

Casual Friday: Getting out on the golf course

Six tips to look professional when you invite clients out on the links

By Fiona Collie | July 13, 2012

Maintaining your professional image when out on the golf course with a client means paying attention to more than just your swing.

Clients have already formed an opinion of you from meetings at the office, and you don't want to do anything to lessen that opinion when meeting with them in an informal setting, says [Linda Allan, a certified management consultant in Toronto who specializes in business behavior.](#)

She recommends following these six tips to look professional when you invite clients for a game of golf:

1. Know the basics

Before heading out for a round of golf make sure you know the rules. Whether you're new to golf or just need to brush up, says Allan, it's always a good idea to make sure you have a solid understanding of the rules and etiquette of the game. Prepare yourself before a game with a client by doing a little reading online or picking up a book on golf.

2. Dress appropriately

Dress casual but professional for golf and impress clients before even stepping onto the green. Although a golf game with a client is a casual event, says Allan, you should still wear a collared shirt and think carefully about whom you are playing with before opting for shorts.

3. Look organized

Make sure your golf equipment is organized and well cared for to maintain a professional image. Some people have all kinds of things protruding from their golf bags, says Allan, or have garbage everywhere in the golf cart after a few holes. Instead, make sure everything is nicely arranged and you are prepared for the day, including having enough golf balls and tees with you.

4. Stick to small talk

Keep the conversation light for a successful day on the links with a client. Sometimes, advisors think a golf game with a client is the perfect time to pitch a new product or focus on business, says Allan. However, the game actually offers little opportunity for any kind of deep conversation. As such, it's better to focus on small talk and building a rapport with a client. Only bring up products or business if the client initiates the conversation.

5. Have a positive (and professional) attitude

No matter what happens during the game, always maintain a courteous manner. The client wants to see that you're enjoying the game, says Allan, and that you're having a good time of it. Never use foul language or appear frustrated with the game, she says. Conversely, if you're having fun it's important that you don't get carried away and become too informal or talk and laugh too loudly.

6. Don't over-indulge

When you invite the client back to the clubhouse after the game, be careful not to overdo it with the snacks. Often, the clubhouse menu consists mainly of finger foods or barbecue, says Allan, which can be difficult to eat politely. Thus, it's best to order less and to have plenty of napkins handy, she says. If you are eating something like a hamburger, go easy on the condiments so that you don't have sauce dripping through your fingers as you eat.