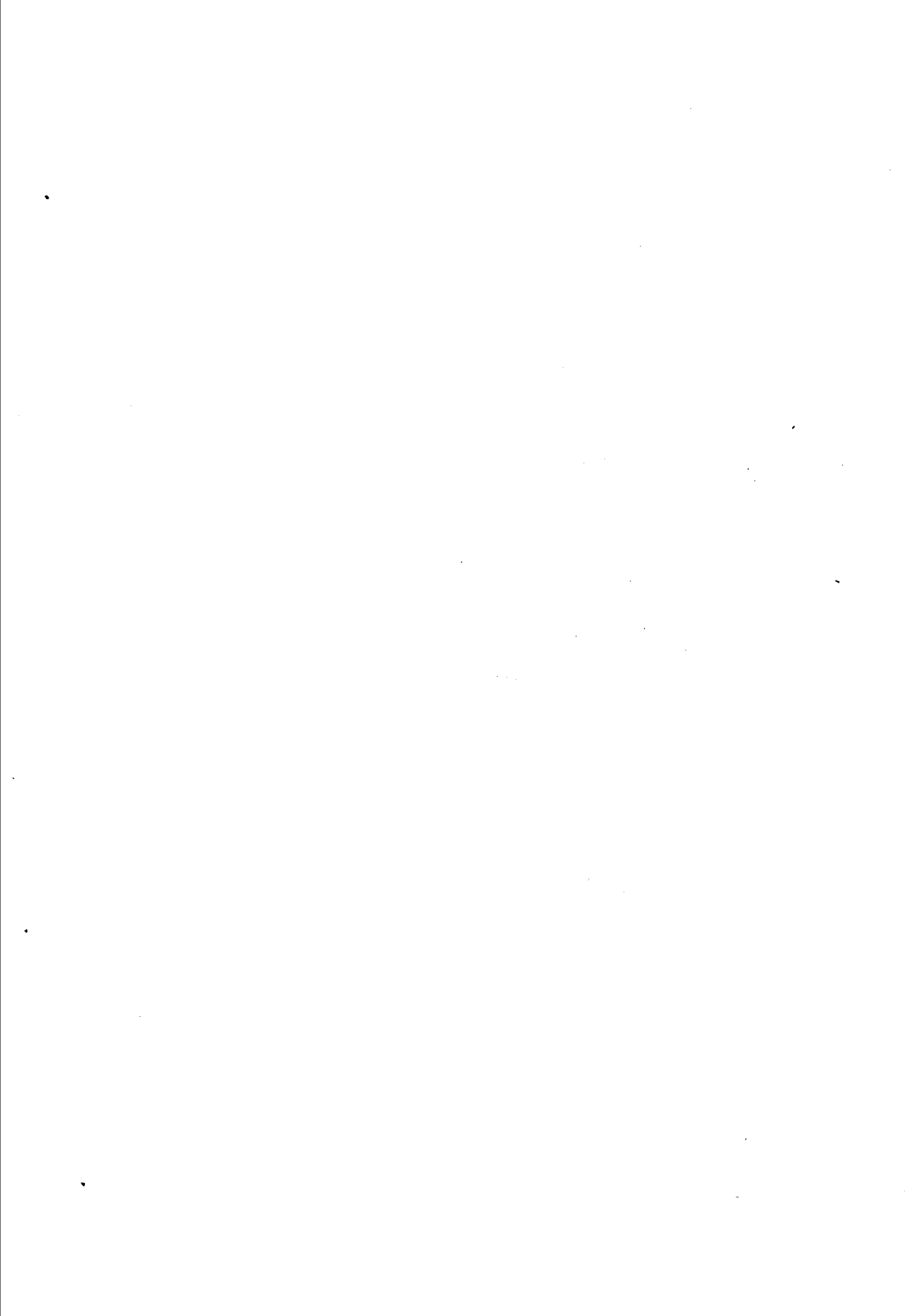


THE COMPLETE BOOK OF
BUSINESS
& ETIQUETTE

LYNNE BRENNAN
& DAVID BLOCK



THE COMPLETE BOOK OF
BUSINESS
ETIQUETTE

LYNNE BRENNAN
& DAVID BLOCK



In general, the masculine forms of pronouns and nouns are used throughout this book, for the sake of brevity.

