

BUSINESS OUTLOOK/LOCAL NEWS
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Social skills enter business curriculum

—A bit of polish can make the difference in a tight job market

Journal Staff Report

A Firm Handshake: Social skills teacher Thelma Domenici preaches eye contact as she works with UNM junior Rahman Johnson.
RICK SCIBELLI/FOR THE JOURNAL

Practical Exam: The final exam in Social Survival 101, taught by Thelma Domenici, included a mixer, buffet lunch and review. The one-week course was offered at UNM's Engineering Department.
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The Anderson Schools has begun offering a short course in social skills in response to recent research and economic changes that suggest advanced social skills can make or break a business professional.

"With the economy tightening and jobs harder to come by, refinement could make the difference in getting a job or bringing in a client," said Howard Smith, dean of the Anderson Schools of Management at the University of New Mexico.

A recent study by Public Agenda found that most Americans surveyed say rudeness is on the rise in our society. The study also found that 79 percent of Americans say lack of respect and courtesy should be regarded as a serious national problem.

Thelma Domenici & Associates has created a series of programs to address these realities, the company said in a press release.

The Anderson Schools uses the company's Social Survival 101, which includes all material and table setting equipment and a mock cocktail hour with invited workers from the city from whatever discipline is being taught. The class size is about 20 and cost is \$2,500.

The company also offers a Corporate Decorum program, where business people receive training in contemporary social skills during a formal cocktail hour and a four-course dinner.

"This is an excellent way to help my staff members who meet with the public to become very comfortable with themselves on a social level," says Michelle Coontz, president of Wells Fargo Bank Santa Fe, who gave a dinner for about 30 of her staff.

Domenici's topics for the three-hour evening session range from the art of conversation at a reception to taming hard-to-eat foods at a formal dinner. She also details navigating a formal place setting, selecting wine and exhibiting ease with clients.

"Industry leaders and executives on both coasts have come to realize the importance of teaching such skills to their employees," said Thelma Domenici, president of Thelma Domenici & Associates.

The price for the Corporate Decorum program is negotiable because some businesses prefer using their own club memberships to bill the food. When that is the case, the cost is \$100 per person.