

Decorating with decorum

As we enter into a heated political season, let us consider a topic that is central to our business philosophy and worthy of reflection for those of us who voice an opinion either in person or on our social media. It is a topic that does not get much attention today, and yet it is fundamental to how we treat our clients, suppliers, and partners. The topic is "decorum."

The definition of decorum is "behavior in keeping with good taste and propriety."

Unfortunately, we are bombarded with content, whether via social media, film, television, or print, that promotes neither good taste nor propriety. One exception to this is "Downton Abbey," a historical drama that follows the lives of the Crawley family and their servants beginning in 1912. You may have seen it.

We are huge fans of the program in large part because decorum shapes how characters treat one another. The show illuminates in stark contrast the differences of a bygone era and today. Characters,



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regardless of their station, treat one another civilly, even when in the middle of great conflict and disagreement. They behave with dignity (the quality of being worthy of honor) which fortifies their views by expressing them from a position of integrity, honesty, and self-discipline.

The evangelist Joel Osteen said, "You can change the world by changing your words." When one considers the enormous implications of what we say, I would agree. Our words incite wars, disparage or uplift reputations, and inspire us to cure diseases or put a man on the moon. We must choose them carefully and speak them within a framework of dignity and respect.

My father was fond of saying, "It's not what you say but how you say it that matters." Excellent advice for communicating effectively, but it is also a reminder that, no matter what you say or how you say it, your language is a reflection on you. It is OK when people disagree with what you say; it is not OK when they disagree because of how you say it.

America is the product of revolution. We are neither faint-hearted nor fearful of expressing our opinion. Our passion stems from believing that our opinions matter and that our voices provide the foundation for solving the problems that face our country. The corollary of having

a valuable opinion is that it is more impactful when expressed with decorum.

You would think that good taste and propriety are staples in the interior design industry, which has its roots in servicing the needs of the upper echelons of society. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As design services migrated from the super-wealthy to the middle class, there was an erosion of norms, including the mannerisms and protocols that formed the client/service provider relationship. This trend was exacerbated by the entrance of product-based businesses (furniture stores, for example) into what is a service-based business.

"Decorating with decorum" is a core value of our business, primarily because the highest level of service is not possible without it. Perhaps, it also because Jeanette is British, and it just comes naturally to her.

Jeanette and Ryan Turk are interior designers for Decorating Den Interiors. Learn more at www.jturk.decoratingden.com.