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## **ETHICS and ETIQUETTE**

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know the difference.**

**Kitty Hailey CLI**

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**They are not the same – and we should know the difference.**

He's rude. He's offensive. He says inappropriate things in public and is bereft of sensitivity. He's the guy who talks too loud and makes comments about people's body image. He drinks too much, smokes in public and doesn't give a damn about how many feet he steps on literally and figuratively.

But is he ethical? Very possibly.

**Ethics** are standards by which we live and values we uphold in the daily life of our existence. They are codes of morality that have been agreed upon within the society of persons sharing a profession or professional association. They protect us all by insisting that everyone is in accord with the proper way to conduct ones self towards clients and fellow workers.

**Etiquette** is the manner in which we display ourselves to the outside world. It's the action with which we interact. Etiquette is a display of our image to others. It is how we dress, speak and outwardly value our fellow man.

One often belies the other. A good person who would not cheat a client or work outside of the law might be the most obnoxious lout, physically offensive in his or her hygiene and with no manners or social graces. On the other hand, a seemingly lovely gentleman who dresses impeccably and remembers to open doors for others is not necessarily the man who can be trusted in business. (Think of all the Wall Street bankers who smiled as they bilked the public of billions of dollars.)

Perhaps this is the "don't judge a book by its cover" standard.

I've been working for the better part of this past year to rewrite and update *Code of Professional Conduct: Standards and Ethics for the Investigative Profession*. This has been a challenge to introduce the concepts of ethics in a technologically based society. Our access to information and expanding electronic world has fast forwarded our profession into the future. What Star Wars promised thirty years ago is being utilized and exceeded daily. Interestingly, the basic rules of ethics do not change exponentially. We can now virtually see and hear through walls, locate persons in minutes and watch them in real time without ever leaving our offices. Yet, we are still bound by the constraints of privacy and the governing laws of our land.

Most of our professional associations demand civility and courtesy to each other and to our clients. In addition, we are bound by rules of honesty, diligence and trustworthiness. Having these agreed upon guides for conduct insures that the image of the entire profession is unsullied. If everyone acts in a professionally similar manner than each of us profits from the trust that is exhibited to the public. As a result of the growth of licensing and associations we have seen a movement away from the image of the sleazy gumshoe to that of a respected profession.

So it is here that the areas of Ethics and Etiquette merge. Acting in a respectful way towards others is both morally appropriate and plain good manners. Valuing relationships and respecting the rights of others stand with one foot in each discipline; ethics and etiquette.

My goal in writing *The Code* was certainly not to be the Emily Post of Investigators. The rules and guidelines within my writing are seriously intended to inform investigators of the need to be honest, trustworthy and diligent in their quest for information. It's not about being nice. It's about being professional. It's about being thorough and helping the client to obtain information. However, I found that in this age of electronic madness there has been a lack of civility that has festered among all people. It's possibly a result of a Gen X "me" mentality. Credit can also be given to the use of electronic devices and the tendency to limited social discourse. It is not necessary to be pleasant to your smart phone. However, it does work wonders when interviewing witnesses.

If the objective is to gain information then we are doing ourselves a disservice by being offensive to those from whom we seek information. I don't mean that we have to use the right fork or sit without our elbows on the table. I do mean that as investigators we have a need to put aside our own prejudices and take heed of the client and the witness as individuals with rights and preferences. When we offend those preferences or step on the toes of those rights we are actually doing ourselves a disservice. Being offensive is a tactic used when *The Maltese Falcon* promoted Martinis at 9 a.m. and satin gowns at all hours of the afternoon. It was the movies! Now television and Internet programs promote a rude, unrealistic view of investigators who get everything done within their half hour time slot. They have no time for niceness. They brutalize their witnesses and speak dissentingly toward their bosses. It's a luxury we, as functioning professionals, cannot afford.

The objective of our profession is to find information. We need to get a foot in the door to gather records and documents. That foot needs to get into the door of witnesses residences so that we have the time and leisure to have a conversation ending in a helpful statement. That same foot needs to enter the conferences and seminars where our peers are teaching us to be better investigators. If we shoot ourselves in that foot before we even get into the door, because of rudeness, bad manners and brutish behavior then we have foiled our own progress. Remember, the objective is to find information. How can we find it if that door has been shut in our face or those records denied us because of a bad attitude?

Again, I must reiterate that my personal goal in the new edition of *The Code* is to provide guidelines which will increase our effectiveness. It is intended to improve our bottom line financially as we proffer a professional face to the world. That being said, I'd like to quote my dad's definition of freedom.

*"Freedom is the right to spread your arms and whirl like a dervish, twirling freely with abandon.....until we get within an inch of someone else's face. Then it's time to stop."*  
(Jacob Schatz circa 1955).

It's all about respect. And if that crosses ethics with etiquette, then I'm all for it.

Kitty Hailey, CLI is an investigator and writer who has promoted professionalism and ethics in the industry. Her concentration is in the areas of civil rights and criminal investigation. She is the recipient of editor/publisher awards from national and local organizations. Feel free to contact her with any questions: [kitty@kittyhailey.com](mailto:kitty@kittyhailey.com).  
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