

# Hello?

ANYONE LEFT  
WITH MANNERS?

AS MOBILE  
PHONE USE  
INCREASES,  
SO DOES  
THE RUDE  
BEHAVIOR  
THAT COMES  
WITH IT



**D**enise Pietzsch was in a public bathroom recently when she heard the woman in the next stall on the phone, breaking up with her boyfriend. "I should not be hearing this," Pietzsch thought to herself. "You should not be doing this. Are you going to flush?"

The rise in cell phone use has made such encounters increasingly common. In the rush to answer calls, texts or

e-mails, many mobile phone users seem to forget where they are, who they're with or what they're doing. With mobiles to their lips, they yell at spouses in grocery stores, question coworkers while checking in at the doctor's and chat up friends during movies.

"We're just getting ruder and ruder all the time," said Pietzsch, executive director of Etiquette & Protocol Image Consultants in Worthington.

Pietzsch, who politely scolded the woman in the

bathroom, encourages people to take others to task for rude behavior. It's perfectly acceptable to ask people to take their cell phone conversations out of the room, turn off their phones during a meeting or meal or refrain from answering texts during a conversation, she said. The key is approaching them in a polite, calm manner, she added.

"I don't think it should be ignored," she said. "We're letting people get away with bad behavior."

Part of the problem is that people feel as though a cell phone gives them some sort of anonymity to speak of personal situations or other private matters, added Nancy Flynn, executive director of The ePolicy Institute, a training and consulting firm in Columbus.

"People will say things in public on a cell phone that they would never say if that person was standing right there," she said. "There is a real disconnect."

## Tech Etiquette

There are some clear do's and don'ts when it comes to using cell phones and other mobile gadgets. **DENISE PIETZSCH** of Etiquette & Protocol Image Consultants, **NANCY FLYNN** of The ePolicy Institute and **BETH MCGRATH**, an associate professor and the business office applications coordinator at Columbus State Community College, shared these tips.

### Shut it off

❖ Turn off your phone for meetings, job interviews, church, doctor visits, lunch dates and important dinners. Few matters can't wait until you've eaten a meal or finished a meeting. Taking calls tells your companions they aren't important, Flynn said. "You wouldn't go to dinner and turn your chair around and talk to people at the next table and ignore [who] you're with."

### Apologize in advance

❖ If you absolutely must take a call, apologize to your colleagues or friends at the beginning of the meeting, dinner or event. Acceptable excuses include an urgent business matter, a response to an offer to buy or sell a home

or an update on a critically ill family member. Flynn recommends saying this: "I want to apologize now. I'm expecting a critical call. When it comes, I absolutely have to take it. I'll leave the room and handle it as quick as I can."

### Think before you speak

❖ Don't engage in personal or important work-related conversations within earshot of others. "Never say anything out loud that you wouldn't want to put on a billboard," Pietzsch said. "Imagine that [the person you're on the phone with] is right there." If you need to discuss sensitive matters, move to an isolated location, she said. "Get up and get out."

### Hang up at checkout

❖ A person waiting on you deserves your attention, the experts said. "It's especially rude if it slows you down or slows the people down behind you," Pietzsch said.

### Don't text, either

❖ Don't convince yourself that sending a quick e-mail or text during a meeting is less rude than answering your phone. "Your attention should be on the topic at hand," McGrath said. It's also wrong during movies or concerts, Pietzsch said. Other patrons will notice the tapping of the keys and lit screen. "It's so rude," she added.

### Proofread your e-mails

❖ Though sending an e-mail from your BlackBerry is less formal than a letter, it's still important to be professional. Abbreviations and other informal language are not acceptable in the business world, McGrath said. "It's absolutely necessary to proofread and spell-check your e-mail before sending it out," McGrath said. She recently received an e-mail with the salutation "Hell Beth," instead of "Hello Beth."



**MANY CELL PHONE USERS SEEM TO FORGET WHERE THEY ARE, WHO THEY'RE WITH OR WHAT THEY'RE DOING WHILE THEY GAB**