Copyright © 1991 Lynne Brennan and David Block

First published in 1991 by
Judy Piatkus (Publishers) Limited
5 Windmill Street, London W1P 1HF

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Brennan, Lynne

The complete book of business etiquette.

I. Title II. Block, David

658.3

ISBN 0-7499-1052-6

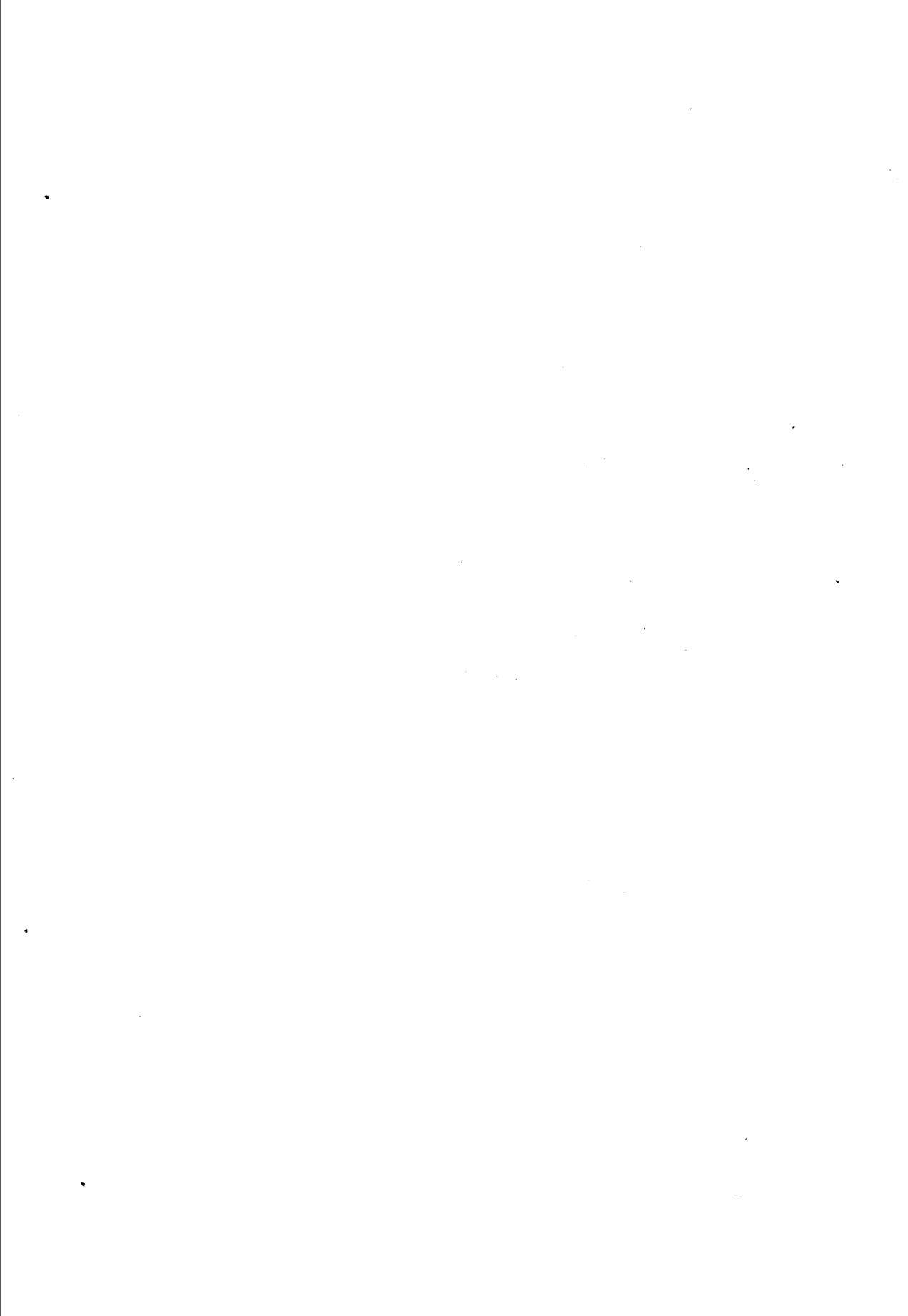
Designed by Paul Saunders

Cartoons by Dave Smee

Typeset by Phoenix Photosetting, Chatham, Kent

Printed and bound in Great Britain by

Mackays of Chatham PLC



CONTENTS

Introduction	9
<i>Part I AT WORK</i>	
1 The Interview	12
2 A New Job	18
3 Staff Communications	23
4 Telephone Culture	29
5 Correspondence	36
6 Personal Relationships in the Workplace	47
7 Criticism	54
8 Hot Topics – Rumour, Gossip, Smoking, Punctuality and Private Life	61
9 Meetings	68
10 Conferences, Exhibitions and Trade Fairs	74
11 Customer Service and Complaints	79

Part II SOCIAL SKILLS

12	The Business Lunch	86
13	Table Manners	94
14	Wine Matters	101
15	Reception Hosting and Guesting	106
16	Entertaining Taboos	116
17	Events Cultural, Sporting and Rewarding	121
18	Addressing Dignitaries	132
19	Wardrobe and Grooming	135
20	Strictly Women	143

Part III FOREIGN ETIQUETTE

21	Japanese Business Etiquette	152
22	Japanese Social Customs	162
23	Business Etiquette in the Arab World	168
24	Religious and Social Life in the Arab World	176
	Useful Addresses	183
	Index	186

INTRODUCTION

THE practice of good business etiquette generates immediate benefits. It enhances customer and staff relationships. It helps executives handle themselves effectively and confidently in every kind of social and interactive situation. It improves the quality of working life for everyone in a company. And it adds value to every other area of company life – from production through marketing and selling, sales promotion, training and personnel development to customer service.

Those who behave wrongly are not necessarily discourteous or rude; usually they are simply oblivious of their gaffes. But that very oblivion brands them as lacking polish, social education and perhaps respect for others. As such, their progress along the path to material and career success is impaired, as is the contribution they make on behalf of their company.

The Complete Book of Business Etiquette starts by suggesting how to make the best possible impression through dress, behaviour and attitude at a job interview, and then how to maintain that impression in the job. We offer solid information on every area of communications, from face-to-face to electronically assisted. There is guidance on how to criticise with positive results and how to turn complaints into sales. We show how good working relationships can be established and, accepting that business people are also flesh and blood, on avoiding dangerous ones.

