

Business Lunches: Who Pays?

Written by Peter Post



Who picks up the tab at a business dinner or lunch? □

I've always relied on the rule that whoever asked for the meeting pays for the meal. My dilemma arises when a guest (usually male) says, "Oh no, let me." I usually smile and say, "That's very kind of you. However, I asked you to lunch." But what if the other party insists?

You're right: the person who did the asking does the paying. I've been taken to lunch by a number of women, and enjoyed it very much. If the person won't take "no" for an answer, simply say, "Sorry Jim, this one's on me. Next time, you can treat." Be firm but kind, which, by the way, is a good business trait to display anyway.

To avoid tussling over the check, tell the maitre d' or waiter when you arrive to bring you the bill at meal's end. Then, instead of putting the check on the table along with your cash or credit card, which gives your guest the chance to take over, hold onto the bill until you can hand it to the waiter.

Even better, arrange payment in advance by giving your credit card number when you make the reservation, and asking them to charge the cost of the meal plus a 20 percent tip. That way, no check is brought to the table, and there's no question of who pays.

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