

Master of Manners



In the world of international business, proper etiquette is crucial to one's reputation and overall success. To ensure that they are putting their best foot forward, professionals turn to Fitzgerald Heslop.

By Christine Aebischer

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Fitzgerald Heslop knows how to make a good first impression. He is cool and collected, and if the meeting was a planned one, then you can be sure he's done his research beforehand — and it shows. His confidence and charisma can put any conversation at ease, and you will never question whether he is truly engaged. As a verifiable expert of etiquette, Heslop is versed in both domestic and international business protocol, as well as dining proficiency and leadership skills, and this skillset is in demand, as numerous professionals — from college students to CEOs — looking to get ahead in the industry seek out Heslop's expertise.

"There is the demand to have a competitive advantage," says Heslop. "Anyone who is in a position where their reputation and image are being constantly looked at — which can be anyone — they are always trying to find another advantage. Knowledge is the final indication of class."

Heslop discovered his zeal for decorum during his time as the head concierge at the Hilton Hartford Hotel, where his responsibilities ranged from arranging car

services to briefing the staff on VIP guests to representing the brand at conventions and in the community. "People trust a lot to the concierge; they rely on you to fulfill their requests, and this began my fascination with household management. When the home is not taken care of, it reaches into the business as well," says Heslop.

After being certified by the Protocol School of Washington, Heslop became the program director and lead instructor of Peak Technical Institute's Household Management and Social Decorum Academy programs, which equip participants with the tools necessary to succeed in today's business world. "The most important things are a person's image, as in reputation and lifestyle," explains Heslop. "[Proper etiquette] allows relationships to be built and maintained.

"The Social Decorum Academy is another aspect of household management. It helps executives, college students, anyone who has an interest in making sure they don't breach a social norm that can be detrimental to a deal or their reputation." Heslop's seminars teach participants the finer nuances of social interactions in the international business

meetings and formal dining situations with confidence and authority. As Heslop explains, people are always arriving at the next plateau in their lives and often do not know how to react accordingly. That's where he comes in.

Participants are instructed how to properly shake hands, present a business card, make appropriate eye contact and pick up on the nonverbal cues that are often vital to any social interaction. One of Heslop's seminars, Outclass the Competition, also features a luncheon tutorial where attendees perfect both American and Continental dining styles. "No one invites you to dinner because they think you're hungry or thirsty," says Heslop. "They want something from you and you want something from them. It is an advantage to be able to sit across from an international person and for them to be able to look at you and be comforted with the same dining style. It's a way to build a relationship."

Due to the popularity of these programs, hotels, corporations and colleges who are interested in arranging private sessions for their staff or students also contact Heslop. Additionally, he trains individuals to be enlisted aides to general officers stationed at

military bases around the world. These aides manage the officers' households and relieve them of minor tasks that would otherwise be at the expense of the officer. Cross-cultural awareness is paramount to Heslop, and in order to provide his aides with comprehensive knowledge of the specific area where they'll be stationed, his own education is never complete. "We must always show honor and respect of people and of nations," Heslop states.

As someone who lives and breathes etiquette, Heslop can't help but notice breaches in protocol, whether in the news, in politics or in television shows. The faux pas he sees most often, he says, is someone forgetting, or mispronouncing, someone else's name, which leaves the impression that that person doesn't care enough to say it correctly or make sure they heard it right in the first place. But each mistake he notices only inspires him to learn more and pass on his knowledge to others. "At the end of the day, there is not *the* way, there's a way, and that's what we teach," says Heslop. "It gets people thinking about how to be aware and how to make sure they're not disrespectful." **UH**

