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Top 10 tips for making introductions with confidence

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

Introducing yourself or introducing others is not nearly as complicated as many of us try to make it. The most important thing to remember about introductions is making them. A person would rather have you tell him you forgot his name and ask for it, than to stand in a group of people and not be introduced.

The following are 10 tips for successfully 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.

4. Never refer to yourself as Mr., Mrs., Dr. and so on. Other people give you an honorific. You don't give one to yourself.

5. In general, call a person by his or her first name only after he or she has given you permission to do so. 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.

6. If someone forgets your name, be quick to supply it in order to lessen their embarrassment.

7. When possible, always add a little information to go with a name. That will give people a springboard for conversation.

8. 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.

9. 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, a limp, moist handshake or, on the other hand, a bone-crusher can slam the door on an enthusiastic response. Another thought: in our ever-changing workplace, interestingly enough, the "hug and cheek kiss" seems 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.

10. 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 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 your hand.

I would like to conclude this column with a few words on name tags. A name tag is a nonverbal form of

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communication. As most of us are aware, many of our business introductions occur at trade shows, conferences, conventions and meetings. So, whether the tag is proof of registration at an event or simply identification for you and your company, you will usually be wearing one.

Generally today, lanyards with an attached tag are more commonly used. However, just in case you're given at pin-on or stick-on tag, be sure to 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. Just one more facet of making introductions!

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