



learningmaterials
21st Century Courtier

Learning Materials

These materials supplement and expand upon the skills and principles delivered in the training.

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“Oh would some Power the giftie gie us, to see oursels as others see us.”

Robert Burns

The Court of King Louis XIV in France, in the palace of Versailles, had few doors. The king was keen to know exactly what was going on and so were the courtiers, so everyone attended and absences were noticed. Knowing the right people and saying the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way was essential and it was considered something of a fine art.

The 21st Century Courtier has a much bigger job than those living in France at the time, since the court today extends far beyond the palace gates.

At the court of Louis XIV, when he woke in the morning, the entire court might be arranged around him in his bedroom; whoever he looked upon when he rubbed the sleep from his eyes rose in stature in the court. So his courtiers wanted to be seen, but not to be so ostentatious as to rouse jealousy or rage in their colleagues. And at other times they wanted to be almost invisible, but not so much as to never be noticed by anyone. They walked a delicate and sometimes dangerous line.

And key to walking this line safely was the cultivation of an acute self-awareness of their own abilities, attributes and environment.

Holding a mirror up to yourself is a salutary, but ultimately very rewarding, experience. We often listen too much to the comments of others and give a great deal of weight to them (whether they are positive or negative). Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses through self-evaluation is critical if you are to effect a journey of self-improvement. All this to enhancing your skill levels and your self-confidence and self esteem will improve.

Self awareness or self observation is critical. It might not be easy, and what you see might not be pretty, but train yourself to try and see how others may see you.

Perception is reality - the real you is in your behaviour and interactions with other people all day every day. We are judged and related to depending on how we behave with others. Understanding this can let us look at our behaviour a bit more objectively. We can 'tweak' whatever we need to, to help improve our relationships with others.

There are seven principles that we believe should be followed by the 21st Century Courtier seeking to network and build relationships effectively. You should aim to follow them all to some degree but how you employ them will depend on who you are talking to and your own personal characteristics.

One thing is for sure: you can learn, change and improve in this area, just like any other.

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2. GUARD YOUR REPUTATION: INTEGRITY AND CREDIBILITY

“The louder he spoke of his honour, the faster we counted our spoons.”

Ralf Waldo Emerson

Personal and professional integrity underpin all of the principles of the 21st Century Courtier. Your reputation (good or bad) goes before you and remains after you.

Credibility is the composite of trustworthiness and expertise – but remember it is context dependent - you can be an expert in your chosen field or profession but not so in others. Make sure you know and understand what can build it and avoid the pitfalls that can so easily destroy it. Your personal qualities and how you behave towards and are perceived by others is of considerable importance. So much depends on your reputation, so guard it closely.

Reputation is the cornerstone of power – make your reputation unassailable as there really is no antidote to a bad one. By subtly making your reputation known to as many people as possible, building it slowly on a firm foundation, you can then sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labour as it spreads like wildfire.

A powerful reputation can create an aura around you that will instil respect. With this preceding you, a lot of your work is already done before you even step into a room or utter a single word. This single outstanding quality becomes your calling card - it announces your presence and really is magic as it can place others under a spell. Cherish your integrity and guard your reputation closely.

In the 3rd century AD Chuko Laing was in a city being advanced upon by a huge army. Laing had been caught off his guard, and had only a handful of men at hand. Quickly he ordered the few soldiers to leave, threw open the city gates and sat himself on a parapet, playing his lute. The advancing army saw an unguarded city, with Laing playing tunes on the city walls: they turned and fled. Why? Chuko Laing’s reputation as an outstanding warrior and master tactician was legend. The opposing general assumed he was being led into a trap and, despite what he saw, withdrew.

3. BE APPROPRIATELY MEMORABLE

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“The last thing we discover about ourselves is our effect.” William Boyd

As mentioned in our introduction to the concept of the Twentieth Century Courtier, in the Court of King Louis XIV the courtiers were often arranged around the King's bed when he awoke in the morning. Whoever he noticed, as he opened his eyes, rose in rank in the Court. We're not suggesting that you break into your business contacts' homes and stand beside their beds waiting for them to wake up. But let's get the most important point about this out in the open. Many people will feel uncomfortable about this: you must be noticed.

Be noticed!

Why? Because in your business networks, if you are not visible then you are invisible.

As it is impossible to be effective in any of your networks if you are invisible, it is essential that you court attention and get yourself noticed. You can of course be noticed for all the wrong reasons: an appalling fashion sense; poor personal grooming; negativity; inability to talk about anything other than work; your love of talking and inability to listen to others. The list is endless.

