



## **First Impressions That Will Last**

### ***9 Steps to Impress Anyone You Meet***

It's the most important meeting of the day. You've planned every detail of the agenda. Your client is on their way...what was his first name? What did she say she liked to eat? What is his wife's name? Are you dressed appropriately? Has this ever happened to you? Your secretary lines up the details but you haven't prepared yourself for what is the most important deal you have ever worked out. How could you have avoided this? Are there steps you can take to make every business contact successful? Sure there are. You can make a great first impression every time. All you need to do is a little prep work. Here are 9 Steps to make you the most sought after businessman/woman in the network.

1. Listen to every piece of information you can about your client. Remember the old adage: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. It is still true today. Most people in business aren't impressed with what you know. They are more impressed with what you remember about them. Learn to listen more than talk. Most sales and customer service success stories involve successful listening skills. Use a note pad to write down notes either during or immediately after phone conversations or casual meetings. I am pretty good at remembering details but my coach gave me a notebook and pen in an effort to help me remember EVERY detail. It has helped.
2. Do your homework. Today you have more information about people at your fingertips than at any time in human history. Use the internet to research every aspect of your client. I worked for a client one time that called me to do a presentation. I couldn't figure out what they did in their industry. Several clicks later I was an authority on their business. I once went into a meeting and was able to tell the CEO why she was hired to run her corporation. She had no idea what criteria was used to select her. Was she ever grateful for my information. Yes, I got the contract – long-term!
3. Dress for success. What image does your clothing and appearance say about you and your business? Who would want to do business with someone who had a disheveled or lowly appearance? When I started out in business I always showed up dressed as I do for presentations. But when I was at the site and not presenting, I dressed very casual. A friend pointed out to me that this was just as important a time to make a great impression as when I was on the platform. This was about the time that I lost 37 pounds in a year. Nothing I owned fit me anymore and the things I wore hung off me atrociously. In

conjunction with my weight loss, I completely changed my wardrobe. I went into my closet and threw out everything that didn't look like I made a million dollars – yes, even the “around the house” items. Today, I not only feel great; I look great!

4. Always be on time. There is no excuse for showing up late for a meeting with a busy client. Never tolerate missed deadlines or late arrivals in your performance in business. It tells people they aren't important. Get a watch and check it frequently. Find out how long it takes to get to the appointment if you are traveling. Don't allow phone calls, drop-in visits or traffic to make you tardy for the most important meeting of the day. I have spent most of my life being on time and reliable. As a result people know they can depend on me to deliver timely service and meetings.

5. Listen more than talk. This isn't a repeat of Step 1. This is for the actual meeting. Let your client take the lead in conversation. You can do this by asking questions that require more than one-word answers. Who is in control of a conversation; the person asking the questions, or the person answering them? Obviously the person asking the questions is in charge. Use the homework you did to ask great questions. It's been said that no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. You show you care by asking questions about them and listening to the answers.

6. Remember people's names and details. People like hearing their name spoken. Again it makes them feel important. Don't overdo it but use their name in the conversation at specific moments to emphasize points. They will appreciate hearing their name spoken. If you have trouble remembering names, use simple techniques like repetition, association or just write them down in a convenient place you can access discreetly. Use the research you have done in your home work to ask about family members, their history with the corporation or their life. Everyone likes talking about themselves and even more they like hearing that you are interested in them and their lives.

7. Be truthful. Never tell a lie or stretch the truth so that you have to spend the rest of your time covering for yourself. Most people can tell when you are lying to them. Tell the truth even if it is painful They will appreciate your honesty in the long run. It will build a reputation for you that no resume or marketing campaign can equal. Being known in the business community as an honest man or woman endears you to ever person you come in contact with. The word of mouth that your honesty generates will come back to you exponentially. One lie told can ruin your reputation and your business may never recover. It is easier to just always tell the truth.

8. Find common ground. As you listen to your meeting partner, look for similar interests or backgrounds. I met with a gentleman last month who not only grew up in my home town but in my suburb. Wow! We spent most of the time connecting with our common past and it made both of us feel better about doing business with one another. Common Ground = Trust. Trust is the foundation for an open relationship that will grow your (and their) business. Look for hobbies, sports, educational interests, cultural commonalities that will bind the two of you into a growing business relationship that will be that foundation for trust.

9. Show confidence. Be positive about your strengths without over-doing it. This will make a great impression on everyone you come in contact with. People can smell someone with low-self esteem. Your appearance says a lot, but your remarks about yourself and your abilities can be sensed before you ever say a word. It is alright to occasionally use self-deprecating remarks in humor, but once should be enough in any business arrangement. Just doing it twice leaves a negative impression. Don't bowl people over but show an air of confidence that leaves everyone thinking that you can be depended upon to deliver the goods you say you can. Never underestimate the power of a positive attitude in any situation and conversation.

Use these steps the next time you want to make a great first impression. You will be surprised at the results they generate. Your business will improve and your bottom line will increase.

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