

Quick Guide: The Professional Receptionist

There is more to being a good receptionist than just being polite and saying "good morning" as if you mean it. Visitors and callers ask themselves "What kind of firm is this? What will they be like to deal with in the future?" Or is the projected image off-putting in some way? So here are the **top ten tips** for projecting that professional edge:

1. **First impressions count.** And this means considering the reception environment too. So are the flowers wilting, or do they look fresh and inviting? Are your literature stands full and impressive, or are they half-empty and disorganised?
2. **Get rid of loiterers!** You know the ones – those who "just want a chat" or who carry on loud conversations with each other as they pass through reception.
3. **Use your eyes!** A friendly, smiling and efficient receptionist to greet clients is vital. Use your eyes in particular and if you happen to be on the telephone when a client arrives, give them that eye contact, perhaps coupled with a discreet hand gesture that says "I'll be with you just as soon as I can".
4. **Make them feel comfortable.** Stand up to greet your visitors so you project a professional welcome to your firm, and use hand gestures as well as words to guide them to a seat. If appropriate, offer to take their coat/umbrella/luggage for them.
5. **Make sure you're organised.** If you don't have a visitor's signing in book, always have a professional looking book on reception for you to get and record your visitor's name before you announce them. No matter how good you are, if you always record their name you cannot forget it or get it wrong!
6. **Reassure your visitor** or caller at every opportunity and tell them what is going on. If there is likely to be a delay before they are collected, offer them what you can, for example a coffee or a private space to make telephone calls.
7. **If a mistake has been made,** then a sincere apology coupled with you offering options and alternatives will help your client focus on the solutions rather than the original error.
8. **Always remain calm and understanding** – even if you think he or she is wrong. Remember that complaints are an opportunity to improve service rather than a problem that is taking up valuable time.
9. **Use language that your client can understand.** Using technical jargon or trying to "blind them with science" will only make matters worse.
10. **Finally, always put yourself in your client's shoes:** are they getting what you would expect from a professional receptionist?

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