A good starting point is to think about the things for which you'd like to be noticed. Imagine six people you met at a networking event all emptying their pockets the next morning and spreading a load of business cards out on their desks. They pick up yours and look at your name. If they can't recall who you were or anything about you then you clearly haven't yet mastered being noticed. Imagine that the person does remember meeting and speaking to you. What would you like them to think about you?

There are a number of ways in which you can be noticed, including the following:

- The way you dress: do you know what suits you?
- Your body language: posture and comportment.
- Your small talk: do you always have interesting things to say (that are not about your work).
- A special skill: be known for something (this may not necessarily be your specific area of technical expertise).

Find a (good) way of being noticed in the spheres in which you move and you will be remembered, considered and spoken about (for the right reasons). Fail to find a way and you will not.

First Impressions

You might not like this fact, but endless psychological studies have proved it to be true: we form most of our opinions about people we meet for the first time within a matter of minutes...sometimes within a matter of seconds.

The scary thing is that a huge chunk of a person's initial opinion about you will often be formed before you've even opened your mouth. Psychologists have found that about 60% to 80% of the impact you make when meeting other people is non-verbal. It's to do with your body language; facial expressions; eye contact; comportment; appearance and dress; and your handshake.

The good news is that these factors that tend to make that initial impact on the people you meet are all under your control. You can choose how to comport yourself, what to wear, to make a point of looking someone in the eye, to shake hands properly, to employ positive body language.

If you want the people you meet to want to meet you again, then it's really important to spend time thinking about the initial impact you want to make, and the impression you want people to form about you.

Being Noticed: Appearance; Dress

Dressing appropriately cannot *make* you taller, more beautiful or change the fundamentals of who you are. However, it can make you *look* taller (checks are really bad if you are short), feel more attractive, boost your self-confidence and help you make the right impression on those you meet. Appropriate personal grooming is also vital.

Here are a few basic rules - break them only once you know them!

- Personal hygiene is important. We do not smell good in our natural state. Pheromones need help.
- That said anything from the Amazonian Musk range is best avoided. And whatever you choose, don't bathe in it.

- Your hair should be immaculate (Does that style suit you? When did you last have a change?).
- Do you have any clothes that do not fit you? Why?
- Do you ever wear any clothes that do not fit you? (see above).
- Be careful about what you buy: a bit more conservative than you really would like, and a bit more expensive than you really can afford will not go wrong.
- Do you have any idea what colours suit you? Be honest. If not, find out.

Bottom line? If in doubt be a bit smarter than you think might be the bottom line, and everything must be immaculate whether you are 'dressing down' or not.

Being Noticed: Special Skills

Another very simple, but very effective, way to be noticed in your business networks is to become known as an expert in a particular field relevant to your line of work.

We've all been to business events and spotted people, or had them pointed out to us, who are known as experts in some special area or who are known for having some particular skill. To attain such status requires dedication and hard work. You need to be prepared to court attention, to put yourself forward to speak at seminars and to write articles for trade magazines.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have people talking about you and pointing you out to others in your business networks because your reputation preceded you.

Avoid Showing Off

This is the flip-side of being noticed. Ostentatious displays, boasting and being too self-absorbed will at best turn others off and at worst arouse jealousy and backstabbing.

So, while you must ensure that you and your achievements are noticed, make sure that you give others more credit than yourself: especially if you are networking as part of a team.

The English painter JMW Turner was famous for his beautiful and dramatic skies, so much so that many of his contemporaries did not enjoy being hung

beside him. Sir Thomas Lawrence was to have this dubious pleasure at an exhibition, one of his works hanging beside Turner's masterpiece, Cologne.

When the exhibition opened, the sky in Turner's painting had been blackened, altering the candescent effect of the signature Turner sky.

When asked what had happened to his painting, Turner said that Sir Thomas had seemed so miserable that he thought to blacken the sky temporarily for the sake of a friend and colleague.

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4. BE A CHAMELEON

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“The last thing we discover about ourselves is our effect.” William Boyd

A chameleon can subtly change its appearance while of course still always being a chameleon: the perfect metaphor for this principle. We do not behave in the same way with everyone we meet but, rather, we adapt according to the situation ...or at least we should.

“But...” we hear you shout: “wouldn’t I be behaving dishonestly if I act differently in different situations; shouldn’t I just be myself?” Yes of course you should be yourself and you should not compromise your integrity and personal values, but who you are and how you behave should have some width and depth.

