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From the Desk of Brandon Foster

Two Snap Judgments People Make When They First Meet YOU

Here at Reitman we send candidates to interviews every day and we often coach people regarding their careers. I thought the following would be of interest to you.

Amy Cuddy, a Harvard Business School Psychologist, studies first impressions, she and her colleagues found that we make snap judgments about other people that answer two primary questions:

- Can I trust this person?
- Can I respect this person's capabilities?

Cuddy's research shows that trust is the most important factor. If there's no trust, people actually perceive competence as a negative.

How to Master the Art of the First Impression

Since it only takes seconds for someone to decide if you're trustworthy and competent, and research shows that first impressions are very difficult to change, the pressure that comes with meeting new people is justifiably intense.

If you try to project confidence but haven't first established trust, your efforts will backfire. Cuddy said, "If someone you're trying to influence doesn't trust you, you're not going to get very far; in fact, you might even elicit suspicion, because you come across as manipulative."

Once you recognize the importance of trustworthiness over competence, you can take control of the first impressions you make.

Here are some tips to help you make that happen the next time you meet someone new:

Let the person you're meeting speak first. Let them take the lead in the conversation, and you can always ask good questions to help this along. Taking the floor right away shows dominance, and that won't help you build trust. Trust and warmth are created when people feel understood, and they need to be doing a lot of sharing for that to happen.

Use positive body language. Becoming cognizant of your gestures, expressions, and tone of voice and making certain they're positive will draw people to. Using an enthusiastic tone, uncrossing your arms, maintaining eye contact, and leaning towards the speaker are all forms of positive body language, which can make all the difference.

Put away your phone. It's impossible to build trust and monitor your phone at the same time. Nothing turns people off like a mid-conversation text message or even a quick glance at

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New Haven

Account Manager,
Luxury Showroom
Industrial Distribution,
Waterbury

your phone. When you commit to a conversation, focus all your energy on the conversation. You will find that conversations are more enjoyable and effective when you immerse yourself in them.

Make time for small talk. It might sound trivial, but research shows that starting meetings with just five minutes of small talk gets better results. Many trust builders, such as small talk, can seem a waste of time to people who don't understand their purpose.



Practice active listening. Active listening means concentrating on what the other person is saying, rather than planning what you're going to say next. Asking insightful questions is a great way to illustrate that you're really paying attention. Not only does thinking about what you're going to say next take your attention away from the speaker, hijacking the conversation shows that you think you have something more important to say.

Do your homework. People love it when you know things about them. Not creepy stuff, but simple facts that you took the time to learn from their LinkedIn page or company website. Find out as much as you can about all the people you're meeting, their company, their company's primary challenges, and so on. This demonstrates competence and trustworthiness by highlighting your initiative and responsibility.

Bringing It All Together

It's the little things that make a first impression a good one, and the importance of establishing trust cannot be overstated. Now if someone would just tell this to the politicians!

From Dr Travis Bradberry
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