There is advice on how to win at meetings without the others feeling they've lost, and we cover such tricky topics as controlling rumour and gossip without getting one's fingers burnt. The book demonstrates how to deal with difficult situations, awkward customers and almost impossible clients and colleagues. It does not even stop short at what to do when your own body conspires against you in company!

The Complete Book of Business Etiquette takes you to receptions, lunch

and dinner, and arms you with the necessary knowledge to take you to the opera or to Ascot and social stops along the way.

If you are a woman in business, or one of the many thousands returning to it, the book will help give you the confidence (if you need it) to keep up with and overtake the men – and without them resenting it. For men it demonstrates, among other things, how not to feel threatened or baffled by women in business.

And finally: export or die of embarrassment – how to win over foreign customers before they win over you. Essential advice is offered on the human skills involved in doing business in two of the world's most important overseas markets: Japan and the Middle East. It would be impossible to list the different forms of etiquette in all the world's business centres, so we have concentrated on the two where behaviour is a cardinal factor in the conduct of business.

Behaving correctly is, however, still only part of the story. We can learn a lot from following accepted rules and codes. But the basis of true etiquette is respect: for others and for oneself. From the moment the business day starts, millions of us change our nature, switching from our family and private personalities into what we consider to be the appropriate attitudes and postures of our profession. By assuming the roles of banker, industrialist, engineer, marketing and sales person, lawyer, writer and so on, many of us part company with our real selves. The acting out of these synthetic personalities, day in and day out, does not lead to long-term fulfilment; it is more likely to result in disillusionment, disappointment and, at worst, psychological malaise. But by following a code of behaviour based on respecting others as unique individuals we will create a far more honest, healthy and enjoyable business life for ourselves and our colleagues. And in so doing, we will add enormously to our effectiveness as business people. How to demonstrate that respect is the purpose of this book.