You are a fool if you act in the same way with everyone; this is not acting with integrity, but with naivety. If you are under the impression that you do act in the same way with everyone, consider what you might say about the dress sense of your best friend, as compared with what you would say about the dress sense of your biggest client.

Being a chameleon is about performing in the right way depending on the situation, matching your behaviour in different situations to known social norms. There are some core behaviours that you’ll always want to exhibit – being a good listener for example. But there are others that will require modification depending on the circumstances, such as the nature of your conversation.

There are, and always will be, a few individuals who are complete mavericks or eccentrics, who don’t play this part of the game (or other parts, too) in the same way as the rest of us, yet seem (mostly) to get away with that. These people know who they are.

And finally, there may be very few kings about in the 21st century, but there are still many powerful people in the various networks you inhabit: know who they are, and be careful how you deal with them. It is important that powerful people are given their place, so be careful of affecting too much chumminess or mateyness with them: always let them make the first move.

Sir Alex Ferguson is the greatest football manager of modern times, and has made a huge difference to every football club he has been involved with.

He has dealt with some very big personalities in over two decades at Old Trafford: Robson, Keane, Whiteside, McGrath, Cantona and Beckham. Variously he has had issues with club discipline regarding alcohol, gambling and dress codes. Ferguson knew how to treat them all, and treated them all differently.

Sir Alex can be ruthless when he needs to be, but he is an expert exponent in the art of being a chameleon.

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“The first duty of love is to listen.” Paul Tillich

Lynne Truss in her international best seller “Talk to the Hand”, says we live in “an age of lazy moral relativism combined with aggressive social insolence” where common courtesies are “practically extinct”.

People worry that courtesy is becoming a thing of the past. Has service in shops become surly? Have youngsters lost respect for their elders? So, thinking about others and paying attention to the detail of what used to be simply common courtesies appears to be even more essential today than ever before.

Key aspects to be aware of are:

- Politeness
- Compliments
- Favours
- Criticism
- Flattery

Politeness

Being rude, impatient or offhand is unnecessary and unproductive. What do you imagine the waiter can do to your soup when you cannot see it? What do you imagine those you are rude to can say about you when you are not there? Politeness is a currency that never costs you a penny, but one that can have great value to you in the short, medium and long term.

Giving Compliments

Compliments not only demonstrate our interest in others, but they are also a way to win friends and form allegiances, to gain affection and influence. But be warned, sincerity is essential because bogus compliments offend, and studies have shown we are very good at detecting a faker.

When complimenting others:

- Be original: choose descriptive words. This will make your compliment more significant.
- Be specific. This shows you are noticing details and paying attention, and it sounds more sincere.
- Be personal. Focus on personality and achievement rather than clothes or looks, as we rate the former as more meaningful.
- Don't compare. The focus of the compliment will then be on the person or thing you are comparing them with.

Accepting Compliments

By accepting a compliment graciously you are acknowledging the good judgement and taste of the giver.

You would be unlikely to walk into someone's home and query their taste in decor or disagree with their choice of wine, so why do so many of us protest when we are complimented on something we have done? You are not belittling your own achievements, but questioning the judgement of the giver.

Learn to accept compliments with confidence and all you need to say is 'thank you' - nothing more nothing less. Accept them with the right amount of humility and self-effacing style, and never throw them back in the face of your suitor.

Favours: Please Do Not Ask for Credit

We used to see the sign 'Please do not ask for credit as a refusal often offends' behind a bar or shop counters. What many do not realise is that it is the bar steward or shopkeeper who will be offended, so be careful what you ask for.

Be careful of being childlike and lacking in thought over the favours you ask of others. Rather, ask favours that can be easily given by the giver and given with pleasure. Ask favours that ideally flatter the giver.

Be aware that the person who is asked for the favour may feel offended, for a whole variety of reasons: feeling that you've only been making their acquaintance to get a favour; feeling embarrassed about having to refuse or perhaps simply being unable to give what you ask; feeling obliged to accede to your request even though that may be putting them in an awkward position within their organisation.

However, doing favours for others is an effective way of cementing a relationship. Working out what is of value to others – it may not necessarily be a difficult thing for you to give – and that you may give willingly is a powerful tool.

Being Critical

No-one likes criticism, no matter what they may say. We may seek evaluation and validation in many areas of our lives but while the criticisms may be useful, insightful and helpful, they can still sting.

Many people carefully consider the words they will use when criticising others: what they should first consider is whether such criticism should be levelled at all. In particular, you should never joke about taste or appearance, even when you are not in the company of the person you are talking about. While wit and humour are important and a great tool for creating rapport with others, be careful how you use them in matters of taste and appearance. Your comments will return to you at the most awkward time, in the most terrible way.

