

Introduction: Welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer Podcast, the show that walks you step by step to improving strategies you can use today to grow your business. We show you how being kind, useful, and, of course, enchanting will bring you more clients and build a thriving community.

Now here's your host from sunny San Diego, Jacob Sapochnick.

Jacob: Hello everybody and welcome to the Enchanting Lawyer podcast. This is a show that we interview inspiring and interesting entrepreneurs from all over the world that share their ideas with us and help us get our job done much better. Today I have an exciting guest all the way from France. I have Kara Ronin with me.

Kara is the founder of Executive Impressions. Drawing from more than 10 years of living an international life, she offers professionals a wealth of practical advice and inspirational tips to move them towards an international mindset and an amazing corporate career. She has a lot of knowledge, interesting insights into the world of business etiquette. I'm going to learn all about it.

Welcome to the show, Kara. How are you today?

Kara: Hi Jacob. Thanks so much for having me.

Jacob: Exciting.

I am kind of envious of you that you are in France right now because I definitely wanted to be there too and enjoy the snow and everything.

Kara: Absolutely. Unfortunately, though this year it hasn't snowed very much.

Jacob: Yeah, that's what I heard. But you can drive just a little bit far into the mountains and you'll see all the snow you need, right?

Kara: Yeah, exactly. Only a couple of hours by car and, or even maybe less, and then, yeah, you're absolutely in the mountains and you can go skiing and everything like that. It's quite wonderful.

Jacob: Why don't you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself and -- Well, you're now in France, in the French Alps, right?

Kara: Yeah. I live in a city called Lyon which is not in the French Alps but it's not that far from the French Alps. And I am Australian which your listeners probably could have guessed from my accent. I'm Australian but I'm living in France at the moment.

Living an international life is something that I have always been fascinated with. I've always loved other cultures and countries and languages. Since I was very young, I always looked at other people who even had a different accent. I was speaking English but with a different accent, say, those from the US or the UK. I would look at them with intrigue and just wonder where they came from, and what was their life like, and everything like that.

So, yeah, it's been a long life fascination for me about different cultures and the international life.

Jacob: It's funny because I always do that. Obviously I have an accent myself but whenever I meet somebody that has some sort of an accent or a feel that they're from somewhere else, the first thing that I want to do is I want to know where they're coming from.

Kara: Yeah, absolutely.

Jacob: Which is kind of very normal.

Before the show and when I first connected with you, I start to think about the word etiquette and the whole thing. The more I read about it, the more I think about it, this word kind of gets a bad rep. People think that it's more of pretentious or you're trying to be above everybody else, and the rules that are kind of socially morally prescribe and very intrusive.

At the same time, I think the concept of etiquette is really, really essential, especially now and particularly in business. So if you look at Facebook and LinkedIn and all these things that are out there with social media, kind of blurred the lines of what is appropriate and what is not, right?

So I'm curious, first of all, to know from you, what is business etiquette in the first place?

Kara: Okay, yeah, absolutely.

You are so right when you say that the word etiquette has a bad rep because it absolutely does. That's one of the things that I am confronted with all the time. I find that people have the image that it's something that's out of date, that's a little stuffy, that's a little snobby, things like that. But in reality, it's something that we have to do with every day, especially in business.

When you meet people, when you go to a business meeting, you're going to meet people for the first time. You want to be able to make sure that you give the right impression of yourself, develop the right professional brand. You do that through knowing and having a few skills in business etiquette.

They're essentially social skills. I like to call them social skills for business. That way it's a bit clear in people's minds and I don't really get that negative association when they hear it.

So, for example, it could simply be learning the right handshake, it could be making sure that you look people in the eye when you're talking with them, making sure that you use the right body language. Everything like that which makes the way we interact with other people and it helps us to give a positive impression of ourselves.

Or, in some cases, you might want to project authority or power so you would learn slightly different skills, different social skills, that would help you project that leadership type of presence in business. But it is absolutely important and very critical for everyone to learn, especially when we're in a bad economic climate like what we've experienced since 2008 with the GFC.

