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iPhone App Helps You Mind Your Manners

Say you're at a big job interview, and the hiring manager decides to take you out to dinner. Do you enter your chair on the right or left side? Should your utensils be on the table or the plate when not in use? When scooping a spoonful of soup, do you scoop toward you or away? Assuming you have wine, do you hold the glass by the stem or bowl?

Techies of all kinds, but especially those on the job hunt, may want to check out Etiquette Avenue, a \$2.99 iPhone app that hit the App Store this week. Etiquette Avenue serves up advice on proper dining habits, when to use your mobile phone, how to deliver a good handshake, and other social tips for professionals. (Answers: enter on the right side; utensils on the plate; spoon away; hold by the stem.)

And it's a good time to learn proper etiquette. Given the massive number of qualified candidates vying for only a few jobs, hiring managers are sizing up a candidate's character. Personal questions and even table manners are fair game. Do you salt your food before tasting it? Could be a sign of impulsiveness or programmed mannerisms.

More than just dinner tips, Etiquette Avenue gives advice in 14 categories such as small talk, networking, electronics and self presentation. One of my favorites: "A Bluetooth device is great for driving but a real distraction in the workplace. It gives the appearance that your calls are more important than anything else you are doing or anyone you are with." That's true, at least from my experience. I never quite know when someone with a Bluetooth sticking out of his ear is really talking to me.

Some points are interesting, but Etiquette Avenue often leaves out reasons for them. When socializing at events, for instance, Etiquette Avenue tells you to affix your nametag on your right side. Yet many attendees at tech conferences pin their nametags to their shirt pocket on the left side. Most folks, of course, just hang their nametag badges around their necks.

Most of the advice is pretty obvious - or, at least, should be. Etiquette Avenue says you should use a professional sounding screen name when you use your personal email address for business purposes. Sounds simple enough. Then again, Carole Schlocker, who runs iSpace, a technical staffing firm, once ran across a resume with an email from someone who



clearly thought very highly of himself: [name]@studinwestla.com. “You’d be shocked at what I’ve seen,” she says. “That shows a lack of judgment.”

Etiquette Avenue also says you should always use professional ring tones for your cell phone. That’s good for business, bad for fun. On the BART train a few months ago, I heard the greatest ring tone of all time: Samuel Jackson in the movie Pulp Fiction saying, “I don’t remember asking you a god***n thing!” Everyone within earshot laughed. But I doubt that would make the grade at Etiquette Avenue.

Got any social blunder stories? Send me an email at tkaneshige@cio.com. Or follow me on Twitter @kaneshige. Follow everything from CIO.com on Twitter @CIOonline.