As we have already stated, few people deliberately behave incorrectly. The problem stems from their lack of awareness of good business etiquette. So if you come across advice in this book which you consider to be rather obvious, please remember that it is included because someone, somewhere, doesn't think it is.

Part I

AT WORK



Chapter 1

THE INTERVIEW

MUTUAL respect is the keynote of any civilised job interview. But if the stakes are high, the interviewee is the one on the spot; he has to make the winning impression. With so many cards hidden, however, that can be far from straightforward. So an elegant command of business etiquette should give him a fighting chance of landing the job. This is particularly important when facing interviewers whose strong suit is incivility, whether inherent or as part of the grilling procedure. Nothing will win over such an approach more effectively than steadfast courtesy.

Selecting staff is no picnic either. But, under normal circumstances, the most effective interviewer is the one who behaves with respect to others. Apart from anything else, few people ever forget the courtesy or otherwise shown to them when they were at their most vulnerable.

Phoning for the appointment

Some job advertisements require the applicant to phone for an appointment. When you do, have your CV handy; this will save time and the answers to any detailed questions about education and past career will roll smoothly and competently off the tongue.

Nervousness can be at its height at this point, so if the interviewer takes the call, and he is good at his job, he will help the applicant by sounding welcoming and interested.

Preparation

It is a courtesy at the interview to demonstrate that it is *this* job you are after, rather than just *a* job. So it is a good idea to research a company beforehand. You can do so by asking them to send you some company literature such as their house magazine or annual report. If that's

impractical, and they are a PLC, the report can be obtained from Companies House (see Useful Addresses). The effort is for your personal benefit too; you owe it to yourself to confirm that you would fit in with an organisation whose culture is expressed in these publications.

The interviewer too, being a professional, will have returned the courtesy by reading the applicant's CV in advance of the interview.

Timing

There will always be a points failure at Sodslaw Junction or a burst water main on the Grimway By-pass. Offering these as excuses doesn't create a good impression and may signify slackness.

If, despite every effort, you are still delayed, you should phone as soon as you can to give the interviewer an estimate of your time of arrival. Explain briefly and apologise then and there; if you wait until you arrive, it will have given the interviewer lots of time to think ill of you.

Ideally, arrive fifteen to twenty minutes early. This not only gives you a chance to unwind and soak up the ambience, but if the interviewer is free he may appreciate the opportunity to get ahead.

Appearance

For most job interviews women should wear a smart business outfit (see Chapter 19). Men should wear suit, shirt and tie.

With your few minutes in hand, you've a chance to slip into the reception area toilet with pocket tissues, comb and nail file, to check that your appearance is pristine and crumb-free. A small clothes brush may be useful, too. Hands are particularly important: nails must be scrupulously clean and well manicured. Women, as a matter of course, should

Pre-interview checklist:

- Is hair neat and tidy?
- Are hands and nails well groomed?
- Check for loose hairs or dandruff on shoulders
- Women should make sure tights are uncladdered and unwrinkled
- Double check that make-up/shave is perfect
- Go to the loo

remember to bring make-up repair kit and spare tights. Shoes should be clean and polished, and men should wear socks long enough to ensure that, when seated, the lower leg is covered.

Entrance

Good-will can be accumulated even before you are called to the interview room. Being pleasant and good-mannered to everyone, from the commissionaire and receptionist onward, can create a pleasing atmosphere that will improve everyone's mood and attitude to you. As bosses sometimes ask their secretaries and others for their view of candidates, it's worth scoring a few legitimate points before you're out of the starting blocks.

