

# Sue Thompson's Be**exceptional**

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## Time is of the Essence

I'm late in getting this newsletter out, so I'm going to write about being late and how annoying it is. I harp on the truth that everything we do sends a message—what we wear, how we speak, how we behave—even if we are unaware of it, because while we may not *mean* to project a message, sometimes people are reading one. If we consistently walk out of the house looking like a slovenly mess, the message of what we think of ourselves is being broadcast to everyone who picks up that signal. If you are trying to gain an employer's favor or impress clients, you might catch one who is oblivious to outward indicators, but then again, you might not, and how will you know? You could be passed over for want of a few minutes of grooming, a nice suit, or some manners.

I am annoyed at myself when I am late, because I want to be on time. I want people to know they are important enough for me to be punctual. I have made a contract with them, either verbal or written, about the time we will meet, and I aim to keep my word.

We all have unexpected impediments to punctuality, of course. Traffic is backed up because of an accident or we answer a phone just as we're leaving and find a crisis in progress. This is why it is prudent to *always* get a phone number you can call should circumstances prevent your timely arrival. Five minutes is acceptably late, but more than that and you run the risk of sheer rudeness. With some people, it is unforgivable, no matter how much you apologize. If you must call, show the courtesy of asking if it is best to reschedule. You are taking someone's time, and you cannot provide them with time to make up for it. Let them tell you what they prefer. It's wonderful when folks are generous and forgiving, but we must live with the fact that those who aren't . . . just aren't, or can't be.

On those who keep me waiting, I proclaim here I am done with small businesses and contractors who will not make the effort to

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be on time. Many women who get their nails done at a neighborhood salon know the chronic inability of some shops to provide actual appointments. Cries of “Five minutes!” are meaningless, because I’m not blind—I can see where they are in the process and both the manicurist and I know that I will be waiting more than five minutes. It is entirely up to me to decide if he or she is worth the wait. The fact that in nearly every city there is a manicure salon on practically every street corner makes it easy for me to walk away if the person who does my nails does not keep the appointment for which I called ahead. We agreed on a time. I told you when I would arrive. You disregarded that and I have been sitting here for half an hour. Hmmm. Goodbye.

In my role as a facility manager, contractors who cannot be bothered to respond to me in a timely manner or show up when they have assured me they will arrive is enough to send me to the moon on days when my cup runneth over with projects and emergencies. I consider the unpredictable timing of jobs prior to mine, but consistent unresponsiveness to calls or emails and/or an inability to show up on time even when my work is the first scheduled job of the day sends me to my angry place.

There’s nothing we can do when competition is scarce. We’re at the mercy of cable providers and phone companies and doctors when they’re the only game in town or unequivocally the best. We have to face inconvenience with aplomb (love that word—it means “imperturbable self-possession,” as in “You can’t make me angry if I don’t allow it”), knowing the way things over which we have no control play out. But when it is in my power to go elsewhere, and I have been kept waiting enough to feel that familiar irritation creeping up the back of my neck into my brain, I know I can go somewhere else, call someone else, make a change, and calmly let the other party know why, because they may not want to lose another customer to their own foolishness.

Let that be a message to you, whoever you are.

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People count the faults of those who keep them waiting.

~ **Ancient proverb**

I am invariably late for appointments - sometimes as much as two hours. I've tried to change my ways but the things that make me late are too strong, and too pleasing. ~ **Marilyn Monroe**

Unfaithfulness in the keeping of an appointment is an act of clear dishonesty. You might as well borrow a person's money as his time.

~ **Horace Mann**

Strict punctuality is perhaps the cheapest virtue which can give force to an otherwise utterly insignificant character. ~ **John F. Boyes**

Punctuality is the politeness of kings. ~ **Louis XVIII**

## About Sue

Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her presentation skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

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