

First impressions last

How to make a great first impression ...



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How you carry yourself and walk send out major messages about how you feel about yourself and how you literally choose to 'walk through life'. So stand tall.

YOU don't get a second chance to make a first impression, says communication strategist John French of Corporate Intelligence Training.

"It is usually the vital initial impression we make that makes or breaks the relationship that follows," he says.

Whether you are going for an important job interview or selling your ideas, products or services in business, your ability and knowledge on packaging a dynamic and marketable first impression is all-important.

French says: "We need to make sense of the world around us and perceive the different opportunities and threats that present themselves. In the first 15 seconds

of meeting someone, you will have instinctively 'judged' them and decided if you want to engage with them on any given level. The first impression you make will block you or give you permission to proceed to the next level."

Here are 10 Corporate Intelligence Training tips to help you shine the next time you need to make an important first impression in a job interview or sales scenario:

■ Your first impression starts before you open your mouth. It starts the moment the other party sees you. Make sure your non-verbal communication (posture/body language/image and dress) convey the right message about you and your profession.

■ Research shows that 83% of data learnt occurs through the eyes. Visual impact is vital in a first impression. Your choice of clothes and personal grooming send out important messages about your social status, self-discipline, esteem, personal flair and demeanour.

■ How you carry yourself and walk send out major messages about how you feel

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Your handshake is the closest you may connect physically in business. Ensure your handshake is firm and resolute and you are making eye contact and smiling when you do it.

about yourself and how you literally choose to 'walk through life'. So stand tall.

■ Your face is the central focus of attention and there is nothing like a smile to win over the other side. Use your smile to light up the room when you meet someone new. A smiling face and warm welcome sets the tone for your meeting.

■ There is no index of character as sure as the human voice. It holds your entire psychological profile and background and tells people more about you than any other defining factor. Use your voice to create a great first impression and enrol on a vocal development programme if you're not happy with your vocal ability.

■ Your voice creates the all-important first impression on the phone. The phone eliminates your visual image and body language, so it is your tone that conveys 85% of your overall communication message. If your career involves the phone, learn to create and project the correct professional vocal tone.

■ In most professional greetings, your handshake is as important as your business card. It is the closest you may connect physically in business. Ensure your handshake is firm and resolute and you are making eye contact and smiling when you do it.

■ Your 'likeability factor' counts in first impressions. Use your unique personality strengths to make an impact and sell your brand.

■ Preparation is vital before a job interview, meeting, presentation or social engagement. So do your homework beforehand.

■ Your first impression will convey your self-confidence, personality, background and intentions. Ensure that you shine when you meet or greet anyone in business.