

Trade Secrets

First Impressions | 2011



INTRODUCTION

We developed the Dell Trade Secrets campaign to encourage and enable small business professionals to share advice. When we launched the Vostro V130, we asked how to make an effective first impression in business. You responded by contributing over 1,500 insights through Facebook, Twitter and SMB-related websites and blogs.

Some of the most popular tips focused on appearance and how to dress when meeting with people for the first time. Preparation, confidence, smiling and "being yourself" were also prevalent themes along with extending a firm handshake when conducting business. Tips on establishing a successful online and social media presence were stressed throughout the conversation as well.

We hope this collected wisdom will be useful, relevant to your business, and perhaps even amusing. As we begin phase 2 of our Trade Secrets campaign, we will continue to provide products, services and solutions to help small businesses succeed. Thank you for sharing your expertise with each other and with us.

CONTENTS

1. PREPARATION & RESEARCH	pg. 4
2. APPEARANCE	pg. 6
3. INTRODUCTIONS & HANDSHAKES	pg. 8
4. INITIATING DIALOGUE	pg. 10
5. ADDING VALUE	pg. 12
6. BEING YOURSELF	pg. 14
7. UNIQUENESS	pg. 16
8. VIRTUAL MEETINGS	pg. 18
9. ADDITIONAL TIPS	pg. 20
10. ADVICE IN 140 CHARACTERS OR LESS	pg. 22
11. ADVICE FROM THE SMB EXPERTS	pg. 24

1.

PREPARATION & RESEARCH

PREPARATION & RESEARCH

“DO YOUR HOMEWORK”

A little known but highly effective source for academic research is Google Scholar. If you come to the table by adding value to their company, how much better are you suited for what follows? Being conversant in some highly relevant applied research for their sector puts you in a position of power.

-Robert Rippee

Use Gist or some other platform to know what they are saying online and what issues are relevant to them. If you can make meaningful connections in your conversation with topics that are of immediate interest to that person, the connection itself is stronger.

-Christopher McDemus

Create an internal picture that these people like me and want to do business with me. Then, step in it and live it!

-Todd Stofka

Read a company's financial reports. They're really full of great info on the business, where the company is heading, where they're located, acquisitions, challenges and more. Lots of great conversation starters are in between all of the numbers!

-Carol Margolis

2.

APPEARANCE

APPEARANCE

"DRESS THE PART"

Dressing well—not expensively—is the best way to make a solid first impression. People notice if your clothes fit, are neat, clean and pressed. They notice if your shoes are shined.

-Bud Bilanich

Making a great first impression is not an accident, but the result of planning and intentional action. Know your best colors and what looks good on you; incorporate your personality in accents and accessories, and then refuse to hide in the background.

-Dianne Daniels

Interior designers and ad execs know colors evoke distinct emotions. This concept can be applied to attire. Red incites conflict and competition; wear it with caution. If you want to stand out without creating arguments, purple is a good alternative, as it evokes respect and loyalty. Blue is soothing, so wear it in stressful situations. Black makes you seem aloof and judgmental, while gray and brown make you appear friendly. Color sets the tone for the meeting, so choose wisely!

-Sarah Shah

3.

INTRODUCTIONS &
HANDSHAKES

INTRODUCTIONS & HANDSHAKES

"HELLO, MY NAME IS..."

Learn how to confidently tell others who you are and what you do. And keep it simple: I am a [blank-your business] that works with/helps/teaches [blank-target market] how to [blank - identify challenges] so that they can [blank - results]. Practice often.

-Katy Tafoya

If someone introduces himself as "Robert", that does not give you permission to call the person "Rob." People are sensitive about their names & using nicknames they may dislike could permanently damage your first impression. Robert is Robert unless he says otherwise!

-Edward Leigh

Say the name of the person you are being introduced to twice in the first minute. This way, you will remember it and everyone likes to hear their name being said.

-Leslie Jacobs

The most beautiful word in the English language to everyone is hearing their own name! You must use a person's name with sincerity and pronounce it correctly! PLEASE take the time to learn how to say it right.