Jacob: One of the things that I observe about etiquette is that it's something that people don't really pay attention to as much as they should. What do you think is so important for people who are professionals, let's say, service providers, people that are in business to pay attention to this?

Kara: Absolutely. It's something that will really help everybody stand out from the crowd.

This is important whether you're an employee professional, whether you work for a company, or whether you run your own business and you're an entrepreneur. You want to make sure that you are the person people remember and you do this by learning some tips and tricks on how to connect with them better, how to make that person feel like they're important and appreciated as well.

For lawyers, for accountants, for any business people like that, you are meeting with clients all the time. The way you interact, the way you dress, the way you present yourself is so important to make those clients want to come back to you for business. If you are looking for a job, it is so important during interviews to make your potential boss want to give you the job and not somebody else.

Jacob: Right. Exactly. This is so important because if you actually think about it, you can see how valuable it can be.

So, why don't we look a few examples and maybe you can kind of explain how business etiquette skills can help people who are listening to the show right now or want to improve their performance in their professional life.

Kara: Right.

Concretely, business etiquette skills can help you in three ways. It can help you develop presence. It can help you develop power which is important sometimes. Not all the time but sometimes -- you might want to project to 30. And it can help you develop connections in business.

If you have those three elements, and this is true whether you are an employed professional or an entrepreneur. If you have presence, power, and connections and you know how to create those three elements then you'll be far beyond any other job candidate, any other business person who is trying to sign the same client as you.

Jacob: So, it's interesting that you mention -- Can you repeat those three and then -- What I've done after a couple of points that I use typically -- and I don't know if it's etiquette or something that flows from that. But I think we can weave it in those three elements that you just mentioned. So why don't you repeat them again?

Kara: So the first is presence, then power, then connections.

Jacob: Perfect.

So, for example, what I usually do is I often, after a meeting, or sometimes even when I do some sort of a business deal with somebody, I would typically send them a thank you note. Usually I'll handwrite it. So that's one thing. So that's kind of -- It shows some sort of a connection, some sort of care about the person that I just connected.

The other thing is I always try to remember the names. So for example -- obviously I remember the names of my employees but also people that I meet. Do you know how it is that you meet somebody and then after 20 minutes you don't remember who they are?

Kara: Absolutely, yeah. Even after a couple of minutes sometimes.

Jacob: Yeah. And then you want to talk to them then you don't know their name and it's so awkward. And then if you don't know their name and you ask them it feels rude. So I think it comes back to the presence element that you just mentioned because you have to be present, you have to listen and actually --

And another thing is how many meetings that we have everyday people are stuck to their phones, tapping away, and they're not listening. So I try to just put the phone in my pocket and not use it while the meeting is taking place and just focus on the presenter. I think, again, that comes back to the presence element, right?

Kara: Absolutely, yeah.

Jacob: So they're all kind of connected.

Kara: Just being in the moment, being with the person you're talking to. Say you're at a networking event. Actually focusing on that person and actually listening to them, not looking over their shoulder to see who else is entering the room or to see who else you could talk to who could help you elevate yourself and your career. So it's being in the moment with the person you're with.

And it's also developing that brand, that professional brand. So it also relates to developing the first impression that you want people to form about you. So knowing what outfit to wear, what body language to use, all of these things help you develop their professional brand or your professional reputation.

Jacob: I totally agree with that.

You know, I just remember that I attended a seminar and I remember that one of the representatives he was talking about -- it wasn't really business etiquette but he was talking about the way we lost our respect and just politeness in business. Have you heard of the elevator rule?

Kara: No, I have not.

Jacob: So the idea is that when you meet with the client or potential business partner outside of your office and you're leaving the meeting and you go into your -- Let's say I came with a colleague and we are in the elevator and now you start talking, "Oh man, that meeting was so horrible. That guy was so rude." So the idea is that never discuss anything until the elevator reached the floor and you're walking out of the building.

Kara: Absolutely.

