

Business manners instill confidence

"Company Manners: An Insider Tells How to Succeed in the Real World of Corporate Protocol and Power Politics"
by Lois Wyse, McGraw-Hill, 289 pages, \$16.95.

The woman is impeccable, her blonde hair perfect, her clothes professional-chic. She introduces herself, strides to the hotel dining room and snaps up a table. Slipping water with a lemon slice and she sizes up and quizzes me politely. Then she launches into a no-nonsense wrap-up of her recent book. The woman is Lois Wyse and she's nobody's fool.

She's not here to talk about advertising, though she's president of a multi-million dollar public relations firm. She's not here to discuss her children's stories or her love poetry or her column in Good Housekeeping. Today the subject is the workplace jungle. Lois Wyse has just written a book about it, called "Company Manners." It's a tough-talking survival guide for middle managers who don't want to stumble while getting on the corporate jet.

"COMPANY MANNERS" is about the way we deal with each other in the workplace. It's about relationships and about the way we deal with others in the workplace.

Wyse's eyes are brown, but diamond-hard. Her demeanor is tough. Her book is similarly realistic, dealing with conduct and day-to-day strategies in an almost Machiavellian manner. Yet, Wyse rejects such a label, insisting that "Company Manners" actually encourages humane behavior.

"I wrote the book because . . . did you read the book?" her eyes flash. Yes. "Well it's in the first chapter. I was invited to a lunch . . ."

The lunch was a classic corporate knife by a potential advertising client, made all the more painful by the hopes which the appointment raised.

"I became very angry at how all of us are treated; and I saw it following a pattern. If I can save other people from embarrassment, and identify those things that lead to frustration in business . . ."

business books

Wyse is candid about the incident. A Dutch-uncle tone pervades her book, which deals with everything from how to recognize "power" to acceptable sex in the office (between an unmarried man and woman couple on the same hierarchical level. That's all).

"What's unique about this book is that it's not talking the lowest level of business. It's really talking to middle management about staying on track and understanding signals. It's the level of the person who's going to be invited to the power lunch, the corporate jet, the executive suite."

THERE IS indeed a guide to giving the famous "power lunch" and to riding in a corporate jet, as well as advice on surviving a merger and what to wear to a

cocktail party in Los Angeles or Des Moines. Interesting, but so what? Isn't this just another yuppie success manual? How does this book help us outperform the Japanese?

Wyse doesn't flinch. "The greatest threat to an employee's productivity is instability. The single most important thing you can give an employee is confidence in the workplace. The strategies, the guide to 'Company Manners,' the hints on recognizing and adapting to the style of each corporation, will make the employee more secure, more confident, and more productive."

"Besides," Wyse's eyes grow quizzical. "There's a whole section on the five keys to being a good CEO. Didn't you read the book?"

We part friends, she shakes my hand firmly and departs for more interviews.

Peace, productivity, a better world, and a more enlightened workplace, all in one self-help book. Not bad, eh, with a power lunch thrown in for bonus.

— Chuck Moss

Be wise to discount merchandising techniques

Does anybody pay full price any more? Discount stores aren't the only ones offering discounts. But if you know how stores differ and how they set their prices, you may be able to tell if you're getting a bargain.

Vanessa L. Harris, extension home economist for Wayne County, offers these differentiations between retail outlets.

• Discount stores buy merchandise at full wholesale prices. They keep prices down with low overhead and extensive use of private labels. Prices are usually 15-30 percent lower than those of comparable items in a regular retail outlet. A discount store's markup over the whole-

practically speaking

sale price is typically 40 percent. A department store markup is 50 percent.

• Factory outlets buy products directly from the manufacturer at close to wholesale prices. They generally stock one manufacturer's goods. In fact, some factory outlets are run by the manufacturer.

• Off-price stores pay less than the wholesale price

for their goods by paying the manufacturers within 30 days and making buying commitments months in advance. They get none of the advantages that department stores enjoy such as the right to return unsold merchandise. This results in prices ranging from 25-60 percent less than list price. Their markup is generally 35 percent.

Be wise to some of the tricks of the discount trade.

Labels are often cut out of goods. Merchants may remove the labels to make you think you're buying high-quality goods. Top-of-the-line products are sometimes buried in lower quality stock for the same reason. Before you buy unlabeled merchandise, satisfy yourself

that it's of acceptable quality. CABLE TV is offering another shopping alternative. An estimated 10 million cable-TV households nationally receive programming that the Better Business Bureau calls a TV "sellathon."

Products are displayed and offered at what announcers describe as "discount" prices. Viewers can order the merchandise by calling a toll-free telephone number and charging it on a major credit card. Some programs accept personal checks.

The BBB stresses the importance of comparison shopping in order to determine that low-price claims are the best deal.

Patience is virtue

Continued from Page 1

"The stock market is the only game in town for total return on an investment," Backos said. "Quality Fortune 500 stocks are the best bet. Overall, good companies will perform very well."

Hack agrees but adds that the cyclical nature of the market requires a close look at a stock's consistency over a period of time. Now, he said, "People close to retirement should not invest in common stocks. But they're the best deals in the world for those in their 40s."

While Dubey believes investment in growth utilities in the Sunbelt is the best move today, White says precious metals capture his fancy. "Within the past three or four months, gold came into a new era when it broke \$400 (per troy ounce). Gold is a safe haven," he claims.

ALL BROKERS contacted say they agree the stock market is a good — if not the best — indicator of the health of the national economy, that the market is tied to the rate of inflation.

"Generally, low inflation indicates

a bull market, while high inflation points to a bear market," Backos says.

Other economic indicators, including employment, the prime lending rate, consumption and disposable income, have fared well over the past year, even though industrial production is sluggish, Wall Street analysts say.

But Elvekrog thinks some major crosscurrents may be contributing to investors' caution.

"We are leaning toward liquidity to avoid a recession by pumping up the money supply. At the same time, we have big problems with the trade deficit and national debt. And gold and silver have taken on life in an economy not booming too well," he said.

Brokers also agree that technology and the knowledge of portfolio managers in big institutions can claim a competitive edge over the small investor, but that's as far as the advantage goes. Engaging the service of a full-service brokerage firm will help the "little guy" gain even ground, brokers say.

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