine. The recommendation can be as simple as, "I've always enjoyed the veal" or "They really are famous for their prime rib."

As far as ordering alcohol there are two schools of thought. One states that if you order alcohol, other guests will feel free to do so as well. The second suggests that you can inform your guest that this restaurant has an excellent selection of California wines and ask them if they would like a glass of wine or a cocktail before the meal? If at that time your guest declines then you should also decline. Remember your mission is to make the guest feel comfortable. You may want to limit the amount of alcohol you and your guest consume. Having a good relationship with your server will help prevent your guest from becoming inebriated.

You set the tone for the meal

If you intend for guests to order appetizers, you must begin by ordering one yourself, so order an appetizer you can all share. This is what sharing a meal is about. An appetizer gives you the opportunity to break bread, so to speak

Remember to let your guests order their entrees first. Do not order something messy like ribs or spaghetti. You do not want to be worried about food on your face; you have enough to be thinking about as it is. Order the same number of courses as your guest. If your guests order a salad or appetizer make sure you do. You do not want them eating alone.

Remember, you are not there to eat but rather to impress upon your guest your marvelous listening skills. You can really showcase your listening skills if you don't eat when you guest is speaking. Instead, lean towards them while employing eye contact. Consequently, you may want to order a smaller entree portion for yourself so you have less to eat and more opportunity to showcase your listening skills. Show your guest your complete attention and eat while your guest is eating. Do not be worried about finishing everything on your plate your mission is to listen, not eat.

When your drinks arrive and you feel you want to toast your guest go right ahead. You may want to toast to others instead. I will always remember a gentleman toasting all those who gave their lives so we at the table could enjoy this fine meal together. Remember this is the **beginning** of a wonderful friendship and it is not about you. By the end of the meal you want them to know you care about them and you have depth. If someone toasts you, do not raise your glass or take a drink. If you do you will be toasting yourself.

Be Genuinely Interested, not interesting. Do not start talking about yourself. Get the client to start talking about themselves. While listening, you will look them in the eyes. Lean toward them and ask questions about what they just said. Listen four times longer than you speak. Ask questions.

If your guest even looks like they have something to say, shut up. If you are speaking and your guest starts to talk, shut up and listen. When someone else is speaking, lean towards them and use eye contact. **Just because a person stops talking doesn't mean you start talking.** This is so important... I want to repeat it. Just because a person stops talking doesn't mean you start talking.

Practice this in your everyday personal life and watch how people respond. By sitting still and not filling the dead air you prove to them you are listening. What will happen next is the person will usually start talking again but this time it is on a much deeper level. This listening skill is well worth the effort to learn.

Engage your guest's company

Do not overlook your customer's guest. For example, your guest brought his/her spouse, unbeknownst to you. Call them by name, find out things about them. If they are married ask the spouse how they first met. Then listen. You can ask them, "When did you know you were going to marry your spouse? Even the spouse will be interested in that answer. Believe me they will be critiquing your meeting on the way home and the spouse or guest's opinion will hold a lot of weight. Make sure you ask them questions and take the time to listen to their answers.

RULE

Do not out do your guest's story.
It is the Kiss of Death.

Do not "out do" your guest's stories

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is "out doing" someone else's story. This is plain and simply the "Kiss of Death." Why is it when we hear a story we want to tell one that is bigger and better? PLEASE DON'T!!! If someone tells you they are going skiing at a local ski slope please do not tell them how you go skiing in Vail, Colorado every year. You aren't going to win a popularity contest by out doing your guest. LISTENUP!!! It is not about you. Listen to and ask questions about their story.

Three Questions to ask your guests and why:

1) What are you looking forward to?

Be prepared to hear this question repeated back to you because people are amazed someone is actually interested in them. It also gives them time to think about the question. The purpose of this question is to give you a timely and accurate snapshot of the person's present mind set. If someone tells you they are not looking forward to anything then understand it might not be the best time to try to sell them something. Instead, try to simply leave them with a smile on their face.

However, if they do have something they are looking forward to be all about it and ask questions regarding it. Perhaps it's a vacation, new car, house, child or job. Whatever they tell you make mental notes so you can address it again when saying good bye to them.

2) Do you remember your first bike?

To engage everyone be sure to look at everyone at the table. Start a topic you can all discuss. Do you remember your first bike? You will be amazed how people want to tell you about their bike. Remember to ask questions along the way. What color was it? Why did you get it? Did it have speeds? Did you ever get hurt on it? Our bikes were our world giving us freedom and ownership. This is a simple question but one that can provoke time travel. If you pay attention you can watch people go back in time in their minds. They are actually a kid again riding their bike around. For a moment they are a child again and what kid doesn't make friends easier than an adult.

After someone answers the question ask them if they were just riding their bike, chances are they will say "yes." If you listen and ask questions you will hear some very interesting and personal stories. The fact is if you discuss their first bike, first car, first house or apartment by the end of the meal they will feel that you have known them their entire life.

3) **When was the last time you experienced exceptional customer service?**

This is a must question. Learn what made the service exceptional then emulate it. You will be hearing first hand what your guest feels are important aspects of customer service. In short they are telling you what they are expecting from you so LISTEN UP!

Talk in terms of your customers interests. Find out what they are passionate about and find out why. If they have a loyalty to a sports team ask if they would like to place a friendly wager on a game and hope you lose. During the Super Bowl almost everyone is willing to place a small wager on the game.

