

RTI Workplace Etiquette

To build strong bonds and foster productivity when working with colleagues in close quarters, everyone should practice workplace etiquette. Here are 13 tips for everyone to keep in mind.



- **Imagine an invisible door.** Don't assume co-workers are available just because you see them at their desks. Knocking lightly on their door or workstation side entrance allows the individual to signal whether he or she can be disturbed at the moment.
- **Don't hover.** If your co-worker is on the phone, don't hover until he is finished or attempt to communicate your message through distracting gestures. Leave a message, go back to your work area and send a message asking him to contact you, or come back later.
- **Be accessible.** In a workstation, it is difficult to establish a system to let others know when you are available and when you don't want to be disturbed. Provide a way for people to leave you a message without disturbing you, such as hanging a clean-erase board outside your workstation.
- **Avoid phone faux pas.** Do not use a speakerphone while working in a workstation or open environment. Also remember to turn down the volume of your cell phone ringer and to take your cell phone with you when you leave your desk. Forward your desk phone to the voicemail system when you plan to be away from your work area for an extended period of time.
- **Use breakout rooms.** If you have an officemate, use a private visitor cube or breakout room if you plan to have a lengthy telephone conversation.
- **Use your "library voice."** Whenever possible, use a quiet tone so you don't disrupt others. People tend to raise their voices when speaking on the phone; consider posting a reminder to yourself to speak softly when on your phone.
- **Resist "prairie dogging."** Resist the urge to ask your workstation neighbor a question "over the wall." Get up and stick your head around the corner, send an email or instant message, or call on the phone to ask if your colleague is available.
- **Curb casual conversation.** While socializing in the office is natural and a great way to build camaraderie with co-workers, not everyone may want to know that your team won the game last night. If a group collects around your workstation, suggest that you all move to a common space.
- **Avoid eavesdropping.** Although it can be difficult to not see into others' cubicles or hear their conversations, be as respectful as possible. It is not good manners to chime in on others' conversations or to peek over at them. Give them the same respect that you would want.
- **Have good scents.** Be mindful of your neighbors' noses before you let your tuna casserole waft through the office. Your co-workers may not share your obsession for Calvin Klein's Obsession cologne or for cranberry-scented air freshener, either.
- **Hit the right note.** You may work best listening to music, but your co-workers may not. Use headphones or ear buds, but make sure co-workers can get your attention.
- **Ask before borrowing.** Always ask for permission prior to using someone's stapler or raiding a co-worker's supply of paper clips. Just because you have easy access to someone's work area does not mean you can help yourself to her stuff.
- **Apply the Golden Rule.** Act in your workstation the way you would have others act. Basically, if it bothers you when others do it, avoid doing it yourself. It's always better to be part of the solution than part of the problem.