Jacob: Maybe it's [unclear 00:11:46] or I don't know what you call this but this is another way to keep your reputation from being hurt because, like, what if somebody else heard you? You know what, you just told. So try to keep that as a little bit in your head, they call this The Elevator Rule, but you can apply it to anything when you start talking about somebody else.

Kara: Oh yeah, absolutely. Especially if it's something negative.

Jacob: Right. Of course.

Kara: You want to be careful and make sure that it's not possible, not even one little bit possible that anyone could overhear. Otherwise it would immediately damage a reputation.

As humans, we have a tendency to remember negative things a lot more than positive things. So if somebody hears something negative about you then that's immediately going to damage your reputation as well.

Jacob: Exactly. And, again, it is connected to etiquette because if you make it a habit to be negative and talk about others behind their back, then you never when somebody else is going to hear it and your reputation will be hurt.

Kara: Absolutely.

Jacob: So Kara, if you would have to choose one important soft skill for a business person professional to have what would it be?

Kara: Okay. Well, there are many soft skills that hope you stand out that you, you know, want to have in your business toolkit. Because you're going to always be confronted with different situations. But if I had to choose just one skill, I would say that no lack and trust factor is critical to your business success. So getting people to know you and like you and trust you.

This is something that I talk about extensively. I'm creating a video course at the moment which is on business etiquette and this is one of the major focuses of that course. But I'll explain briefly what it's about.

People are going to work with you or they would rather work with somebody they know, like, and trust than somebody they don't. It's just natural human reaction. You're not going to want to work with somebody who you don't trust, who you don't like, you don't want to be around.

So it's essential that you learn how to develop that in your business interactions with your co-workers if you're in an office, with your employees if you who's the boss, and also with your clients.

There are many elements that make up this know, like, and trust factor but essentially what we're talking about is we're helping people feel safe around you and feel more relaxed around you. When you have those elements, I want to do business with you rather than somebody else.

Jacob: Right.

Kara: So at the end of the day, it's about standing out in the eyes of the client or your boss or your colleagues.

Jacob: And I think it's so important because if you can't gain their trust then you can't move to the next -- whatever you want to do.

Kara: Absolutely. Yeah.

Jacob: So Kara, I think in-person etiquette is so important and what happens after we meet but I wanted to maybe touch base and maybe a couple of minutes about the online world, what's happening on social media. This is a world where people and businesses are concerned about brand awareness -- what are they saying about me 24/7. You can't control it. People are talking all the time on Facebook, on Twitter.

This digital landscape is kind of -- it seems to me makes it a bit more difficult to know whether or not you're crossing a line, whether you're not doing something that is good or bad.

Maybe you can comment on that because I know -- I mean I tell you what my rule is. Before I create a hashtag, or I post something on Facebook or Instagram or Snapchat, I will think myself "Is this going to make somebody feel good or bad?" If I think slightly that it's going to be a little bit of negative and it's going to make somebody not want to continue with their day because of something that I said, I'm not going to do it.

Kara: Yeah.

Jacob: That's kind of my rule. But, I don't know. How do you see etiquette in business as we engage online with people we never met?

Kara: Yeah. Well, it absolutely applies online and I think a lot of people forget about that fact that it is important online as well. Of course when you meet people in person, there are things that you need to do. But online it's so important as well.

I was actually watching some of your videos before we got talking today and I really liked one thing you said on your YouTube channel in one of the videos. You said, "Be nice, be kind, and be useful." And I thought that was so important and so critical to business to just being successful in business with your co-workers, with your clients, with whoever.

I think that rule is important to apply when you interact with people online as well. You have to remember that whatever you write online whether it's at Twitter, a tweet, whether it's on Facebook, or an email, whatever, it is there forever. People can find it.

If you're not proud of what you just write or what you intend to write, if you wouldn't want to see it on the front page of a newspaper, for example, then don't post it or don't write it.

Stick to the policy that you talked about in one of your videos to be nice, be kind, and be useful to other people and you'll be safe interacting with other people online.

