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Making a Great First Impression - by Casey Gillespie**Sending the Right Signals**

Remember the old cliché "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Well, it's true. We all want our first meeting with a client (or anyone else for that matter) to go well. We want to appear confident, but not too domineering; relaxed, but not bored--and all of these things are reflected by the way we walk, talk, and even stand.

Self-awareness is the key to making a good first impression. Did you know that in a study done by the University of Virginia it was found that only 20 percent of people accurately assess how others perceive them in a first meeting? 20 percent! So my advice is to keep reading and learn how to adjust your behavior so that if you aren't already in that 20 percent, you soon will be.

It's All In the Eyes

Let me share four little magic words with you: Always make eye contact. Although it sounds easy, there are a couple of things you need to know.

Why should you make eye contact? When you look someone in the eye, it shows you are interested in what they have to say. If you are constantly looking around, you give the impression that you that you are either a) bored or b) uncomfortable. Neither of which are good when you

first meet someone.

What you should do is either direct your gaze at the person's eyebrows or their nose. Another tactic you should practice is mimicking their expressions. For example, if they smile you smile. Beware though, if you start mimicking the other person's every move you are going to seem overeager--and weird.

Give `Em a Hand



When you initially meet someone in a business setting the first form of physical contact is usually a handshake. You have to take into consideration what kind of grip you have. If it is weak you might seem insecure or uninterested. On the flip side, if you have a death grip you project the need for control and the possibility of being domineering. Go for a firm handshake where you engage your full hand and pair it with a smile and a polite "hello."

You should avoid the two-handed handshake where you either cup the other person's hand or pat them on the shoulder. Not only is that annoying, but you will seem overly aggressive. Be the first one to reach out your hand, and you will seem interested and courteous--two things that will always work for you instead of against you in an initial meeting.

Carry Yourself With Confidence



Whether you know it or not, the way you carry yourself says a tremendous amount about your self-esteem. If you bite your nails or constantly look down, you give off an air of self-consciousness or nervousness. Standing with your arms folded in front of your chest, shifting your weight from one foot to the other, or fidgeting is called "closed" body language. You may seem unapproachable and aloof. Body language is particularly important because it can be observed at a distance allowing a person to make a judgment call on you before they even meet you. If you are standing alone in a room full of people with your arms folded (or ladies, playing with your hair) you are broadcasting to everyone that you are nervous or that you lack confidence.

Again, what you should be doing is standing tall with your arms at your sides. If you are like me and feel the need to constantly do something with your hands fold them in front of you or hold a folder with your resumes to keep your hands occupied. When conversing with someone, face the person directly to show you are open and interested in what they have to say.

Watching What You Say



This is one that may take a little practice because you have to adjust what and how you say according to whom you are speaking to. In other words, you have to read the other person. If you sound like a walking dictionary you look like you are trying too hard to appear intelligent and articulate. However, too many slang words or "umms" and "ahhs" are just as off putting. You have to judge how formal or relaxed you can be

according to what signals the other person gives off. One rule that you can always abide by regardless of who you are meeting for the first time is to never, and I mean NEVER use profanity.

You should also keep your tone in mind. Don't be too sarcastic or pessimistic and don't reply to everything with "terrific" or "fabulous." You will either appear to be a real downer or down right phony. Just try to match the other person's tone. How positive or sarcastic are they? How much personal info do they give? Stay within their limits and you should be fine.

And lastly, be open-minded. If someone says something that you disagree with, say something like, "That is an interesting way of looking at it." Confrontation in an initial meeting almost always guarantees there won't be a second, and no second meeting means no contract. And I don't have to tell you what no contract means.

So until next week fellow Independents, mind your p's and q's, and save your opinions for the spouse and kids.

Casey Gillespie

"We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in." -Thomas Paine

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