



EXECUTIVE ETIQUETTE, PROTOCOL, & INTERPERSONAL MASTERY

INITIATION TO THE EMBA JOURNEY

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prepared for: Krakow School of Business

OCTOBER 28, 2026

Philippe De Brouwer

Academic and Professional Profile Dr. Philippe De Brouwer holds a background in theoretical physics and earned a second Master's degree in Business Engineering while working full time. His academic distinction includes solving the “fallacy of large numbers” puzzle, originally posed by P.A. Samuelson and unresolved for 38 years. In his Ph.D., he challenged the foundational assumptions of Harry Markowitz's Nobel Prize-winning Mean Variance Theory, developing the “Maslowian Portfolio Theory” and fundamentally advancing the field of investment advice.

Career Highlights Early in his career, De Brouwer transitioned from insurance to banking and from IT to asset management. At Fortis (now BNP Paribas), he played a key role in launching one of Belgium's first capital-guaranteed funds and was promoted to director in 2000. In 2002, he joined KBC, where he orchestrated the merger of four companies and became CEO of the consolidated entity in 2005. Under his leadership, the company climbed from 11th to 5th in the market, even amid heightened competition.

Following the financial crisis, De Brouwer led the creation of a new investment management company for KBC in Ireland, which quickly grew to manage around 1000 investment funds and approximately €32 billion in assets. In 2012, he broadened his expertise into financial risk management, focusing on statistics, analytics, data, and numerical methods.

Recent Roles and Publications De Brouwer served as Head of Analytics Development for the Royal Bank of Scotland Group and currently holds the position of SVP at HSBC in Kraków. There, he oversees the Model Review Centre of Excellence and serves as Global Head of Professional Practices for Model Risk Management. He also coordinates collaboration with universities.

He has authored numerous scientific papers and books, with his latest being “The Big R-Book: From Data Science to Big Data and Learning Machines.” His work continues to influence both academic and practical approaches to finance, risk, and data science.



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Half-Day Masterclass Structure

Block 1 (09:00 – 10:30)

- **Module 1:** Foundations & Inclusive Courtesy
- **Module 2:** Classic Chivalry & Traditional Protocol
- **Module 3:** Boardroom Dynamics & Power Seating
- **Module 4:** High-Stakes Business Dining Protocol

10:30 – 10:45 | *Structured Networking Coffee Break*

Block 2 (10:45 – 12:30)

- **Module 5:** Executive Dress Codes & Headwear Guide
- **Module 6:** Global, Diplomatic & State Protocol
- **Module 7:** Digital, Hybrid & Crisis Communication
- **Module 8:** Interactive Role-Play & Case Workshop

12:30 – 13:00 | *Executive Q&A and Wrap-Up*

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1 Foundations & Inclusive Courtesy

1.1 Core Principles & Spatial Awareness

What is Executive Etiquette?

Strategic Definition

Etiquette is not a set of rigid rules—it is a strategic communication framework designed to minimize social friction, project gravitas, and show respect across professional environments.

Core Pillars:

- **Spatial & Social Awareness:** Reading room dynamics and body language.
- ***Noblesse Oblige*:** Leadership status demands exemplary standards of empathy and respect.
- **Deference vs. Rank:** Balancing organizational hierarchy with peer respect.

Modern Influences (2026):

- **Inclusive Professionalism:** Shifting from gender-based chivalry to status-, host-, and client-based courtesy.
- **Contextual Adaptability:** Knowing when to use strict protocol vs. agile professional ease.

Executive Courtesy & Spatial Awareness

Modern Executive Deference

- **Hierarchy Over Gender:** Defer doors, seats, and service to clients, seniors, and guests regardless of gender.
- **Door Etiquette:** The person closest to the door opens and holds it for the group; lead into unfamiliar rooms to guide.
- **Elevator Protocol:** Step aside to clear exits; host/junior holds controls if necessary.