Jacob: The reason I advocate for that is because it just feels that most people -- I mean we don't want to generalize but I think that a lot of people are trying to ask first and then offer whatever they have to offer but they always ask first. And I think it's important to give, give, give and only then ask. And it's really important because if you start giving for no reason, you want to help somebody, you want to share content, you want to promote somebody's book, you want to promote somebody's new course. For no reason, you don't ask anything.

At some point you may need help as well and then you can ask. And it just feels that people are just coming and emailing. I get a lot of emails as well saying, "You know what, can you help us do this and this? Can we do this deal together?" I'm asking myself, "Why would I do that? What value ..."

Kara: You don't even know that person.

Jacob: Yeah. First of all, I don't know you. And second of all, what value did you bring to me that I should step out of my way to help you?

I think, especially in our business where we work with people, we don't -- I stopped charging for consultations many years ago because I felt that even if I spend 10 minutes with somebody giving some free advice, whether they hire us or not, it doesn't matter. They tried and they sampled what we can offer and then they can decide if they want to. But at least they got some value when they left.

And even if they didn't retain our services, they at least left with a feeling that they got a little bit of help and maybe one day somebody else will be referred by that person. You know what I mean?

So, it is a form of etiquette as well because you think about others before yourself in a way.

Kara: Absolutely. Because you are helping to form a positive impression in the minds of the people you give that value to. They then spread word of mouth where there is online because that actually happens a lot more nowadays and it's much quicker than speaking to people, but they spread that word around that. That you are a great person to work with, that you're warmth, that you're approachable, and that you're professional as well. That's really what you want people to say about you.

I also used the same approach and many other people use the same approach when they have blogs or websites. You write free articles on the blog or I have over a hundred articles on my blog right now. I started getting to videos last year so -- Just like you have a YouTube channel where you give people free advice or tips.

Jacob: Yeah, I saw your channel. We're going to link it in our show notes as well.

Kara: Okay, great. Yeah.

Jacob: Absolutely. That's great.

So let's talk about likeability. I would like to hear from you maybe one or two tips about becoming more likeable. Everybody wants to be liked. How would you help somebody to become more likeable?

Kara: Yes.

Being liked is -- I refer to it as a second element. First you need to know somebody because you're not going to like somebody you don't even know. So you need to develop that first. But then the second element is likeability and getting someone to like you. One of the easiest ways and the most powerful ways you can achieve this is to find a similarity with that person.

There was a study done in 1970s, it was quite a while ago, but it was around the time when the 1970s when people dressed like hippies, there was all that hippy culture going on.

So there was one study done and the researchers decided to separate two people. So they dressed one person as a hippy and one person in straight clothes. They refer to as normal or straight clothes. They went to a college and they asked the college students on campus for a dime so that they could make a phone call. They found that when the researcher was dressed just like the student they asked the money from they got the money more than two-thirds of the time.

So simply by having similar clothes to the person you are interacting with can make that person think, "Hmm, he's like me," or "She's like me," and it can help them to like you.

It doesn't just have to be the way you dress. It could be a similar background. You could like a similar type of food or have a similar hobby or anything in common with the other person. But it is one of the most powerful ways to achieve likeability.

Jacob: And I think I've been following that rule for a little bit and I think that definitely works. So that's a great, great tip. We all must find a way to become likeable because otherwise you can't build any relationship.

Kara: Absolutely.

For example for your listeners, they're professionals. So if you're going to a client meeting and you know your client is from a traditional industry and they wear very formal clothing, you should also wear formal clothing. If they're from a casual industry and they wear jeans and they wear maybe a shirt or even a t-shirt, then maybe you should turn your clothing down a little bit otherwise you might alienate them a little bit if you're too formal. So you can use it to your advantage.

Jacob: It's funny that you mention that because after this I'm going to finish recording the show with you, I have a meeting with a city official about a project that they're doing and I totally forgot about the meeting. If you see me right now, I'm dressed with jeans and a blue shirt and I have kind of this funky sport shoes and he's probably going to come. He's actually already sitting at the office probably with a suit and he's like in his probably late 60s. I have to find a way to ...

