
Press Releases - 2006 Apr 17

“DON’T F**KING BULLSHIT ME”, SAY BRITISH BOSSES

- 66% of managers find 'bullshitting' by staff very annoying, but only 37% have similar objections to swearing
- Most believe that it is now perfectly acceptable not to offer alcohol at a business lunch
- Taking a mobile phone call at a business lunch is now considered more acceptable than smoking after the meal
- Half of managers now believe that companies should ban smoking throughout their entire grounds

British company managers actually prefer to hear colleagues swear than bullshit according to a new survey on business etiquette by **The Aziz Corporation**, the UK’s leading independent executive communications consultancy. Whilst 66 per cent of managers find bullshitting very annoying, only 37 per cent object to their colleagues swearing. 36 per cent find swearing tolerable, compared to just 8 per cent prepared to tolerate bullshitting.

The survey also reveals that older bosses are less tolerant towards swearing than their younger colleagues, reflecting a decline in the formality of business language. Whilst almost three quarters (74 per cent) of managers in their 50s find swearing annoying, under half (43 per cent) of those in their 30s think it is unacceptable to swear in a business meeting.

Professor **Khalid Aziz**, Chairman of The Aziz Corporation, commented: “The survey reveals an overwhelming dislike for those who bullshit in business. Bosses prefer their colleagues’ language to be honest and accurate even if that means tolerating the odd expletive here and there. However it does appear that the culture of television personalities such as Sir Alan Sugar and Gordon Ramsey is permeating the business world. While a direct no-nonsense approach may be preferable to the real life David Brents who merely talk-the-talk, good communicators do not need to swear.”

The research also indicates that there has been a cultural shift in how alcohol is viewed in a business environment. Only two fifths (39 per cent) of managers now think that it is perfectly acceptable to drink alcohol, such as a glass of wine, at a business lunch. Indeed, the majority (57 per cent) of bosses believe that it is acceptable to not even offer alcohol to guests. This contrasts somewhat with the champagne lunches of the 1980s.

Khalid Aziz added:

“Although business language is increasingly informal and attitudes to swearing appear to have softened, the business lunch is now taken much more seriously. There is a perception that people are under ever more pressure at work and are now ‘far too busy and important’ to enjoy a business lunch. Unfortunately, as a result, the value of this face-to-face contact has been neglected. Business lunches form a valuable part of building and sustaining strong relationships, which is ultimately what business is all about. While we are certainly not advocating that you over-indulge, some might say that people should be allowed to enjoy a glass of wine with their meal without having to worry about how this will be perceived.”

The research also found that it is now less acceptable to smoke after the meal than to interrupt a business lunch to take a mobile phone call. 72 per cent of managers think that smoking after a meal should be avoided, compared to 62 per cent for taking a mobile phone call over lunch. Those in their 20s are the most comfortable with taking a call during a lunch, with no-one in their 20s believing it to be completely unacceptable. Conversely, of those in their 60s no-one considers it to be perfectly acceptable to take a call, but 46 per cent believe it is completely unacceptable.

Khalid Aziz said:

“It is remarkable that attitudes have changed so much that it is now more acceptable to interrupt a business lunch to take a phone call than to light up a cigarette after the meal. This toleration of mobile phones reflects not only the rise of the ‘mobile phone generation’ but also a business culture where it is increasingly seen as not only acceptable, but indeed essential, to be contactable at all times. Mobile phones, and Blackberries in particular, mean that the office is now everywhere, from the boardroom to the breakfast table.”

While mobile phones are now an accepted part of business life, smoking is most definitely not. The survey reveals that almost four fifths (79 per cent) of managers find smoking immediately outside the office unacceptable and half think that companies should prohibit smoking throughout their entire grounds, including external spaces, such as car parks. So strong is the animosity towards smoking in a work environment that nearly three-quarters (70 percent) think that those who take frequent smoking breaks are being unfair to their non-smoking colleagues.

Khalid Aziz commented:

“Popular opinion has now shifted from viewing smoking as acceptable and even sophisticated, to seeing it as scruffy and a way of skiving off work. M&S recently banned employees from smoking in public when wearing company uniforms and BT has prohibited staff from lighting up in their offices or company vans. This corporate concern that any association with cigarettes can damage a brand’s reputation shows just how far from grace smoking has fallen. No company wants their brand associated with the image of Harry Enfield’s Waynetta Slob – that’s just not professional.”

– Ends –

Professor **Khalid Aziz** of The Aziz Corporation is available for interview on this story. If you would be interested in speaking with Khalid then please visit our [Contact us](#) page.

Notes to Editors

The Aziz Corporation

The Aziz Corporation is the UK’s leading independent executive communications consultancy. Its mission is to add value to businesses by ensuring their people are effective communicators. Consultancy services offered by the Aziz Corporation include presentation skills, media training, crisis management, image consultancy and voice development.

About the survey

This survey was completed by 200 senior managers and directors of major companies based across the United Kingdom.