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No room at table for late responder

Jay Remer, **Financial Post**
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Dear Etiquette Guy: I sent out dinner invitations three weeks in advance to 10 business associates for a dinner at my house. "RSVP" was clearly stated. Nine gentlemen promptly replied affirmatively within a week. I then organized a catered sit-down dinner for 10 people, including me, and elected not to invite any more people as my table only seats 10.

Two days before the dinner I ran into the 10th person. He indicated that he was interested in coming to the dinner. I took a deep breath and politely told him that I was not able to accommodate him as the table was full and dinner plans were set. He mumbled something about receiving a lot of e-mail and lots of travelling. We cordially parted company. When I ran into him again the next day and acknowledged him, he was clearly miffed, shot me a dirty look and kept walking. This has apparently impacted our business relationship. I am now questioning whether I should have sucked it up and accommodated him regardless of his cavalier attitude toward my invitation. Should I have accommodated him?

Dinner Giver

Dear D. G.: Thanks for asking this good question. There are a couple of different ways of looking at this, but the bottom line is that you are correct in what you did. People need to respond to RSVPs immediately, especially in business situations. This situation is likely to pass; if it doesn't, would you really want to do business with this guy anyway? Just remember that the host is always the boss for the evening. - Jay Remer is the Etiquette Guy. He is trained and certified by the Protocol School of Washington as a consultant for corporate etiquette and international protocol. He lives in St. Andrews, N. B. E-mail your etiquette questions to jay@etiquetteguy.com and visit his Web site at www.etiquetteguy.com.

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