

## Face - to - Face:

### *McCrudden Training's guide to making a great first impression*

First impressions really do count! "It takes only 7 seconds for us to judge another person when we first meet," says Linda Blair, clinical psychologist and author of *Straight Talking*. Judging people when we first meet them is a primitive survival instinct. It happens in seconds, sub-consciously and although consciously we might recognise that it's flawed there is nothing we can do to stop it.

In today's 'time poor' society, we tend to use these instinctive assumptions as a short-cut to decision making, so starting out positively is essential as you might not get a second chance. Here's our short guide to making a great impression face-to-face!

**Get the basics right.** Being well groomed, but comfortable, in clothing is a good way of showing that you are confident. But remember, your outfit plays second fiddle to the sub-conscious messages you send. In his autobiography, Sir Richard Branson talks about a successful meeting with Coutts Bank despite the manager not being at ease with his appearance in jeans and flip-flops!

**Take a moment to centre yourself.** A deep breath out will help to release any tension, calming your nerves allowing you to pull yourself up to your full height and open your body language. Claim your space and stand confidently.

**Success is in your hands.** A University of Iowa study found handshakes are more important than dress or appearance in establishing a first impression. Firm handshakes show dynamism and confidence, but make sure you don't squeeze too hard. Offer your hand palm-to-palm horizontally, and don't allow someone to shake your hand from over the top - this is a very dominating approach and puts in you in a submissive position.

**Body language is key.** Don't clutch your bag or purse in front of you defensively, use open gestures - not crossing your arms across your front. Start every new meeting with your head held high and a smile on your face. (If you look grim, unhappy or worried people will assume that's how you are). If you're looking to meet someone who's across a room - lock eyes with them and acknowledge them with a smile - it's a sub-conscious signal.

**What's in a name?** Hearing our own name is music to our ears. Use the other person's name early in the conversation and at least once more - but don't overdo it.

**Flattery gets you everywhere.** A little research their LinkedIn profile and their organisation can get you a long way. Hop on to Google and do your research before a meeting, it's a great form of flattery to show you know a little about someone - but limit how much you tell them - you don't want to look like a stalker. If you don't have the chance to research them, you can flatter them by showing you're interested in them. Asking open questions (especially the more unusual ones that will get you remembered) and showing signals that you're listening to their answer not only gives you information to work with, but flatters the other person.

**We like people like us.** When you first meet someone, mirroring the amount of eye contact they make, and the speaking volume and speed will make them feel more comfortable in your presence.

**Be brief** Briefly but confidently describe what you do and how you can benefit them. Your aim is to appear an authority without boasting. Then breathe. Don't talk, talk, talk. Spend at least as much (if not more) time listening as talking, and once you've got the other person to agree to you offer - change the subject. Don't risk talking them out of it!

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