



PHILIP SYKES

Philip is the man behind The British School of Etiquette. With an international reputation, he has worked with royalty, diplomats, presidential staff and celebrities. He has trained personnel in luxury retail establishments, airlines as well as students in schools and universities. From his early days working in prestigious hotels to his decision to open The British School of Etiquette, Philip has always believed the adage 'it's not what you do but how you do it'. His success is testament to this.

Why is he so successful at what he does? Quite simply, he is committed to his craft having been schooled in it from an early age.

Philip remembers how important manners were to his parents. He was taught to say please and thank you as soon as he could talk and his parents were often complimented on how polite Philip was. Philip's mother expected good manners from Philip's friends too. If they didn't introduce themselves properly when telephoning she would ask them to call again and practice the proper etiquette.

Philip's father was born and brought up in England and attended Oxford University, a true English gentleman. His mother's insistence on good manners and etiquette can be traced to her roots as she came from a colonial family of Scottish decent. Her brother joined the Royal Navy becoming Air and Naval attaché in Europe to Her Majesty the Queen. On retiring from the Navy, he was given an honorary position of private secretary and treasurer to the Duke and Duchess of York (HRH Prince Philip and Princess Fergie)

As a young boy Philip was involved in cubs and scouts which places a premium on helping others, being thoughtful and kind. Philip gained great satisfaction from this. He was naturally drawn to the social side of things, putting together charity events, playing rugby, cricket, tennis and athletics as well as enjoying the arts as a member of the drama society.



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Philip attended Michaelhouse, one of the most prestigious schools in South Africa where great emphasis was placed on the saying 'Manners maketh the man'. He was taught to stand when a person enters the room, to offer a seat to a lady, to hold the door for someone, and to always walk with a lady on the inside of the pavement. The school prided itself on encouraging pupils to help people and to carry out community service. Philip worked with autistic and mentally challenged adults at Sunfield Home in Howick. Philip believes in going the extra mile and he received a special community tie to recognise his time and effort dedicated to service.

When he left school he set off to travel the world arriving in London in 1987. Not afraid of hard work and willing to work his way up, Philip's first job was at The Hard Rock Cafe, Hyde Park Corner, London. He started as a bus boy, cleaning, clearing and offering diners water. But after six months he was promoted to a hosting position, working on the door, meeting, greeting and seating people.

Returning to South Africa, Philip secured employment at one of South Africa's top 10 restaurants, The Colony Restaurant and swiftly became one of their top waiters and maître d'

In 1989 he began his three year National Higher Diploma in Hotel Management becoming the top all-round student. This accolade meant he secured employment at the finest hotel in South Africa, the Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town and then on to the Johannesburg Sun and Towers. This experience was invaluable. Returning to London at the beginning of 1992, Philip headed up the Brasserie and Food and Beverage department of The Lowndes Hotel (Hyatt Group), a small 5 star, boutique hotel in Knightsbridge. Here Philip's understanding of the power of excellent service, consistency and quality would reap dividends. He was the first person in the history of the hotel to turn the Brasserie around and achieve profits. Quite simply, people kept coming back.



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Philip had always dreamed of opening a restaurant. He returned to South Africa and opened Pages in Thyme, a restaurant set in an old Victorian home and served exciting food with a South African and European influence. Philip trained his staff developing them to the highest standard. He says 'I watched with joy as each individual grew in confidence, character and strength. We established what I believe was South Africa's best waitering / service team'. The restaurant soon became a top restaurant in South Africa. In April 2015 Philip met one of South Africa's top executive chefs, Christiaan Cambell. He was delighted to find that Cambell remembered him well. Cambell told Philip he considered that Pages in Thyme was 'by far the best restaurant he had ever eaten in, you were way ahead of your time'.

Pages in Thyme earned an outstanding reputation under Philip's direction. When Christiaan Cambell suggested that the Executive head chef and his sous chef from La Gavroche, Roux Brothers Restaurant in London (2 Michelin Stars) eat there, the chefs were astounded and said that of all the restaurants that they had eaten in in South Africa this was the best. They absolutely loved it.

By now Philip was keen for a new challenge and sold the restaurant to return to London.

It's one thing to understand instinctively how to do something. It's another to be able to teach it to others. Philip realised he had a skill for understanding people. A move into training was the next step. On moving to London he built up knowledge of the British business world before setting up his training company Step to Training. The company became a market leader in developing training for adult career changers and British Armed Forces Service leavers. As always, Philip was strongly focused on the human side of the organisation, looking at what people needed and developing the appropriate training programme.



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As a customer service expert he took the lead in liaising with customers and students to design and develop bespoke courses. Here, Philip was determined to ensure the courses were fully interactive. Demonstrations, props, group feedback and role-play were critical as Philip wanted students to gain a thorough understanding of the course and, importantly, to leave confident in their skills. This experience would prove invaluable when he came to set up The British School of Etiquette where focus is always on building confidence with students so they can take their new skills and employ them with ease.

Step to training became a leader in its field and Philip was approached by Cirencester College to steer the formation of the Heritage Academy. The academy was set up to train in the traditional building methods for restoring historic buildings in Britain. HRH Prince Charles, the patron of Winchester Mansions in Gloucester, where the academy was based, endorsed the academy. This is an area close to His Royal Highness's heart and he personally thanked Philip, congratulating him on his involvement and dedication to this cause.

Philip is personable and charismatic, effortlessly putting people at ease. His career to date demonstrates his highly effective management skills and his ability to motivate people. He has the enthusiasm and drive of an instinctive entrepreneur. Again and again he has proven successful in delivering sustainable revenue and profit gains in competitive markets.

And so in February 2013 Philip made his most exciting move yet. He had a burning desire to set up a new training business that would help people develop themselves and get ahead. The focus would be life skills, etiquette, manners and service. With his in-depth knowledge of the etiquette and social graces employed in the highest circles of society as well as his ability to deliver compelling training, he opened The British School of Etiquette. This school would allow him to share his considerable experience with both private individuals and the corporate world. He knew he could make a real difference to people in their business and personal lives.



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As Philip says:

'There is no better way to describe what drives our team than perfection. Our professionals specialise in training individuals of all ages, from all cultures and all sectors of society. At a corporate level, we collaborate with our clients to enable them to deliver the service and finesse which will not only grow their companies, but will also set them apart as experts in etiquette and customer service.'

Philip is passionate that today's generation, including his own children, should learn traditional manners and that this will stand them in good stead in the modern world, teaching them respect for themselves as well as an understanding of the effects of modern technology and social media. Teaching children is one of the most rewarding parts of Philip's job. Philip has built The British School of Etiquette into an industry leading organisation bridging different cultures which becomes ever more important as the world becomes a smaller place.

Philip's vision is to provide the highest professional standards of education, not only to individuals but also to organisations in the hospitality, retail, leisure and tourism sectors, helping these organisations become the best and most sought after within their industry. The British School of Etiquette is a passion for Philip. It's a life's work, a vocation. He brings his outstanding interpersonal and motivational skills to every course he runs. And the results speak for themselves.