Body Language & Gravitas

- **The Power Handshake:** Firm, web-to-web grip with 2–3 seconds of direct eye contact.
- **Spatial Respect:** Maintain arm's length personal space; align torso toward speakers during presentations.
- **Poise & Posture:** Sit tall without slouching; cross legs at ankles or knees consistently and comfortably.

2 Classic Chivalry & Traditional Protocol

2.1 Table Etiquette & Social Standing

Traditional Table Etiquette & Social Standing

Standing Protocol at Table

- **Rising for Ladies & Guests:** When a gentlewoman/guest stands to leave or approaches the table, all gentlemen stand immediately out of deference.
- **Seating Order:** Gentlemen remain standing until all ladies/distinguished guests are seated.
- **Returning to Table:** Gentlemen stand once again when a lady returns to her seat before resuming dinner.

Alternating Seating & Assistance

- **Man/Woman Alternation:** Seating is structured man-woman-man-woman to balance conversation and hosting support.
- **Assisting the Lady:** A gentleman assists the lady seated on his left (or right) with pulling out her chair and tucking it in before sitting down.
- **Attentive Service:** The gentleman assists with passing platters, pouring water/wine, and serving before tending to himself.

2.2 Traditional Gestures, Hand-Kissing & Hat Protocol

Classic Gestures, Hand-Kissing & Hat Protocol

The Right-Side Rule & Hat Ribbons

- **Your Lady on Your Right:** Traditionally, a lady stays on the gentleman's right side (keeping his right sword arm free to protect).
- **Hat Decoration Placement:** Because the lady walks on the right, the small ribbon knot, cockade, or feather on a man's hat is placed on the **left side** so it never brushes against her.

Door & Passage Courtesy

- **Door Holding:** Men hold doors open for ladies and senior peers, allowing them to pass through first.
- **Guiding Entry:** Enter first only to guide through dark rooms, heavy crowds, or unmapped venues.

The Art of Hand-Kissing (*Baise-Main*)

- **The Initiation:** The gentleman **never** pulls the lady's hand up; the lady offers her hand, and he bows down to her level.
- **The Contact:** Lips **never** make wet contact with the skin—hovering a millimeter away or a feather-light brush of hair/lips.
- **Context Rules:** Formal indoor settings, European high society, or classic galas; never outdoors or in transactional modern offices.

3 Boardroom Dynamics & Meetings

3.1 Power Seating & Discussions

Boardroom Power Dynamics & Seating

Power Seating Protocol

- **The Chair's Seat:** Center position facing the room entrance or head of the table.
- **VIP / Guest Placement:** Right-hand side of the Chair indicates key authority or guest of honor.
- **Strategic Support:** Key allies or presenters sit directly opposite or adjacent for visual alignment.

Managing High-Stakes Discussions

- **Graceful Interjections:** "Building on [Name]'s point..." or "To offer a complementary risk perspective..."
- **Managing Pushback:** De-escalate heated debates by focusing on data and common strategic goals.
- **Airtime Discipline:** Concise delivery; leave space for quiet subject-matter experts to contribute.

4 Business Dining & Hospitality

4.1 Executive Dining Protocol

The 13-Step Executive Dining Protocol

- A. Punctuality is mandatory (arrive 5 minutes early and 5 minutes late – anything else requires a quick message).
- B. Greet the host/guests with a firm handshake.
- C. Napkin on lap immediately upon seating (folded fold-facing-you).
- D. B-M-W Rule: **B**read (left), **M**eal (center), **W**ater/Wine (right).
- E. Utensil navigation: Work strictly from the outside in.
- F. Host leads: Begin eating only when the host lifts their fork.
- G. Pass food/salt/pepper to the right (counter-counter-clockwise).
- H. Never reach across another diner's plate; request items politely.
- I. Resting cutlery: Code for pausing (10:20 angle) vs. finished (10:20 parallel).
- J. Host handles all financial settling subtly and quietly in advance.
- K. Engage both left and right neighbors in balanced conversation.
- L. Express immediate verbal gratitude to the host before leaving.
- M. Follow up with a written thank-you note within 24 hours.

