

Why manners & courtesy are vital for successful selling, businesses & societies

By [Sue Barrett](#) 02/08/2016 [Attitudes & Behaviours](#), [Communication](#), [Ethics & Values](#), [Life Skills](#)

Sometimes, the seemingly trivial daily acts we perform are the most important. Courtesy is but one example. For instance, while driving your car, do you ever want to switch lanes but are prevented from changing by the heavy traffic? How do you feel when someone, recognising your problem, slows down, waves to you and lets you in? Your mounting frustration is likely to instantly transform into relief and thankfulness. You probably raise your hand as a sign of thanks and change lanes. Later, when you see someone else in a similar situation, do you also slow down and let them in? If you do, you are sharing and spreading the kindness you received from another. How do you suppose the driver you just helped will act? We don't know but we would hope they will do the same.

You may be thinking that I'm being a bit old fashioned raising this topic. Some people argue that courtesy and manners no longer matter in a 21st century world. However, good behaviours, courtesy and manners are never out of style. That is why there is good reason for bringing this topic to our collective attention – for business, sales and societal reasons.

Manners and courtesy are under threat.

Over the last few decades, with the advent of the internet, we have seen communication becoming more and more direct, blunt and in many cases, nasty with many people voicing their opinion whether they are supported by facts or not. This is creating a lot of discussion and tension about people's right to free speech[1] with some thinking free speech means they can say and do anything they want and hang the consequences. With the media increasingly highlighting stories of people feeling slighted by others resulting in anger and outrageous acts, the stories of social media trolling and personal intolerance, and the one-up-man-ship and name calling by our politicians and other vocal groups, you could be forgiven for thinking that manners and courtesy had all but disappeared from our societies.

The good news is that they have not, yet. For despite the news most people still act with courtesy and respect towards each other however, these virtues are being tested and could potentially be sidelined if we do not actively make them a part of our daily lives.

In an article from UniversalClass.com they highlighted that, 'Without etiquette, members of society would show far too much impatience and disrespect for one another, which would lead to insults, dishonesty, cheating, road rage, fist fights, and a rash of other unfortunate incidents. Etiquette is merely a set of guidelines for politeness and good manners, the kindnesses with which we should always treat each other. It will always matter! Etiquette, the complex network of rules that govern good behaviour and our social and business interactions, is always evolving and changing as society changes. It reflects our cultural norms, generally accepted ethical codes, and the rules of various groups we belong to. It helps us show respect and consideration to others and makes others glad that we are with them. Without proper manners and etiquette, the customs of polite society would soon disappear and we would act more like animals and less like people. Aggressiveness and an "every man for himself" attitude would take the lead.'

Courtesy and manners are NOT trivial, they are necessary for a healthy and functioning society. Here is how Edmund Burke (1729-1797) describes Manners:

"Manners are of more importance than laws. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in."

Manners, courtesy and morals flow from the same principle: **the consideration for others.**

Considerate: Respect the needs of others.

Good selling and service and good business are all about the consideration for others – clients, staff, suppliers, etc.; understanding where the other is at and then working out if we can help them in a mutually beneficial manner.

For instance, The Virtues Project defines Consideration as follows:

Consideration is giving careful thought to the needs of others. It is holding a decision in a contemplative and thoughtful way. We mindfully consider what will result from our choices before we act. We speak with gentleness and tact. We care about others and their feelings. We carefully observe their preferences and

needs, then do things to give them ease or bring them joy. Consideration shines in small daily acts that add to the happiness of others. It is one of the most meaningful ways to show love. Considerate people give the very best gifts.

Consideration is at the heart of good business and good societies. Consideration is good selling.

Consideration is good customer service. If you want your customers to come back, refer you on, sing your praises, then encourage everyone in your business to demonstrate consideration via courtesy and manners.

Why bother?

Because the small daily acts of courtesy, manners and consideration are very good for business and vital in making for good sales and customer service practices and outcomes. Today, they are needed more than ever. They are needed to be practiced daily in the face of what seems to be a tsunami of unnecessary fear and hate plaguing our media and societies.

If we want to do good business, make good sales, deliver good service, build healthy client relationships, and build sustainable businesses that make for better societies we must be vigilant and not let manners and courtesy disappear from our daily practices. We need to make a stand which is why I am wanting to pay particular attention to these virtues and highlight their importance so they do not disappear altogether from our thoughts and actions, because if they do society as we know it will disappear and bad things will happen. That is why we cannot dismiss manners and courtesy. They are vital daily acts of kindness that make for a better more inclusive and productive world.

Whenever someone treats you kindly, show your appreciation, express your gratitude, and offer your thanks. It just might make a difference.