



Gaining the Competitive Edge

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: 12-12-12-12-12

First 12 steps you take into a room, go with a purpose. First 12 words you say, have them be positive. Top 12 inches, checks good grooming. Bottom 12 inches, shoes should look brand new. First 12 inches of your arm includes manicured hands.

If you feel insecure, remember that others feel the same. Treat each person you meet as though he/she were a very important person.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Always stand up. Smile. Firm hand shake. Eye-to-eye contact. Say your first and last name. Enunciate when you speak. Repeat the other person's name.

When networking, wear your nametag on the right hand shoulder. Professionals wear them on the left. Ladies, make sure that your hair does not cover the nametag.

BODY LANGUAGE:

Refrain from touching yourself from the shoulders up. Do not play with your hair, rub your eyes, etc. Fidgeting is a sign of nervousness. Placing your hands in your pockets is comfortable, however it is unprofessional. Do not assume that others like to be hugged or touched on the arm. The handshake is the best way to be professional. During interviews and meetings have your hands above the table. This will help you with proper posture and you will not be perceived as rude. Always be aware of the "comfort zone" of another person. Do not go into another person's "space." Constantly be aware of another person's body language, and "mirror" whenever possible.

MIXING AND MINGLING:

Hold your beverage in your left hand. Always have a napkin to avoid any drips. Talk more about others than yourself. Ask open-ended questions. Make a point to learn something about each person you meet. Discreetly write notes on the back of business cards. Have your business cards ready. Use a small black leather carrying case for your business cards. Never walk away from a person without closing out the conversation, "Nice chatting with you. I think I will try the hors d'oeuvres." Most importantly, enjoy the opportunity to meet other people. Networking is the key to success. It may pleasantly open doors for you!

CORRESPONDENCE:

Be timely. Use quality paper. Make the envelope as professional as the letter. Use "Ms.," "Mrs.," or "Mr." in salutations. Give thanks/appreciation in the first sentence. Keep sentences 10-12 words in length. Be direct and concise. Thank you letters should be sent within 24 hours. Send thank you letters even if you are rejected for a job or a bid.

BASICS:

In the professional world, never use profanity or foul language including distasteful jokes. Do not make personal calls while on the job. Do not send jokes and stories through company e-mail or fax machines. Never touch or pat a female colleague. Never make comments about women's' appearances that are degrading. Never address women as "honey", or "sweetheart." Avoid loud conversation, including the use of cell phones. Turn cell phones *OFF!* Avoid giggling to fill in the pauses. Never chew gum. Remember that there is always someone who is watching, and it is Murphy's Law that as soon as you commit a faux pas it will be untimely. Continually put your best foot forward and it will become habit.

BOOKS:

Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands by Morrison, Conaway and Borden (ISBN #1-55850-444-3)

The Little Book of Etiquette by Dortha Johnson (Running Press ISBN # 0-7624-0009-9)