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HAVE YOUR PEOPLE CALL MY PEOPLE, AND WE'LL DO LUNCH



Attending a business lunch seems simple enough -- eat, talk, get back to work. That is, until you're written up, fired, or even just embarrassed about a faux pas. Here are some rules for business lunches (and dinners, breakfasts, brunches, afternoon snacks, elevenses and drinks after work): **Be on time.** Of course, this rule applies to everything in business. Just because your schedule is messed up doesn't mean you get to share your tsuris with everyone else. It's rude and unprofessional. Canceling at the last minute is bad, too. **Treat the meal like a meeting.** Yes, a meal is intended to be more casual than a formal meeting. Feel free to discuss things other than business. But at some point, there's business to be done, so do it. Don't get distracted by the food, the atmosphere, or that super sexy server of the opposite sex. **Be careful what you say.** You don't have a *Get Smart*-style Cone of Silence. You never know who's listening. Discussing firing that secretary while she's sitting at the next table is unprofessional and betrays a real lack of class and tact. Sensitive conversations should be held behind closed doors at the office, not at Daily Grill. **Kill your cell phone.** You're outside the office, and you're supposed to be concentrating on your lunch guest, whether it's a client, vendor, competitor, headhunter or that employee you're firing in public so he or she can't make a scene. Turn your cell phone off. In fact, you should do this whenever you visit a restaurant, even on your personal time. Theaters, too. But feel free to use your cell phone in a hospital -- that stuff about affecting the medical machinery is total BS. **No three martini lunches.** Don't drink alcohol at lunch. Remember, you have to go back to work. Showing up drunk is a career killer. **Who pays?** The person who called the meeting picks up the check. If that's you, pony up. If it's not you, avoid the lobster. Never order anything more expensive than what the person paying is getting. So get out there and have a great lunch!

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