The encounter

First impressions are critical. It is a statistical fact that the outcome of many interviews is decided in the opening thirty seconds. So you can rack up points instantaneously by remembering the interviewers' names. Reinforce your powers of recollection by repeating them as you are introduced – 'Good morning, Mr Jones . . . Good morning, Mr Nyakotorimochu . . .' and by keeping their business cards in front of you. Don't use their first names unless you are specifically asked to do so.

A man gives his first and last names, and does not call himself 'Mr'. 'Mr' is a courtesy title added by another person. The same is true for a woman, who should give her first and last name, without the 'Mrs' or 'Miss', unless her status is considered relevant.

In the majority of cases, communicate with the interviewer in a friendly and respectful manner, regarding them as individuals rather than just as icons along one's career path. Polite self-assurance is what you should aim for.

It all starts with the handshake. Unless the person who greets you takes the initiative, you should offer your hand first to the prospective boss, whether male or female. It is worth checking your grip: a weak and flaccid one gives a corresponding impression; nor should it be a pumping iron display. The proper handshake is firm and dry and held for just two to three seconds.

The interviewer demonstrates courtesy to the applicant by, if possible, not taking calls or allowing any other interruptions during the interview.

Body talk

Civility and openness should be communicated from the moment you sit down. Arms should be uncrossed, so you don't look defensive. To look and feel relaxed, be careful not to perch. Sit with your bottom tucked well into the back of the chair: be alert and attentive and make direct eye contact.

Remember not to allow your nerves to cause distracting gestures like swinging or contorting your legs, rummaging around your face or constantly appraising your jewellery.

When facing an interview panel, tension often makes you lock on to a friendly and responsive face. It's worth making the effort to unclamp your gaze and share it among all the others.

Coffee talk

The simple question, 'Would you like a tea or coffee?', seems to have the same stupefying effect on some people as the tie-breaker in *Mastermind*. 'Oh . . . aren't you having one? I won't then, thanks. Sure, yes, absolutely. Oh, all right, sorry to trouble you, yes please . . . whatever's easiest . . . don't mind. I'd prefer coffee actually. Sorry. White with milk please, thanks very much indeed. . . .'

The preferred alternatives are the simple: (a) 'No thanks, I won't right now', or (b) 'Yes please, tea/coffee would be very nice.' Consider laying off the biscuits as they can be crumbly and awkward to handle and may impede coherence.

No smoking

Even if the interviewer is shrouded in fumes from his own cigarette or cigar, you shouldn't light up one of your own. There may be others in the room who disapprove, perhaps company rules restrict the practice, and anyway, why risk any negative reaction?

Nowadays even interviewers themselves should ask the permission of applicants before smoking.

. . . Or slandering

However much the interviewer may probe, don't malign your current or former employers. It's a loser's approach paying cheap and short-

term dividends. Your response to such questioning should show your understanding of why a person or company operates in a particular way, without being disdainful or over-critical. Far better merely to disassociate yourself from their actions. Remember that the interviewer may briefly relish hearing others criticised, but may wonder if one day he and his company will be subject to a similar attack. Also, he may interpret your remarks in a different way – believing you were the one at fault because you couldn't get on with people or fit in.

Wherever possible, you should give some credit for your successes to those you worked with. This will demonstrate your ability to work as part of a team.

'In business, however good you may think you are, most people judge you only by your behaviour.'

TERRY J. NASH, Director General, The Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Revelations

You don't have to give detailed answers to personal questions. If you have experienced a private tragedy that you honestly believe will *not* affect your work, it is no one's business but yours.

Where relevant, you must admit health handicaps or likely stays in hospital. If you are handicapped, you should not attempt to trivialise it, nor should you be defensive. The best approach is that your handicap motivates you to have extra drive and determination.

Objections

If something is said that you disagree with, you should politely and respectfully say so. Should the interviewer dig his heels in over a fundamental issue on which you take an opposing view, you must maintain your integrity – failure to do so is at your future peril. But be careful not to be dogmatic, and be wary of a potential employer with that tendency.

However badly you need the job, always have self-respect and never allow anyone to be rude to you without redress. At times, you may feel the urge to take a verbal counter-swing at an offensive interviewer. Instead, offer him the opportunity to withdraw the affront and to apologise. Otherwise, politely end the interview and leave.