



## [DR. SHIRLEY'S CAREER CORNER]

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Reprinted from the March 2007 issue of BIC

# Introductions: A business basic

Introductions are an essential part of business. Handled appropriately and with ease, they are the mark of a polished business professional.

The most important thing to remember about introductions is making them. A person would rather have you tell him that you forgot his name and ask for it, than to stand in a group of people and not be introduced.

The following are a few dos and don'ts of making introductions:

1. Always show deference to clients, senior executives, distinguished guests and high-ranking dignitaries by stating their names first. For example, "Mr. Davis (senior executive), I would like to introduce Ms. Eliot (junior executive)."

2. When introducing members of the opposite sex, use age and rank or degree of distinction as a guide. If the two people are approximately the same age, rank and prominence, the woman's name should be mentioned first. Otherwise, you should adhere to the preceding guideline.

3. If someone has forgotten to introduce you, take the initiative and introduce yourself. Smile, extend your hand and say, "My name is soandso. I don't believe we've met."

4. In general, call a person by his first name only after he has given you permission to do so, for example, "Please call me Shirley." There are, of course, certain informal settings where first names would be appropriate. Let your common sense and knowledge of business protocol be your guide.

5. When possible, always add a little information to go with a name.

That will give people a springboard for conversation. For example, "Ms. Smith, this is Dr. Williams, vice president of marketing." "Ms. Smith is president of XYZ Company."

6. Stand when being introduced. This shows consideration and respect. If standing would be awkward, however, it is permissible to remain seated. Always shake hands and exchange greetings.

7. The handshake is important. It is the usual greeting for both men and women. Handshakes are your first way of connecting with a person. Remember, however, that a limp, moist handshake or on the other hand, a bonecrusher, can slam the door on an enthusiastic response.

8. In our ever changing workplace, interestingly enough, the "hug and cheek kiss" seem to be trying to sneak in. When meeting someone for the first time, please be cautious. Though this may be a growing influence in global circles, always consider the business and social setting in which you are interacting. Usually, you won't go wrong if you stick to the good old fashioned handshake.

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9. When you shake hands, people make an immediate judgment about your character and level of confidence. So, give them a firm, quick grasp and shake. Grasp the other person's hand completely so that the

thumbs are interlocked and the hands are completely within each other. Shake hands from the elbow, not from the shoulder. You're not pumping water. Special note: When a man and woman are being introduced, their hands should come together simultaneously. Gentlemen, times have changed. You do not need to wait for the woman to offer her hand first. Ladies, some men are unaware of this change in etiquette, so be ready to offer you hand.

10. To help you remember a person's name, repeat it as soon as you are introduced, and practice saying the name several times during the conversation.

I would like to conclude this column with a word on name tags. A name tag is a nonverbal form of communication. As most of us are aware, many of our business introductions occur at trade shows, conferences, conventions and meetings. So, whether it is proof of registration at an event or simply identification for you and your company, the name tag has become a frequent element of professional business attire.

The question is, "Where should the name tag be placed?" The answer is, wear it on the upper right portion of your garment. Why? Because when you shake someone's hand, their line of vision travels from your eyes, down your right shoulder to your extended hand. It is far easier to read a name tag when it is in the line of vision.

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