

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

How to Stand Out and Make a Great Impression

I have a sign in my office that says: *"I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant!"* It was uttered by former President Richard Nixon,(who was not talking to his wife), but was talking to a nation of people who have developed such short attention spans that making people hear what you really mean has become a daunting task.

Thanks to pagers, e-mail, PDA's, voice mail, text messaging and laptops, we expect instant gratification. We want the home page to load faster, the TV to go on quicker, and the bank transactions completed sooner. After all, if we can broadcast events Live as they happen across the world why shouldn't we expect everything in an instant? But, if we are constantly barraged by interruptions masquerading as communications, how can we expect employees, prospects or customers to hear what we have to say during business presentations, meetings or sales calls?

Perhaps Henry Ford put it best when he said:

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to understand the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as your own."

With all due respect to Mr. Ford, today he might say *"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to make what you say mean something to the other person, to realize it's about them and not about you."*

Today, a century or so past Mr. Ford's hey day, polls show the ability to communicate clearly is the NUMBER ONE key to success for leaders in business, politics and other professions.

So, let's approach this as a ten course dining experience to help you cut through the clutter so your message comes through loud and clear.

1. START WITH A CLEAN PLATE

Forget about what you can't control

There will be always be a difficult customer, a promising prospect who turned you down, a person who stabbed you in the back, or a mistake that could have been prevented. Forget about it! You can't control any of that.

So, when you speak, focus on what you can control which is:

- The words that come out of your mouth
- Your body language and eye contact
- Your attitude
- Understanding what your audience cares about

2. DON'T SERVE THEM ALL AT ONCE

Don't tell them everything

Most people want to tell you everything they know. They want you to know how much they know. They're afraid of leaving something out.

They truly want to educate or help you. But, it's simply too much to digest.

And, you no longer have control over your message. You make 7 points.

They will only remember one or two. So you have left it up to them to decide which points are the most important. Get to the main point first!

For example, census workers spent the past ten years collecting census data. The statistics and volumes of information are endlessly complex, but their message is short and simple: Fill out the form.

3. STUFF IT TILL IT'S FULL

Pack it with Real Life Examples

As a reporter, I shared lots of information, but it's not the information people remember. It's what that information is stuffed with: Stories, analogies, real life examples, powerful numbers, and metaphors. Look for ways to personalize your speeches, presentations, sales pitches and media interviews so people can relate.

4. THINK OF THIS AS A DINNER PARTY

Put yourself in their shoes

Try putting yourself in your audience's shoes. Whether it's a business presentation, or a one on one conversation, become your audience. If you were serving dinner, would you serve what only what like or would you find out what your guests would enjoy so the experience would be a successful one.

5. WET THEIR APPETITE WITH THE FIRST COURSE

First words out of your mouth are most important

Think of a newspaper. What do you read first? If the headline grabs you, then you will probably read on. Communicating to target audiences is no different. You're first words are key because they set the tone, the pace, tell people what you're talking about and give them a reason to keep listening.

6. DON'T MAKE THEM WAIT

Get to the point

Not only do you have to engage people quickly, but you need to make them focus by getting to the key points **quickly!** Don't make listeners wade through a bunch of stuff before they figure out what you're really trying to say.

7. OFFER A LITTLE DESSERT

Short and Sweet

Keep your message short and sweet. Brief, but to the point. Know the saying, less is more? The shorter you keep it, the simpler it is. The simpler it is, the clearer it is. The clearer it is, the easier it is for others to understand.

8. SERVICE WITH A SMILE

You are your message

People want to know that you are fully engaged. So when you talk with someone, don't look at your watch, read your e-mail or appear obviously distracted. Smile. If you want to have presence, you need to be present.

9. EAT LIKE IT'S YOUR LAST MEAL

Be passionate

Enthusiasm is contagious. If you're not enthusiastic how can you expect to excite or inspire anyone else? If you appear bored, they'll be bored. If you're visibly uncomfortable, you'll make them uncomfortable. However, if you look people in the eye, gesture accordingly, and involve your audience, you will keep their interest.

10. TIP GENEROUSLY

People want to be appreciated

Gain support from reporters, audiences, business partners and prospects by making people like you. Think about how you come across to others. Do you do all the talking or do you involve others? Do you give credit when credit is due?

In an age of information overload, it is more important than ever for you to manage your message so what you say is really heard. After all, if you've poured your heart, soul and savings into growing your business, you must have something important to say! But, no one will hear you if you don't have their full attention.

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