

MAKING AN EXCELLENT FIRST IMPRESSION

Lots of solo business owners worry about making a good first impression on people they meet whilst networking.

It's common to worry about what other people will think of you. As every networking session is the perfect opportunity to make an excellent first impression, the following tips might make it easier for you to relax and enjoy yourself.

The way you shake hands

There's a lot of difference between a hand shake that's like a limp lettuce leaf and one that has a grip like a vice and makes you think every bone in your hand has been broken. If your shake is limp, the other person may think you don't have confidence and you are timid. At the other end of the scale is the vice like grip. This may give the impression of over confidence, someone who wants to take control, is domineering, or perhaps the person is just over enthusiastic.

Aim for a firm grip and position your hand so it fits into the "web" between the thumb and index finger of the other person's hand. The shake should last only a few seconds but leave a lasting impression: metaphorically, of course.

Have you noticed when two women shake hands, their shake is often remarkably different than when they shake hands with a man? If you fall in to this category, change immediately. Your handshake should always be firm and confident, regardless of the gender of the other person.

Nametags

Nametags are another problem. They should always be pinned or clipped on your right hand side level with your armpit and about half way along your collarbone. Lift your elbow at 90 degrees to your body and follow the line across. This is where the nametag should be placed. When you shake hands the other person's eyes will naturally be drawn to the tag.

If the tag is too low, especially on women, it may seem a man is glaring at the breast area, when in actual fact he is only looking at your nametag.

The size of the writing on the tag is also very important. It should be easy to see from about a metre away. This is particularly important if you are holding a seminar or workshop and want to read the names of the attendees.

Even for networking it makes it easier if you can see the name without squinting or getting up closer than you would like.

This is of greater importance if you are arranging a function for older people. Don't put them in the position of having to get out their reading glasses simply to read the nametags.

Business cards

When is the right time to hand out a business card? Some people say wait until someone hands you their business card first. Others may give them out straight away. There is no set rule, but don't thrust your business card at the person immediately, it gives the impression you are trying to "sell" them something.

Your business card introduces your company, make sure it says exactly what you do and your contact details are easy to find. Don't forget the back of the card; this is often left blank, yet this is a great place to advertise your services or products.

Printing of business cards is quite inexpensive and costs very little to have black printing on the back.

Getting these three simple things right will give you every chance of making an excellent first impression.

About the Author:

Barb is a successful business writer/editor/communicator. She writes in plain language and believes material for print and the web should be clear, concise and user-friendly. Please visit her website at www.barbclews.com to find out more.