I tell you to bet two dollars for several reasons. First, it keeps it friendly. Second, when you pay them you are proving you have integrity. Third, if and when they spend the two dollar bill whose name do you think will come to mind? Can you see how you just created another contact opportunity that can help you build your relationships?

Appreciate others opinions

Not only respect but appreciate other people's opinions for they are what make conversation not only necessary but enjoyable. Be glad we all have differences of opinion. How boring would it be if you already knew everything that was going to be said to you? Do not get into an argument. Winning an argument will cost you every ounce of goodwill achieved to this point.

RULE

When the food arrives you should be served last.

Time to Eat

When your meal arrives you should be served last. All well mannered guests at a business or social meal will wait for the host to begin before starting their own meals. Don't keep them waiting. If it is a small gathering, wait until everyone has been served and then immediately begin eating.

You shall hold your utensils in a proper manner and use the appropriate utensils for the course being served. Salad forks and soup spoons will be on the outer side of the utensils presented for use. Food shall be passed to the right and you will never serve yourself first before passing a dish. Items such as salt and pepper holders or cream and sugar bowls shall be passed together as a set and placed by the person to your right's plate. Remember when passing syrup pitchers or gravy boats face the handles towards the recipient.

When cutting meat, the fork should be in the left hand and the knife in the right, if left handed these positions would be reversed. Cut only one piece at a time; do not cut the entire item into pieces at once. When you lay down your knife it should be placed across the top of your plate with the blade facing inward. Then, transfer the fork to your other hand before using it to eat with. You may use the European style of cutting with the fork in your left hand tines facing downward. Cut the meat with the knife in your right hand then simply raise your fork to your mouth.

Remember the magic words *please* and *thank you* and use them often. You shall not eat too fast or too slow, try to stay in step with your guests. If you don't like something just leave it on your plate. If you need to remove an inedible item from your mouth remove it using your index finger and thumb and place it on your plate. You shall be polite and respectful at all times, even if the food or service you are receiving during your meal is substandard.

Remember body language. Don't slouch towards your plate, bring the food to you. To eat bread tear one bite size piece off at a time, butter it, then eat it. It is considered inappropriate to take a bite out of a whole dinner roll however toast or garlic bread may be eaten as a whole piece. Don't speak with your mouth full and allow time for your guest to eat. When you are finished with your meal place the knife through the tines of the fork and place them in the center of your plate in the shape of an X. This will signify to your wait staff that you are finished and that your plate can be removed. When eating, pace yourself, you never want to finish before your guest forcing them to eat alone.

Remember

Do not bring up business until the entree is finished and plates are removed.

Do not bring up business until the entrée is finished and the plates removed. When you are finished eating do not push your plates away from you, instead leave them in their original positions to be removed by the wait staff. Once your main course dishes are removed reposition your dessert utensils by sliding them down towards you. The fork should slide down to the left and the spoon down to the right.

Dessert Anyone?

If you intend for your guests to order a dessert first order one for yourself. Encourage them to order coffee and get ready for your 15 minutes of fame. When drinking coffee don't bend down to the cup. By sitting up straight and bringing the cup to your lips you exude a sense of strength. Body language 101, try it and see.

As the host you should be the first one to bring up the business at hand. You are constantly being perceived so posture is important and so is body language. Sit up straight, bring the orchestra and keep your elbows off the table **Understand that people have short attention spans.** They are only going to get 20% of what you say. Get their attention by MAKING IT INTERESTING!!! Lean toward them and when talking use proper English. What you say says a great deal about you and your company.

Bring the energy, be enthusiastic and look at everyone as you speak. Use hand gestures, voice inflection and speak from your heart. Be sincere and keep it short. Let them know you appreciate what they have done for you so far and look forward to developing your business relationship in the future. Ask them what ideas they might have to further develop your opportunities. Even if they mention something that you have already thought of give them the credit for it. Let them know they have input. The more they feel they have input the more they will buy into your plan.

Allow time for final questions and thoughts. If they were truly listening there will be questions asked to clarify your ideas. You could ask, “What did you hear me say?” You might be surprised by the responses. No two people heard the same thing coming from your lips.

Ending the Business Lunch/Dinner

When you feel the meeting has come to an end place your napkin loosely on the table to the left of your plate never on the plate. This will signal the end of the meeting. You can then get up and walk your guest out.

Comment again on whatever it was they were looking forward to. Have a great time on that vacation or enjoy the new car, house etc. you get the picture. Remember what it was so you can contact them again in the future to ask them about it. Remember we are building relationships. It’s nice to have a reason other than business to call someone.

Remember
Comment again on
whatever it was they
were looking forward to.

When saying good bye walk them to the door give them a firm handshake with plenty of eye contact. Say good bye to everyone individually with a comment. Be the last person to hold eye contact when saying your final good bye.

Once all of the guests have left, pay your bill and thank the wait staff that assisted you.

Write down everything and anything you learned about your guest. Birthday, anniversary, middle names, kid's names and ages, spouse's name, how they met and what they are looking forward to. Asking what they are looking forward to gives you a topic to discuss the next time you want to contact them.

Critique yourself. Write down everything you did well and not so well. You are a work in progress. Don't beat yourself up if you struggled through the meeting. Remember what you did well and improve on your rough spots. What is most important is making your guest(s) feel important.

Finally, do not forget to write a thank you card and snail mail it as soon as possible. To make it personal place a stamp on the letter, never use metered postage.