

Swearing at work...

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“What is your favorite curse word?” I love that question when it is asked by James Lipton (or Will Ferrell doing a great imitation of him!) on the Actors Studio. Most of the actors who are interviewed have their answers bleeped out. We all laugh. Why? It validates that sometimes an off limits swear word is the best way to release a particularly strong feeling or emotion.

What about at work though? Is it okay to swear? Officially and according to most policies and rules of business etiquette, it isn't. But reality and experience tell me it may not be so simple.

Don't assume those you work with are comfortable with bad language. At one company, employees were asked put money in a jar in the office every time they cursed! I imagine that cut down on the amount of profanity flying around that place!

At another organization, it was perfectly acceptable to swear when frustrations boiled over.

Here are unwritten rules about swearing that I have observed:

- It's okay to curse in the field but not in the corporate office.
- Its fine for men but women are seen as “crass”
- Men should clean up their language when women are around.
- If some words slip out when with others acknowledge it and apologize if you offended anyone.
- Leave your “potty mouth” at home!
- Swearing occasionally is okay but doing it a lot means you have an anger management problem.