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DORAL

## Teaching business class essentials

Using proper etiquette to achieve success in the business world was the topic of conversation at a workshop for businesswomen in Doral.

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A group of businesswomen in Doral got a glimpse, as well as a chance to mingle, at a workshop Wednesday. The session was the second of a three-part series on image and protocol for modern businesswomen organized by NMG Consulting, an international public relations firm based in Doral.

"It's not about powdered wigs, white gloves or tea parties anymore," the introducer said. "It's about competition."

**Elena Brouwer**, an internationally recognized etiquette and protocol expert, agreed.

"Don't be afraid of the word 'etiquette,'" she said. "It's just about having good manners -- and we all need to have them."

In today's business world, **Brouwer** said, men have an edge over women. That, she said, means women need to try even harder to network and sell themselves.

And it doesn't mean dressing in a skimpy, low-cut dress, she said.

"Dress appropriately," **Brouwer** said. "Wear outfits that you'd wear in an office."

Your best bet: business suits.

And when it comes to jewelry and make up, less is more. Flashy earrings and bright lipstick are a no-no.

**Brouwer** also advised the women to keep conversation flowing smoothly by talking about current events or movie stars. Never talk about controversial subjects such as religion or politics, she said.

Another important tip **Brouwer** offered: Do your homework and know to whom you're talking.

How close you can stand to someone, how to greet them and what to say differ from country to country. For example, greeting someone with a kiss on the cheek is acceptable in South Florida because of the large Hispanic population but it could be offensive elsewhere. The safest option is a handshake -- firm, but not too firm.

**Brouwer** instructed the women to practice what they had been taught.

Women of all ages walked around Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio & Spa, where the workshop was held, mingling. With a champagne glass in one hand, and a free right hand to shake with, the women asked one another questions, always making sure to maintain eye contact and not stand too close. Just as **Brouwer** had instructed.

But having good etiquette skills goes beyond face-to-face encounters.

Being polite in e-mails, as well as when talking on a cellphone, is just as important as when attending an event.

**Brouwer** suggests cellphone users avoid speaking about sensitive issues, just in case someone else could be hearing the conversation.

Also, she said, never talk on your cellphone while at a business lunch or dinner. Only answer if there is an emergency.

"People sometimes forget these things because they're so attached to their cellphones," **Brouwer** said.

The information provided in the workshop will be valuable when doing business, said Barbara Romani, the community relations director for Citibank, who attended the event.

"I don't think etiquette is something that people are concerned with anymore," Romani said. ``It's a different world today than it was when I started working 43 years ago."

The rules also apply to people who don't work in the traditional business world, such as Elizabeth Posada, a special education teacher.

Posada, a Coral Gables resident, said she uses proper etiquette daily, when speaking to her students, parents, administrators and colleagues.

She wishes other people would be more conscious of etiquette: ``It makes the world a nicer place."