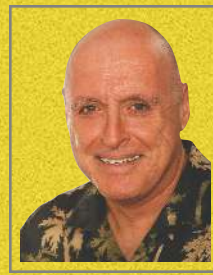


# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 839 What About Cell Phones and Business Meals?

Cellphones and business lunches. Do they go together? If so, how and when? I'm Jerry Roberts and we'll answer those questions and more, plus I'll tell you some surprising industry chatter about how the folks at your favorite restaurant may feel about phones at their tables. That's coming next, on The Extra Point.

As COVID anxieties have lessened over the past few months, the business lunch has returned. Managers and salespeople taking clients and prospects out for a bite, trying to warm up the relationship and maybe close a deal.

The main thing our manager or company owner wants is to make a good impression on our guests. Don't embarrass the organization by something we say or do. Keep the food on the plate, off the table, and don't talk with your mouth full. Basic stuff.

These days, that particular advice is still relevant, but the number one issue about business lunches is what to do with your phone. Can you have it on? Can you look at it? Under what circumstances can you take a call? How about texting?

I caught a blog post a few months ago that dealt with all this, and it was clear that not everybody was on the same page. A manager named Gloria had invited a new client and his team to a familiarization lunch, so all could get acquainted.

It turned out to be 12 people, with both managers facing off in the middle. While introductions were taking place, the ring of a cellphone was heard. The phone belonged to Tina, one of Gloria's newer crew members.

She answered the phone, turned away and spoke in a muffled tone for about 30 seconds, then ended the call and put her phone on vibration mode, laying it on the table. Gloria was surprised Tina would answer at the table,

instead of getting up and taking the call away from the group.

After everybody had placed their lunch order, the client was making brief remarks about his company's products and the kind of support he was looking for, when Tina's phone went off again, with the buzzing clearly heard. Tina again answered, spoke for a few seconds and quit the call. Gloria couldn't believe it. Embarrassed, she apologized for the interruption.

A few minutes later she noticed Tina was focused on her lap, no doubt reading something on her phone. Then, she was scrolling. Gloria whispered to another worker to leave the table and text Tina, to tell her to turn the phone off.

After the lunch and back at her office, Gloria spoke with Tina, learning what she had done at the lunch was acceptable at her previous employer. When Gloria advised her that the same thing didn't work in her company, Tina seemed surprised and disappointed.

In her post, Gloria said she had never thought it necessary to write up a policy about phone use at meetings, but her company was expanding and hiring for several new positions, so she drafted one that afternoon. She shared key points from the memo:

"We all want to keep meetings as short and as productive as possible, both with clients and also when it's just our team. Phones can be an unnecessary distraction. Please follow these simple rules.

1. Please place your phone on vibration mode at the start of the meeting. Also turn off notifications, as vibration mode may only cancel out the ringer for incoming calls.

2. In meetings with clients, keep the phone off the table.  
(Con't.)

3. If you feel you must answer a call, leave the table to do so.

Sidebar...

Last point, and maybe one you're not aware of. A National Public Radio report cited a growing number of restaurant staffers who are upset with widespread phone use in their eateries.

Servers say they end up coming back to a table several times, waiting for people to decide what they want to order — mostly because they're distracted by their phones.

Industry experts now say that people on their phones take so much time sending pictures, texts, and making posts to social media, the average party requires longer to finish its meals and pay the bill, than was the case five or ten years ago. That means fewer customers over a lunch or dinner period.

Fewer customers means lower revenue, and that will eventually result in higher prices.

Then again, Guam's a laid back place. Do we want to worry about this stuff here?

Cell phones and business meals, what do you think?

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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