A Little Bit Pregnant?

Either you’re pregnant or you’re not. It’s the same with being on time. Either you’re on time or you’re late, and that’s an ineffective way to start any meeting. **BY PETER POST**

A reporter for the *Washington Post* called one day. She authors an “Ask the Expert” column and had a question for me: “This guy wants to know if he was treated badly. He went to two interviews. For the first he was 20 minutes late. He understood why he might not get that job. For the second he was only five minutes late. But again he didn’t get the job, and his lateness turned out to be a factor. He wanted to know, ‘Was this fair?’”

I was incredulous. Can you be a little bit pregnant? Either you’re pregnant or you’re not. There’s no in between. In my book, it’s the same with being on time. Either you’re on time or you’re late. Unfortunately, when you’re late, the first words out of your mouth are, “I’m sorry…” What an ineffective way to start out any meeting. A job interview is about presenting your best assets and creating a strong first impression. Starting with “I’m sorry,” or worse, ignoring the lateness, leaves the interviewer with questions about your work habits before you’ve even introduced yourself.

When I teach Emily Post business etiquette seminars, I tell the participants that if I had only one piece of advice to offer, it would be to be on time. When you’re on time, you start to build the relationship. When you’re late, you start by having to recover from a mistake.

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If you have business etiquette questions you’d like Peter Post to answer either in an upcoming issue of *Training* magazine or in an online article, please e-mail them to *Training* magazine Editor-in-Chief Lorri Freifeld at lorri@trainingmag.com.