

WHAT ARE YOU DOING BETWEEN 12 AND 2?

If you are one to gobble down a sandwich in 10 minutes, or worse, not eat at all during the time normally allotted for lunch, think again. Not only are you deteriorating your health, you are missing out on a great opportunity to cater to your clients and potential clients. Business lunches are the perfect opportunity to build substantial and profitable relationships. People would rather do business with people they like. Then why miss out on such a great opportunity that requires a small investment of time and money while improving your business relationships and generating more sales?

Here are 10 tips to plan a great business lunch.

1. **KNOW YOUR FAVOURITE RESTAURANTS.** When hosting a client lunch, it is not the time to try out new places. Do that with your friends. Invite your clients to restaurants that fit your top criteria as far as service, food, price and ambiance are concerned.
2. **BE AWARE OF YOUR CLIENT'S LOCATION.** Make a list of your favourite restaurants in different parts of town so that you minimize the client's travel time. Remember, your goal is to create a better relationship, not have the client feel frustrated because s/he is stuck in traffic.
3. **KNOW YOUR TABLE ETIQUETTE.** Do you know where the client should sit, who should order, how to handle the table settings, when to order alcoholic drinks, how to settle the check? You want to be confident about every aspect of your business lunch and avoid any embarrassing situations. Learn your etiquette and please, turn off your electronic devices.
4. **BRUSH UP ON CURRENT EVENTS.** During the casual conversation portion of your lunch, you want to be able to contribute something of interest, in an array of topics. If you know your client is particularly fond of sports, travel, music, etc, learn more about that topic.
5. **KNOW YOUR BUSINESS GOALS.** What do you want to accomplish? Are you making a formal presentation or are you building the relationship? Did you know that not all cultures expect you to start talking business right away?
6. **DON'T MAKE EVERY BUSINESS LUNCH ABOUT YOU.** The goal is to build the relationship, not to put pressure on your client. Unless it was established beforehand that you would be presenting a new product or service, stay away from the sales pitch.
7. **MAKE A RESERVATION.** Do not assume that because you eat there often, that there will always be a place for you. Make a reservation the day before your lunch, even more so if you want to ask for a specific table that will allow some privacy if you are discussing confidential matters.
8. **DRESS APPROPRIATELY.** The casual-Friday, provocative, creative, or sexy looks have no place during a business lunch. Avoid wearing heavy perfumes and rattling jewellery.

9. **KEEP AN EYE ON THE CLOCK.** Ask your client how much time s/he has and make sure you pace your lunch activity accordingly.
10. **FOLLOW UP.** If resolutions were taken during the business lunch, confirm them in writing when you are back in the office. If you promised to send something to the client, do it within the next 24 hours. Thank your client for accepting your lunch invitation.

Bon appétit!

Kathleen Gran is a certified Image Consultant and associate member of the Association of Image Consultants International. She trained with one of the select few Certified Image Masters in the world. She is also certified by Reach Communications Consulting, Inc. in the 360Reach Personal Brand Assessment. Kathleen's 10 year experience in corporate management and training positions, early career positions as special event and marketing project coordinator, combined to her passion for the impact of people's image on others have led to her career in image coaching. She helps people discover their authentic image and believe in their personal power.

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