

SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

'Old School' Communication

I don't know if it was from a parent or a teacher but I was always taught a prompt reply to a phone message or to a recent correspondence-- is a form of courtesy and good etiquette.

Such Emily Post-it notes of social etiquette came to mind after a few recent occurrences. One involved a college senior who contacted me via email and asked me for some advice and assistance in pursuing some job prospects in the golf industry. Knowing him and his family for a number of years, I was happy to oblige. I took extra time in my research for him and even compiled a comprehensive list of possible contacts. I emailed it to the young man and waited for

his reply. Several days went by and still no word from him. In this day of spam filters, I fretted whether or not the email ever arrived. So I sent another email, after double-checking his address, and simply inquired if he had received my previous email. Later that day and to his credit, the student did call me at my office and said he had indeed received my emails, thanking me for my efforts. He admitted he just "hadn't gotten around" to sending a reply. Biting my tongue, I didn't lecture or admonish him for this minor breach of courtesy and we went on to have a cordial conversation. But in the back of mind, I wanted to impart one tip from Job Search 101: be prompt and courteous in getting back to people, especially those who do you a favor. And if you're too busy to hand write a classy "thank you" note (still the best and most memorable touch) at least break a little digital sweat and drop them an email.

You see, it still amazes me in this age of email with its convenience and immediacy how lax and indifferent some people can be in communication. I mean, how

much time and energy does it take to read an email, hit the reply button, and compose a few sentences of acknowledgement?

The other occurrence started several months ago when I had a meeting with a young marketing "executive" to discuss a golf project of mutual interest. The person expressed genuine interest in the matter and said she would follow up with me shortly. In my mind, it was a perfectly fine business encounter with all the standard courtesies observed. As such, I didn't even try to contact the person for over a month. When I finally did, I fully expected some further conversation. Well, after leaving several yet never pestering phone voice mails (all after listening to the standard promised script of "I'll be happy to return your call etc") and a few politely written emails, I've yet to receive a single reply. This is now some three months in duration. Now unless this person has assumed a new aide slot working for Madam Secretary Condi Rice, I can't fathom why she can't or won't find less than thirty seconds in her day to make a reply. And it seems so

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wasteful of each other's time. Tell me "thanks, but no thanks" but tell me something so we can move on. In my early career days, I recall reading some of the management principles of IBM. One that has stuck with me is simply this: "Return all phone calls within 24 hours." Certainly, there's a sales incentive at work here but the practice speaks volumes about how IBM wanted to act in an energetic manner but also how it wanted to be perceived.

Okay, where is all of this leading? For sure, I had to get off a rant here. But I also wanted to share a story about a communicator from the Old School. I cherish two letters written to me by the esteemed golf writer Herbert Warren Wind who passed away last May. As a fledgling editor of *Michigan Golfer*, completely wet behind the ears, I wrote a letter in 1984 to Mr. Wind asking his permission to interview him for the magazine. He promptly wrote back, thanking me for the request but humbly declining to be interviewed. He wrote, in part: "I will be at the Masters and, of course, would be pleased to talk to you, but I really do not want to be interviewed for a piece...I hope you understand. See you down there.

Yours very truly, Herb Wind."

A month later in Augusta, I nervously introduced myself to Mr. Wind (who insisted I then call him Herb) and we struck up a wonderful conversation. He was a gentleman in the best sense of the word, kind and thoughtful and never arrogant or pretentious in spite of his lofty literary reputation.

Moving ahead a few years, I even had the good fortune to share a table with Herb in the Augusta National clubhouse and watch the Masters telecast during a Friday round marked by incessant rain. After the tournament, I wrote him a letter and within a week or two I received from him a handwritten note on that iconic *The New Yorker* stationary. "Dear Terry, thanks very much for your good letter. I very much enjoyed not going out in the rain on the Friday at Augusta, and sitting comfortably in the clubhouse and chatting and kibitzing on what TV showed us. I have finished with my piece. There is awful lot of bad weather in it...Hope to see you at the U.S. Open. Yours very truly, Herb Wind."

Thankfully, he never relied on email. *MG*

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