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(Lack Of) Online Etiquette

Monday, December 6, 2010 At 1:42PM

Is it just me, or is etiquette and courtesy at an all-time low when it comes to electronic communications? I know that this is an oft-repeated sentiment these days, but it never ceases to baffle me when I find an undeniably rude, abrupt message gracing the hallowed halls of my inbox.

Take the other day, for example: my husband and I are slowly, oh-so-slowly renovating and refurbishing the house we moved into a few months ago, and as a result, we're buying and selling a number of things every month. One of the last things to go was a Broan range hood, and we were selling it because we had just managed to acquire a Bosch hood that fit our gas stove much better. Since we moved into the house, the hubby cleaned it, refurbished it, tinkered with it, installed a brand-new motor in it. The thing retails for just over \$200 at Canadian Tire, and I asked for \$125 on Craigslist and Kijiji, mentally ready to settle at \$100.

First, I got the seriously ridiculous low-ball offers. This is an actual message that I received:

CAN UTAKÉ 40

I'm serious. No, really. Putting aside the lack of all courtesy, all semblance of language and just plain online-etiquette sense (hello, one of the first things we all learned is that all capitals is YELLING), did this person really think sending me a poorly-crafted (well, not crafted at all, actually) equivalent of a nose-thumbing was going to get me to play ball? I don't mind negotiating (which is just what I did with the well-mannered gentleman to whom it eventually was sold), but that definitely wasn't what this was.

Then when we sold the dishwasher that came with the house, same sort of nonsense: we posted it for \$225, and this was just one of the initial responses I got:

\$80 cash if yes call me anytime at 416 555 5555. thanks cya

Excuse me? Does this guy think that poor diction and the manners of a doorknob will compensate for the offer of cash? Besides which - how many of us actually accept a cheque, Paypal or anything other than cash for items worth a couple C-notes on Craigslist and Kijiji? Am I supposed to be bowled over by the generous offer of straight cash?!

And then you have the plain rude people. The "brand new selling for \$XXX why should i pay u \$XXX" people. I mean, come on. First off, I try to price fairly, taking into account the condition of the item, what improvements we've made, the lack of HST charged and so on. Besides that, if you've a problem with the price I'm charging, why on earth do you think that gives you the right to be rude to me? Now, had you said, "The brand new item is selling for \$XXX: is there any way you can do better on your price?", you've already put me into a better - read: "more reasonable" - mood. And I'll check your facts and send you a reasonable counter-offer if I feel it's warranted, or my reasons to the contrary if that's the way the debate swings. But again, either way, why on earth *not* be civil? What on earth does it say about a person when he or she feels no need to be civil or even a teeny bit polite?

It has to be said: the internet isn't out there for you to abuse other people. The internet isn't a forum in which you have the right to - anonymously or otherwise - make someone feel badly or hurt someone's feelings. And you certainly haven't the right to be plainly rude simply because you can hide your own ill manners and lack of respect (both toward yourself and to others) behind the forgiving cloak of the internet.

How did I respond to the \$XXX person? I said, "You needn't. Have a great day."

We can only hope that the veiled sarcasm and the taking down of several pegs registered. I'm not holding my breath.

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