So watch how you criticise, and be very careful who you criticise. Be subtle and gentle in your criticism, especially when it is directed at your superiors. In fact, consider carefully whether you should be offering criticism to your superiors at all.

Definitely avoid criticising your competitors. In fact make a point of emphasising their strengths. It shows a good degree of self-confidence if you do. You will then be all the more devastating when you do criticise.

Flattery

It is commonly thought that flattery can get you anywhere and this may be true for those who know how to use this sophisticated tool properly. There is no doubt that flattery is an essential tool in our daily lives. It is employed everywhere: with our family, our friends and our business colleagues.

However, a golden rule with flattery is only to employ it if it's genuine. People can sense insincerity a mile off. And, if you choose to employ flattery, be subtle and frugal with it. Rather than the dog that pounces and slobbers all over you when you enter the room, be the cat who stands back, surveys the scene and then gracefully walks over and gently rubs herself against your legs and retreats. Flattery should be served in small, elegant portions.

“Like any individual who has achieved any degree of authority in the business world, I have encountered my share of toadies who sought to gain my attention through flattery. However, while their numbers are considerable and the energy they expend is great, their success in achieving their goals are few. Such individuals are predestined to fail because they almost invariably make several major mistakes.

Firstly, they are too eager for quick results. Hence, they employ what they consider the most potent, quickest-acting stratagems, which 99 times out of 100, are so unstable and maladroit that they are completely transparent.

Second, the devoted apple polisher is so intent on his truckling and favour currying that he neglects his official duties.

Third, were he to devote as much time and effort to productive work as he does to playing the slavering spaniel, he would advance much faster.

Fourth, most seasoned businessmen have long since learned the hard way that there is more than a grain of truth in George Herbert's acid adage, 'Many kiss the hand they wish to cut off.'”

J Paul Getty

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6. BE OPTIMISTIC AND ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

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“I think and think for months and years. Ninety-nine times, the conclusion is false. The hundredth time I am right.” Albert Einstein

A positive, enthusiastic, cheery demeanour is always a good thing. Not only is it good for your social and business relationships, but it's also been proven to be good for your health – boosting the antibodies in your bloodstream and helping you live longer.

There are many phrases in the English language that are designed to cut ourselves and others down to size, and one of the most endearing features of our culture is that you cannot get 'too big for your boots' - which is one of them. Such behaviour can be deeply ingrained, and it is difficult to get out of the habit of concentrating on the negative.

There is no need to be cheery, happy and smiley all the time, but no-one likes a cynic either, one who never has a good word to say about anyone or anything, including themselves.

Self-Talk and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

What we say to ourselves reinforces our self image. This then controls how we act and behave. Depending on the outcome of what we do this then generates either positive statements or negative statements and so on it goes. This is the 'Self Talk Cycle'.

Self fulfilling prophecies are more commonly known as the 'sure enough' principle. Start off thinking it's going to be a lousy day and, sure enough, you'll probably be right.

The Pleasure Principle

Life is too short to be miserable and negative all the time. Try to be a source of pleasure – this is really important – charm and the promise of enjoyment will attract others to you like bees to the honey pot.

You have a huge amount of power over the direction your conversations and interactions take. If you start a conversation by talking about how terrible the weather is, go on to the fact that you can never get parked at the office and then progress to the fact that the food is cold and white wine warm, before long you will be saying how difficult the business environment is and how tough you are finding it all.

Here is the answer: stop doing this! Smile. Be positive, Have something interesting and upbeat to say when you get the chance and, just as importantly, look as if you are interested in and enthusiastic about other people, their views and their news.

And in a business development context, think about ways that you can positively impact on your clients and prospective clients. For instance, can you connect them with people you know who they would like to meet? By putting like-minded people in touch with one another you will increase their networks and enhance your own reputation.

Points to work on:

- Make sure your self-talk is positive, uplifting and constructive –you have around 60,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day – make sure the majority of your thoughts work *for* you and not *against* you.
- Have a positive view of your own achievements
- Regularly and sincerely expressing admiration for the work of others
- Genuinely revel in the abilities and achievements of others (this is a conscious decision)
- See the glass as half full – it's known as Learned Optimism (a term coined by Martin Seligman (www.authentic happiness.com))
- Find ways to connect with and be of assistance to your clients that are not just connected to providing the services for which they pay you

Being positive and optimistic is a good way to be and, make no mistake, the ability to attract others is a powerful tool. It enriches our social lives and is invaluable in getting others on your side – whether it's the childminder you need to watch your child for an extra hour or the employee who you need to stay late.

