



Mind Your Manners and Move up the Corporate Ladder

Author says no elbows on the table is just the beginning of social graces and your career

By Leah Shafer
Contributing Writer

Shrimp fork, salad fork, dinner fork. Bread plate, water glass, wine glass.

The conundrums of dining – and etiquette more generally – are a source of confusion and angst even for savvy folks as they navigate their way through polite society. Minding their manners is a matter of pride and business sense.

Enter Joy Weaver, etiquette expert and owner of West Plano-based Protocol Enterprises Inc. Ms. Weaver can tell you the best ways to raise a mannered child, how to eat a wheat roll at a business lunch, and how to find the best networking position at a buffet. She has made a career of helping people behave their best.

“I think that we would like to live in a nice society, and most people do the best that they can, but it never hurts to remember the rules of etiquette,” she said. “You don’t know what you don’t know until you go to a class.”

In 1999, Ms. Weaver left a successful real estate career to pursue the business of manners.

“I saw this big niche because socializing and business go hand in hand,” she said. “So many deals are sealed with a meal, and it just makes sense to have etiquette training.”

Since then, she has trained everyone from Fortune 500 employees to hospital workers, visiting their place of employment for short classes or more intense seminars.

“Normally, it’s large companies like construction firms, health care, law firms, lots of country clubs and department stores – it’s been a wide variety of people,” she said. “It gives their employees a competitive edge and you’re always wanting to fine-tune your employees.”

Ms. Weaver said most of her classes are “basic blocking and tackling” in etiquette, like which side of the jacket to wear a name badge or how to properly get in and out of a chair at a banquet.

“Some people have completely forgotten every dining rule they’ve ever learned,” she laughed. “One of the biggest faux pas is not following the golden rule of life, treat others like you want to be treated.”

To get qualified to teach, Ms. Weaver attended an eight-day manners boot camp of sorts in Washington, D.C., at Dorothea Johnson’s Protocol School. In Plano and Dallas, all of her business has been word-of-mouth since then. Being mannerly is more than just “the right thing to do,” she said.

“If you’re confident in yourself, you don’t worry about what’s going on with you and you can focus on what’s going on with the other person,” she said. “This is instant gratification. You walk away and you know you’ve learned something.”

In 2005, Ms. Weaver said she hopes to publish two books, *One-Minute Manners* and *Etiquette Tips From the Bible*. In the latter she makes her case that scripture contains the basic foundations for polite interaction.

“[In the Gospel of Luke], Jesus tells his disciples if you go to dinner make sure to eat before you go so you won’t look like a fool,” she said. “That’s one of the basic rules of networking – your main focus should not be on eating, it should be on socializing.”

An emerging focus of her business is teaching the children of Plano mannerly interaction.

“Parents need to start in the beginning being patient and persistent, teaching things like ‘yes, ma’am,’ ‘no, ma’am,’ ‘please’ and ‘thank you,’ she said. “Parents should help kids understand *why* they’re saying thank you instead of waiting until they’re nine and sending them to me and saying, ‘Fix him in an hour.’”

But even the hardest cases have a good place to start.

“We’re all like diamonds – we all have a basic value but it’s not until we’re polished that our true value is recognized.”



STAFF PHOTO: ELIZABETH LAVIN

MANNERS MAVEN: Joy Weaver teaches corporate and social etiquette through her company near the Shops at Willow Bend.