4.2 Networking & Social Boundaries

Cocktail Networking & Social Boundaries

Social Intelligence in Networking

- **Left-Hand Hold Rule:** Always hold chilled drinks in your left hand so your right hand remains warm and dry for handshakes.
- **Entering Groups:** Approach open 3-person clusters; make eye contact and wait for an opening.
- **The Graceful Exit:** "It was a pleasure discussing X. I want to make sure you connect with others, so I'll let you mingle."

Corporate Boundaries & Moderation

- **Alcohol Management:** Cap at 1–2 drinks; alternate with water. Alcohol tests professional discipline.
- **Taboo Topics:** Avoid politics, personal finance, religion, and internal gossip during social events.
- **Host Duties:** Introduce guests quickly with relevant context ("Meet Jane, who leads our Data CoE").

5 Executive Dress Codes & Headwear

5.1 Men's & Women's Dress Codes

Executive Dress Codes: Men vs. Women

Dress Code	Gentlemen's Standard	Gentlewomen's Standard
White Tie	Black tailcoat, black double-striped trousers, stiff white pique wing-collared shirt, white pique bow tie & waistcoat.	Full floor-length formal evening gown, tiara (if married), white opera-length gloves, high jewelry.
Black Tie	Tuxedo / dinner jacket (black/midnight blue) with satin lapels, black silk bow tie, cummerbund / low waistcoat, patent leather shoes.	Floor-length evening gown or elevated floor-length dressy cocktail gown, fine statement jewelry.
Morning Dress	Morning coat (cutaway), striped trousers, double-breasted waistcoat, silk necktie / ascot, top hat, pocket square.	Smart formal day dress, tailored skirt suit, dress hat or fascinator, tailored heels / closed pumps.
Business Formal	Dark tailored suit (navy, charcoal, dark gray), fitted dress shirt, silk necktie, leather Oxfords / Derbies.	Tailored skirt suit or trouser suit, elegant dress with matching blazer, closed-toe pumps / flats.
Business Casual	Tailored blazer / sport coat, dress shirt / fine polo, dress trousers / chinos (no denim), loafers / dress shoes.	Tailored trousers / pencil skirt, blouse, fine knitwear, blazer / cardigan, chic pumps / leather flats.

Rule of thumb: Align with organizational standards while distinguishing tier levels. When uncertain, dress one notch above room expectations.

5.2 Gentlemen's Classic Headwear & Rules

Classic Headwear Guide & Hat Etiquette

Classic Gentlemen's Hats

- **Homburg:** Stiff felt hat with a single central crown crease ("gutter") and rolled brim edge. Favored for formal business & diplomacy (e.g., Churchill).
- **Fedora:** Soft felt hat with a pinched crown and flexible wider brim. Highly versatile executive hat.
- **Trilby:** Similar to fedora but with a narrower brim sharply turned up at the rear and shorter crown.
- **Bowler / Derby:** Hard felt rounded crown. Historic staple of London financial city executives.
- **Top Hat:** Tall cylindrical hat worn strictly with White Tie & Morning Dress.

- **Panama:** Woven Ecuadorian straw, formal summer wear.

Hat Etiquette Rules

- **Indoor Removal:** Always remove hats indoors (offices, homes, restaurants, elevators in residential venues).
- **Doffing & Tipping:** Briefly touch or lift brim by the crown when greeting or passing a lady/elder.
- **Hat Decoration Position:** Remember that hat ribbons/bows/cockades sit on the **left side** to avoid interfering with a lady walking on your right.