Likeable people leave us in a better mood than when we first started talking to them and if you practice these behaviours regularly you will enhance your client relationships and thus increase your business development opportunities.

According to Martin Seligman (guru of Positive Psychology Movement) 'a chilly mood activates a battle station way of thinking: focus on what is wrong and eliminate it.' 'A positive mood buoys people into a way of thinking that is creative, tolerant, indefensive and lateral.'

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7. FOLLOW-UP: KEEP THAT PROMISE

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Losers make promises they often break. Winners make commitments they always keep.” Denis Waitley

There is little point, from either a personal or business viewpoint, in spending your precious time and energy on business activities if you never follow up on anything, meet anyone again or ultimately get any benefit from it.

A few points for starters:

- Putting someone’s e-mail address in a group and sending them apparently funny pictures now and again does not constitute keeping in touch.
- Nor does sending a Christmas card annually or a spam e-mail informing thousands about what a great service you provide.
- Nor does meeting someone periodically and promising a coffee, game of golf or drink after work: you know it will never happen, so either don’t say it, or do something about it after you do.

Now we’ve got some of the basic mistakes out of the way, what about an alternative plan?

7.1 Setting Expectation For Follow-Up

Lots of people find it hard to make that call or write that e-mail to follow up with a new contact they’ve met. Part of the problem is finding the time for this. You need to understand that *networking*, and working on your professional and business relationships really is part of your work. It’s very easy to use time as an excuse for not following up

The other reason people often don’t follow up is because they’re scared of rejection. They’re scared that their request for a meeting or coffee or lunch might be turned down. Our advice is simple: set the expectation for your follow up when you meet someone who you’d like to meet again. It’s a lot less scary to call or e-mail when you know that the other person is expecting you to do that and has already given you permission to do so.

So the start of the follow up process is actually to set the other person's expectation that you intend to follow up on your initial meeting right at the end of that meeting. Find your own choice of wording but here's a suggestion to get you started:

“It’s been really good talking to you Fred. I was particularly interested in the challenges that you said your organisation is facing in relation to [x, y & z]. We do a lot of work with people in similar situations and I think we could help. I’d really like to meet you again to hear more about your situation and to tell you more about what we can offer. Could I get 30 minutes of your time over a coffee to do that?”

Once you've said that, be quiet, observe and listen. Does the person back away and tell you they're kind of busy for the next decade? Or do they look and sound genuinely happy to agree? Assuming they seem prepared to give you 30 minutes of their time we'd suggest going a little bit further:

“Great. So what would be the best way for us to arrange that? Should I give you a call? Or drop you an e-mail? Or is there someone I should speak to who arranges your diary?”

Again, be quiet, observe and listen. Find out how they like best to be contacted. Some people hate e-mail; others love it. Same with the telephone. Then just close with confirmation that you'll do whatever it is that they've indicated is best for them:

“OK, I’ll give you a call on Monday so we can compare diaries / drop you an e-mail tomorrow to suggest some times and we can get that arranged.”

Job done! The person has agreed to give you 30 minutes of their time. They're now less likely to refuse to do that when you get in touch and they're expecting you to contact them (by their preferred means) to arrange that. Now – doesn't the follow up seem a lot less daunting?

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7.2 Actually Following-Up

“Do or do not. There is no try.” Yoda, Star Wars

Of course it is absolutely vital that if you say you will do something, you do it. If you agreed that you'd call or e-mail to arrange a suitable date for a further chat over coffee, then you must do what you said you'd do... when and how you said you'd do it.

If possible, over-deliver on your promise, e.g. if you said you would call with that piece of information, make sure you do at least that. And if you have some written information that might also be of help, send that too in the post.

There are many methods that you can use to follow-up and to keep in touch. Here are some ideas:

- A compliments slip with a useful newspaper article
- An e-mail
- A telephone call
- A gift, where appropriate
- A thank you card or a note
- An invitation to an event, or to see round your office
- Lunch, coffee or a drink

It is important to know what kind of follow-up to adopt in each situation. It is unlikely to be the right thing to do to suggest a coffee and a bun with the chief executive officer of a large multi-national you have just met, but you might ask for a meeting with him / her or, more likely, the person in the organisation who deals with your area.

The chances of you getting it right every time are zero. At some point everyone calls on a bad day, gets the wrong person, sends the wrong material, or says the wrong thing. So what? Tenacity is key.

Make that call and learn to love no.

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