THE NETIQUETTE REVOLUTION

Communicating online has some profound differences from face to face interactions and can cause us to seemingly bypass the filter in our brain that helps us make decisions. The rise of online communications is not something all of us have had any training in and I invite you to read through the following guidelines * aimed at helping us live together a little better.

- **REMEMBER THERE IS A HUMAN AT THE END OF YOUR COMMUNICATION –** It is easy to forget this when you don't have the person in front of you and the golden rule has to be would you say this to the persons face? Without all the usual clues we rely on in Non Verbal Communications miscommunication can happen easily, and be upsetting to the human at the other end.

- **PUSH THE PAUSE BUTTON –** This is great advice for us all as we can sometimes sacrifice sense for speed. If you doubt there are unconscious processes going on think about the response you are *immediately* drawn to write, push the pause button, then write the one that is going to be most helpful to communications. That pause can be enormously helpful for both private and business communications.

- **RUDENESS IS OFTEN CONTAGIOUS –** Being rude online by shouting an opinion or shouting down someone else's is very likely to start a Flame War (or really hurt someone as in the next rule). If you need to vent you might need to find another avenue, as you are unlikely to assert your opinion over someone else's by acting in this way. I'm reminded of football violence when I think of these types of behaviours and ask yourself, is beating up another teams fan likely to make them like your team? You are much more likely to be heard if you are courteous.

- **POSTING ON PUBLIC PLATFORMS CAN BE DANGEROUS –** It is absolutely crucial to remember that public platforms can have many people looking in and there is a danger that a group shaming process can happen. This can be excruciating for the person that has been shamed and significantly affect their mental health. There are always people lurking who are worried about putting their head above the parapet for just this reason, and I urge you to think about what you are writing and where before doing so. Push the Pause button if you are not sure and ask yourself what would be most useful to write (or not).

- **USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD –** The Internet is a fantastic place for sharing good practice and information. It is good practice to make sure you are being clear and ethical about what your are contributing to inform readers who are likely to be less in the know. This can also mean paying attention to grammar and spelling etc. on professional websites, as this may help clients feel more

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confident about approaching you. We need to be careful we are not abusing our powers, even unwittingly.

- **FORGIVE OTHERS AND BE COMPASSIONATE WITH YOURSELF –** Remember you are a human too and with the best will in the world we all make mistakes. Mistakes online can feel much bigger, but if we are forgiving and compassionate with others and ourselves, perhaps that will become contagious.

REMEMBER WE ARE ALL HUMAN

This list is by no means exhaustive and is based on my research, experience and opinion. There are other lists out there of various kinds from which I have drawn influence (e.g. Shea, 1994) and this one is designed to help us think about the impact we might be having on each other as human beings, with the power to do something positive.

I attach links to two other Netiquette guideline lists which provide more detail on how to get involved in positive online behaviour, and attend to online security.

The Core Rules of Netiquette – (Virginia Shea, 1994)

An example of up to date security advice regarding online communications (Tweakyourbiz.com, 2017)

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