6 Diplomatic & Global Protocol

6.1 Diplomatic Standards

Diplomatic & State Protocol Standards

Dimension	Head of State (Monarch)	Head of State (President)	Ambassador / Diplomat
Legal Basis	Ancient crown tradition & royal precedence	Constitutional law & national protocol	Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961)
Formal Address	"Your Majesty" / *Sire* / *Majesteit*	"Mr. President" / *Panie Prezydencie*	"Your Excellency" / *Eksce-lencjo*
Salutation/Greeting	Slight head bow / handshake if initiated	Firm standard presidential handshake	Official diplomatic handshake with formal title
Dress Standard	Ultra-formal / White Tie / Dark Suit	Formal dark business attire	Formal diplomatic business attire
Topic Boundaries	strictly non-political, institutional	National policy, trade, state affairs	Bilateral relations, trade, consular affairs

6.2 Cross-Cultural Etiquette

Global Business Etiquette: Regional Comparison

Dimension	Europe (Central / West)	United States	Asia (East / Southeast)
Hierarchy	Moderate-high; formal titles (*Pan/Herr*).	Flat/Egalitarian; first-name basis.	Very high; strict deference to seniority, age, and rank.
Communication	Direct, structured, low-context, factual.	Action-oriented, high persuasion.	High-context; indirect; priority on "saving face".
Trust Building	Track record, technical rigor, competence.	Transactional value, speed, commercial gain.	Long-term relationship (*Guanxi*), informal dining.
Greetings	Standard firm handshake with surname.	Energetic handshake, warm conversational opener.	Bow or gentle handshake; 2-handed business card exchange.

7 Digital, Hybrid & Crisis Decorum

7.1 Virtual Communication

Digital, Virtual, & Remote Etiquette

Video Conference Presence

- **Camera Framing:** Eye-level camera position, well-lit face, professional background.
- **Engagement Protocol:** Camera stays ON during high-stakes client or board meetings.

- **Mute Discipline:** Mute when not speaking; acknowledge speakers with subtle physical nods.

Executive Channels & Boundaries

- **Channel Hygiene:** Email for formal records; Teams/Slack for quick operational syncs; WhatsApp for urgencies.
- **After-Hours Boundaries:** Respect global time zones; use delay-send options for non-urgent weekend emails.
- **Social Media Branding:** Keep LinkedIn professional; avoid political debates on public platforms.

7.2 Crisis Leadership & EQ

Crisis Communication & Executive EQ

The Executive Apology

- **Ownership:** Acknowledge mistakes immediately without deflection or defensive language.
- **Action Plan:** Focus 80% of communication on immediate remediation and preventative steps.
- **"Off the Record" Caution:** Assume all electronic and verbal communication can become public.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

- **Active Listening:** Restate key concerns before responding ("What I hear you emphasizing is...").
- **De-escalation:** Lower pitch and volume when faced with hostile or emotional feedback.
- **Gravitas Under Pressure:** Maintain composure during operational failures or public crises.

8 Interactive Workshops & Cases

8.1 Case Scenarios & Takeaways

Interactive Workshop: Case Scenarios

Scenario 1: Boardroom Confrontation

During an M&A presentation, a senior stakeholder aggressively interrupts your financial forecast, calling the numbers "overly optimistic." **Task:** Role-play a 30-second response demonstrating executive gravitas and de-escalation.

Scenario 2: The Cross-Cultural Faux Pas

At a formal Tokyo dinner, a western executive hands their business card across the table with one hand and immediately writes a note on the back of a received Japanese card. **Task:** Identify the protocol breaches and explain how to recover gracefully.

Scenario 3: Networking Disengagement

You are stuck in a 10-minute one-sided conversation with a vendor at an exclusive gala while a prospective major client walks past. **Task:** Execute a smooth, respectful 15-second conversational exit.

Conclusion & Executive Takeaways

Core Leadership Principles

- **Etiquette is a Strategic Asset:** It reduces transactional friction, protects executive reputation, and builds long-term trust.
- **Adaptability Over Rigidity:** Master formal rules so you can adapt fluidly across cultures, hybrid mediums, and crisis situations.
- **Lead with Respect:** Authentic leadership combines domain mastery with consistent, inclusive courtesy.

Thank you. Open Floor for Q&A & Discussion.