

Behind the Counter

Business Networking – Part 2

In the previous issue you found out that people can determine a lot about you in the first 7 seconds after meeting you. So how do you make a good impression in the first seven seconds of meeting someone?

1. Stand upright, hold your head up indicating confidence.
2. Make sure that your hands are visible – hidden hands indicate that you can't be trusted or that you have something to hide.
3. Walk with purpose and enthusiasm.
4. Make eye contact for at least 4 seconds, if you can't hold the eye contact it is again an indication that you can't be trusted.
5. Smile, but don't smile as you walk up to the person. Let the smile gradually grow on your face after you have been introduced, or made your introduction as if to say to the other person "I approve". If you approach the person with a ready, wide, smile, that tends to indicate phoniness or that you want something.
6. Show enthusiasm when greeting the other person, however don't take it so far that you seem to be over medicated, or coffee'd out, again an indication of being phony.
7. Be impeccably groomed and accessorize carefully. For example, a woman who wears a ton of costume jewelry tends to leave the impression that she is less confident, less educated and less intelligent.
8. Your tone of voice should be pleasant and upbeat and should indicate interest in the other person.

Once you make contact make sure that you keep the focus on the other person and use strategic questioning to keep the conversation going without sounding like you are cross examining. To keep the focus on the other person use active listening. By active listening you can pick up on what interests the other person and this will keep the conversation going. For example, when talking about the food, someone might say how delicious a certain item is and then you can ask if the person has had the item before and where and perhaps lead on to other topics and experiences. With active listening you can

reflect back to the person in words that the person has used so that there is an immediate connection and the person might think that you are pretty much alike. Avoid the 'me too' syndrome and let the person talk about their experiences even if you have recently been there.

Here are some ways to ruin a first impression

1. Use slang, baby talk or less intelligent language
2. Holding your hands behind your back or having your hands in your pockets indicating that you have something to hide or cannot be trusted
3. Being late for a meeting indicates that you are not dependable, or arrogant.
4. Conversely, being too early for a meeting indicates lack of confidence.
5. Throat clearing indicates that you are trying to stall, interrupt or establish your importance.
6. Lack of enthusiasm indicates that you don't care, have no confidence or are arrogant.
7. Answering the phone during networking, indicating that the person you are networking with is not important.

There are three places in a room that are better for positioning oneself for networking. They are near the food, near a heavy traffic area, but not in the heavy traffic area, and in or near the middle of the room.

So now that you have positioned yourself, what do you talk about? You should focus on topics that are neutral and non-combative. Your first words should be relevant and appropriate for the event. Something along the lines of "This is a good turnout." Any comments should be complimentary, empathetic and positive towards the other person – in other words 'You focused'. Your opening comments should be easy for the other person to agree with.

Make sure that you maintain your non-verbal image. Stand about an arm's length from the person. Lean in toward the person when they are speaking indicating interest. Make sure that your posture is not slouching or hunched over and that you smile appropriately, maintain eye contact, nod appropriately when the other person is speaking and that your body stance is open and inviting and that your arms are not crossed.

Here are 9 things that you should not say when you are trying to establish rapport.

1. I understand – the immediate response is no you don't
2. Our competition doesn't – don't talk about the competition
3. What do you do? – to avoid negative comments the question could be reworded to ask what do you like about your job?
4. What's your title? – indicates only the important people are worth talking to have a title
5. I've had the same experience – same as I understand
6. What problems is your company facing? – replace problems with issues or challenges
7. No problem – indicating that it normally would be.
8. I'll let you go (translated as you're boring me)
9. "I" – try to keep it to a minimum to seem more intelligent and caring.

Some topics to avoid are problems with your company, problems with the prospective company, highly charged current events, politics, negative comments about other people, competitive or confidential information, religious or ethnic issues.

Happy networking!!

I have a passion for accounting and I also have a passion for the theatre, so when the position came open, I volunteered to be the Treasurer for Viva Musica. The summer production of "A Chorus Line" starts Friday August 15 and is followed by an opening nite gala. The show is expected to be the best that Viva Musica has ever put on and I can attest to that after having watched a walk through some weeks ago. Please contact Ticketmaster for tickets and I hope to see you at one of the performances.

Gabriele Banka is a Certified General Accountant and the owner of Banka & Company Inc., She can be reached at 763-4528 or info@bankaco.com.