



Paul's Leadership Tips

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CRACK BERRY

I taught at Santa Monica College for many years. As many of you know when I conduct classes my teaching style is one of dialog and not monolog. I have always believed that the more interaction there is between student and teacher the lessons become more enjoyable and that leads to the information being retained.

In those days when a student didn't make eye contact with me I would assume that he was perhaps a shy person or was afraid that I would ask him a question. I see the same student posture today while conducting training for firefighters. However, I quickly learned that it is not shyness or afraid of being asked as question that causes the lack of eye contact. Today I get the Blackberry stare or the iPhone eyeball and head bobbing. It is interesting to watch the student try to keep up with my discussion while simultaneously trying to check and respond to e-mails.

For most of us everyone we know has a Smart Phone, Blackberry, and Jitterbug, Palm or other such devices. However, my wife is the exception to that rule. She had, until recently a cell phone that looked like a brick. She was perfectly happy with it and didn't want to change phones. Well, as you probably know she couldn't find batteries for it and had to give up her brick cell phone. She likes a very simple phone. All she wants is to have an emergency notification phone and every once in a while receive a phone call not necessarily make a phone call.

Anyway, back to the people who do use their cell phones inappropriately. Like I said, everyone has one, even me. When you think about it, that's a lot of eyeballs scrolling through e-mails during dinners, classes, meetings, at movies, yes even in church. It's addicting. As a matter of fact, just the other day my wife and I were out having lunch. I received the incoming e-mail vibration three times in about five minutes. I unconsciously starting reading my e-mail and was promptly scolded by you know who. She said it was rude and she was exactly right. She also wanted to know if I thought the Blackberry made me feel more important than anyone else. I put the phone away without comment.

OK, now really back to the people who are connected and wired 24/7. Many people are concerned that having the electronic gadget continually connected to your hand is getting a bit much. Hence the name "Crack berry." It is addicting. There are even WEB sites for Blackberry users and abusers.

I did some research and came across some gadget guidelines that I would like to share with you. I even have a handout sheet that I give to my students at the start of every class I conduct. Here they are:

- Turn the phone off or set it to vibrate when you're meeting with people in restaurants or other places where your usage could disturb people – such as the movies.
- Make sure to conclude your business – whether it is sending an e-mail, checking your e-mail or talking on your device – before you get in line as the bank or the store. There is nothing more frustrating than to wait on a customer who is otherwise engaged.
- You should never be in a conversation with someone and ask him to hold on for a moment so you can check something. This tells the person you are speaking with that he's not as important as your telephone.

So whether you're the offender or the offended, here are a few more pointers to keep in mind, courtesy of Diana Olson, an etiquette and "civility specialist" serving the San Diego area.

- If it's an urgent call, excuse yourself to take it. You should also let people know beforehand that you are expecting an important call or e-mail, so they're not caught off guard when it happens.
- Because alarms and alerts can be annoying, it is best to set your smart phone to vibration mode or to turn it off completely.
- When you are with other people, put your device away so that it is not an intrusion and so people know that you are completely present and focused on them, not you're BlackBerry.
- Just because there are messages on your phone doesn't mean you have to check them. Set time aside each day for checking and responding to non-urgent e-mails.
- When attending a social function or party, turn off your BlackBerry. The last thing you want to do is embarrass yourself or your guests with your ringing phone and inappropriate texting.
- Pay attention to people when they speak to you. Whether you're in a business meeting or just hanging out with friends, real, live people should take precedence over any kind of PDA.
- Know your limits. Life is for living and not for texting. Learn to balance your life between what you like to do and what you have to do. Using your BlackBerry for work is fine, but at the end of the day, put it away.
- If you can't text using two hands, then you shouldn't be texting. Using your BlackBerry while you're on the toilet or eating is not only disgusting, but rude.

I can't wait to see what happens when the airlines start allowing the use of cell phones on planes. I hope they have several Air Marshalls on board when that happens.

That's my pitch for this month.

*VIVI BENE--LIVE WELL
RIDI SPESSO--LAUGH OFTEN
E AMA MOLTO--LOVE MUCH*