Kara: Throw on a jacket or something.

Jacob: No. I have to find a way to bridge the etiquette and explain why I'm dressed like that. Maybe because I'm volunteering a seminar today and doing something good or so on so it doesn't feel that bad. I'll come up with something and I'll ...

Kara: Come up with it, yeah, an explanation.

Jacob: We'll update our listeners in the next show that I'll do with you as to what I did during -- in this moment.

Kara: Yes, that would be interesting.

Jacob: Because I really look weird like I'm in the weekend right now. But that's something to think about. Always be prepared and always have an extra jacket in your closet which I don't have today.

Kara: That's true. But you can overcome that. You can make that up with just the way you interact with that person to make them feel special as well.

Jacob: Yeah. We have a lot of fresh cool kids this morning so I think I'll just throw [unclear 00:24:10].

Kara: Well, that always helps.

Jacob: So Kara as we come to the end of our show, I wanted to ask you one question about networking because we all go to networking events. I try to do some of this a couple of times a month. Give us one or two tips to help people start a conversation with somebody you've never met. I still have that issue sometimes but I'd like to hear your take on that.

Kara: Yeah. So you're right. Starting conversations especially with people you don't know, complete strangers, can be really daunting and really scary. You'd be surprised, even people who have been in business for years are still daunted by this. The thought of how do I start a conversation? What do I say?

So I like to tell my clients that conversations generally follow three stages. And when you meet somebody for the first time, you only need to focus on the first stage of the conversation. That's usually small talk. Now that's easy to say but what can you say during small talk?

I often tell people, if you choose something in your surroundings, say, an object that surround you, an item of clothing or jewelry the other person is wearing that just kind of stands out that looks unique. You can talk about the venue, you can talk about the food, the city you are in, or even the weather. That's generally what the first stage of a conversation revolves around. That's what most people feel comfortable with.

Jacob: Right.

Kara: You don't want to meet someone for the first time and jump in and ask them, "What's your opinion on ..." or "Hmm, what do you think about ..." You don't want to go too deep too quick because you're going to scare that person away.

Jacob: Right.

Kara: So concentrate the conversation and your questions on your surroundings. That's the best tip I can give your listeners.

Jacob: I like that. That's what I usually do. Surroundings or maybe -- Well, if you know people like sports, maybe you can throw some sports stuff in there.

Kara: Absolute ... Yeah, if you know they like sports.

Jacob: Yeah, of course, if you know.

Kara: If it were me, I'm not really into sports. Yeah, I would not know what to answer.

Jacob: Very good. Perfect.

Kara, why don't you share with our listeners -- If they want to connect with you, how do we find you online, your website. Again, we'll make sure to have all the links in the show notes as well.

Kara: Yeah, that would be fantastic.

I'm very present online. I have a website that your listeners can visit and the address is www.executive-impressions.com. So there's a hyphen in between the two words.

If you visit my website then you can also join my monthly newsletter. By being on the list of people who are there, you will get notice and announcements of new products and, as I mentioned before, the video course that I'm preparing at the moment which will hopefully be released in about three months time. It's going to be a really lengthy video course -- probably a two-plus hours in length, high-quality video. It's fantastic. I'm working on the post-production of that at the moment so I'm very busy with that.

But if you go to the website, join my newsletter, then you will be the first to know when it's released. We can learn more tips.

Jacob: Perfect. I just joined myself as we speak.

Kara: Ah, wonderful! Okay.

Jacob: So, excellent.

Thank you so much, Kara. We'll make sure we link all these links in our show notes and really appreciate you taking the time all the way from France to join us this morning.

Kara: Yeah, you're welcome. Thanks so much, Jacob. I hope you have a great day.

Jacob: Thank you.

Thank you to our listeners who tune in every week. I really appreciate your emails, your comments, and we'll continue to try and improve the show and get you exciting guest. Have a beautiful day and we'll see you at our next episode.

Closing: Thanks for listening. You can find even more resources, including the show notes for this episode, at enchantinglawyer.com. That's www.enchantinglawyer.com.