

# The Corporate Kiss

You never know how it happens... You go to shake hands and the gentleman (or cad, I haven't made up my mind yet...) goes into a gentle lean and there it is! A corporate kiss! Where the hell did that come from?

Ahhh, the corporate kiss. It's a private moment from when a consultant becomes something more – a trusted confidant, a respected professional in a sector obsessed with relationships or something more, a socially acceptable token of 'I like you as a person, you're okay by me!' It's a mark of recognition, care and dare I coin a new phrase, a sign of 'commercial, professional intimacy'.

Well, what ever the corporate kiss means, the gentleman I have dinner with occasionally has got his y-fronts in a twist about it... "Why do you insist on kissing these people? I think it is demeaning the way these men think they can side to up and kiss you! You don't see me kissing women at functions and I can still have professional relationships without the kiss!" And the bemoaning continues...

So, my little mate, this is for you – hopefully it puts the issue to rest once and for all, as I'll keep on corporate kissing for as long as I bloody well like (you'll be telling me to quit the swearing next...)

## **What is the corporate kiss?**

So, what are we talking about? It's the chaste peck on the cheek (two pecks, if you're up for a bit of European action). Maybe there's a handshake at the same time, but the handshake will come first then gentle lean in and peck on the cheek. The corporate kiss is not a full lip lock, teenage movie style nor does it include a wrestler's embrace in the disguise of a hug.

It's subtle without being intrusive but really, what's really going on here? Is the corporate kiss significant or demeaning?

## **Is it a weapon of mass destruction or badge of honour?**

As with anything, the corporate kiss can be viewed as political weapon of mass destruction. The woman seeking the corporate kiss from a man with perceived influence and power in the sector may well undertake the action with the intent of "Look everyone! Look who can't wait to give me a corporate kiss! Doesn't that make me important that we are on kissing terms!" Political? Absolutely. Dangerous? Absolutely. Demeaning? Hmm....

And as equally political and damaging is others commenting on who is corporate kissing who, with disparaging remarks like "Did you see that? He just kissed her hello! They MUST be having an affair!" Little shallow of you, boys and girls – that's how rumours start.

You know what is more infuriating than these comments? It's usually women making these comments about the woman being corporately kissed, either out aloud or snidely to their neighbour. While you should never use the corporate kiss as a political weapon (read Dad's Networking Rules #4 and #6), never comment on a woman delivering or receiving a corporate kiss – let it be a commercial, professional moment between two people.

And a word of warning to the men folk of the sector...

Listen here, lecherous cads... Don't you dare think for a moment that the corporate kiss is *entrée*, that simply because you may have known someone for a while on a work/social level that gives you the right to initiate the corporate kiss – far from it, fellas. Lesson for you here, let the woman initiate the corporate kiss.

Weapon of mass destruction is not far from the truth in some instances. One of my favourite clients (a delightful woman, referred to as Mrs V) delivers the European corporate kiss – not every time but enough to keep you guessing if it's going to be one kiss or two. Just be careful of the head butt and the nose entangle when it happens – mildly embarrassing if it happens to you and highly amusing if you ever get to see it live in action.

## **Once kissed, can you ever go back?**

Once kissed, what now? Can you ever go back to plain old handshaking?

Of course you can go back, who are you kidding?! A polite, mildly assertive handshake while standing your ground and dropping a comment along the line of "I don't think that's appropriate" usually does the trick. Or if you are in a particularly cheeky mood, something along the lines of "What would your wife think?" or "Not until you buy me roses and diamonds first" can also get the message across.

Kiss, kiss!

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