

## **OH BEHAVE!**

### **The corporate honchos are coming into town and the staff needs to brush up on professional etiquette. Who are you going to call?**

BY BARBARA J. PERKINS

Pauline Winick is the mastermind behind a sophisticated handshake classification system.

First, there are good ones, and you know when you get one of those. Then she says, "there is the crusher, the dishrag and the glove." The glove, says the affable Winick, is two handed, and that "is much too intimate for business."

She should know. As co-founder and co-director of The Protocol Centre based in Coral Gables, Winick and business partner Dale Webb provide business etiquette seminars for individuals, schools and businesses. "We offer

classes for students and adults," says Webb, underscoring the emphasis on business – not social – behavior.

"Social is based on chivalry," she says. "Business etiquette is based on rank and precedent."

These women have spent many years learning the ropes of business behavior. Webb served 16 years in an executive position at Florida International University; while Winick may be best known for her 11-year stint as executive vice president of the Miami Heat.

The two first met in 1980 through Leadership Miami, a program focusing on community issues and leadership skills. Twenty years later, they worked together to help launch the FIU football program.

"We said if we ever found the right business, we'd go into it together," says Webb. They found it.

"I saw an ad for training and protocol and I remembered all the people who worked for me and always asked, 'how do you do this or that,' and 'how do you work a room,'" recalls Webb. "I told Pauline I had an idea and thought we could do it well."

Prior to launching their Coral Gables-based company in June of last year, the duo – ever mindful of their manners – completed their own formal training by attending the Protocol School of Washington, one of the most well regarded and rigorous such programs in the country. "It was hard work – like boot camp," observes Winick.

Since the company's inception, these entrepreneurs have been plenty busy because business is booming. According to Winick, this year they will conduct more than 80 business etiquette and protocol programs.

And while their primary courses are based on fundamentals and cover topics such as how to make an entrance, conversation skills, appropriate attire and dining dos and don'ts, classes can also be highly customized to meet clients' needs. Because the training programs involve significant interaction between the instructors and students, class sizes vary, but never exceed 30 participants.

Despite a varied mix of clients, many questions come up repeatedly. Business people want to know about everything from cell phone use to cubicle etiquette. Most school-aged students are eager to learn interviewing skills. But other inquiries come up as well, such as how much cleavage is acceptable at work, or how high stiletto heels can be. For the record, she says, no amount of cleavage is okay at work ... neither are stilettos.

Winick gleefully recalls one of her first assignments – a young man who came in for a private dining tutorial. "His boss thought we could polish him up," says Winick. The request came after the junior executive was at a formal dinner with his boss and used a chicken leg to summon a waiter.

Surprisingly, many people need to be reminded of how to behave. "What we do," says Winick, "is prepare people to be comfortable and confident."

The two, who instinctively finish each other's sentences, are exuberant about their business. Webb holds firm plans to grow the business and won't rule out the possibility of options such as franchising. As for Winick, she loves being a catalyst for personal and professional growth.

"I started off life as a teacher so it's like coming full circle," says Winick. "It's fun to take what you know and help others have more confidence."

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