-Vicki Donlan

Positive first impressions are made by eye contact, speaking your name slowly & clearly & shaking hands with a firm gender neutral grasp. A proper handshake begins by extending your hand, fingers spread & thumb up at 12 o'clock. Slide your hand forward & let your fingers pass theirs for a palm to palm handshake.

-Frank J. Carillo

A good handshake will make someone feel appreciated and connected to you. A bad handshake will set you back an hour in rapport building. Learn to mirror their handshake and customize it to the person, culture & situation.

-Kurt Mortensen

4.

INITIATING DIALOGUE

INITIATING DIALOGUE

“ASK QUESTIONS & LISTEN”

The best way to make a great impression is to ‘fish’. Basically, keep the other person talking; ask interesting open-ended questions that help you learn about that person. Simply ask good questions and become a great listener!

-Linda Edgecombe

Ask a question that 1) sparks their imagination and 2) showcases your biggest benefit.

-Rosey Dow

My grandfather once told me that every man was considered wise—until he opened his mouth. The best first impression that I can make with a new client is to listen carefully. I take time to consider what the client is asking before I speak out. I practice careful questioning; listening for both the content and emotion in the answer given.

-Bonnie D. Hall

5.

ADDING VALUE

ADDING VALUE

“GO ABOVE AND BEYOND”

Throw some free tips out there during your conversation. Not just any tips either, ones that are specific to who you are talking to. It is a casual way to have them garner interest in you, without formally trying to “sell them”.

-Mike Saxton

When first meeting someone, introduce yourself and then listen carefully to what their needs might be. Don't be shy about asking how you can help or what services or individuals they would value being introduced to. If there's a resource or a connection you could recommend, tell them about it and why you think it's a good fit for them. Then offer to make the introduction and make sure to follow up too.

-Sue Clement

6.

BEING YOURSELF

BEING YOURSELF

“LET YOUR PERSONALITY SHINE THROUGH”

Treat the secretary, janitor and interns just as well as you treat the CEO.

-Jeremy Streich

The best way to make a great impression in business is to make a good impression personally. That means eliciting laughs. People love to laugh and showcasing quick wit is a great way to establish a great rapport with someone. Channel your inner comic. But be sure to relinquish the spotlight when it's appropriate

-Elura Nanos

When you smile at people, what do they do? They smile back. Smiling shows confidence, sincerity, and approachability. And it doesn't cost a thing.

-Jessica Selasky

I always go into new work situations like I have nothing to lose—because I don't. When I have the “I can't fail” mentality in the back of my mind, it helps me feel confident about who I am and what I'm doing, and that air of confidence (not arrogance) comes out in the interaction.

-Nate St. Pierre

Many people are aware of the need to ask lots of questions, listen carefully and pay attention; but how many are aware of the importance of being able to confidently talk about themselves? While placing the other party at the center of the conversation is important, you do need to be able to present yourself in a compelling manner. Perfect your elevator pitch in advance of a meeting or social event and don't be afraid to sell yourself.

-Sarah Moore

Don't be afraid of your knowledge. Remember, no one wants to do business with someone who isn't confident in their own abilities. That doesn't mean be arrogant, but if you know your subject then don't be afraid to let that knowledge show.

-Simon Salt

7.

UNIQUENESS

UNIQUENESS

“DARE TO BE DIFFERENT”

Here's the process:

1. Make sure you have a qualified prospect.
2. Get your mother to bake tasty apple pies.
3. Deliver a warm pie to the prospect's reception area.
4. Message on business card: “Dear Mr. Smith. Our clients get a bigger piece of the pie. I'll call tomorrow to arrange a meeting to discuss how. In the mean time, please enjoy the pie. My mother baked it.”

-Wayne Vanwyck

When I meet someone, I hand them a red clown nose. I then proceed to teach them how to use it for their well-being. I tell them to put it on whenever they are stressed or angry, because you cannot remain mad with a clown nose on. Use it when stuck in traffic or running late. Put one on when on the phone with a cranky person. By sharing a laugh together and giving them useful tools, I become “memorable”.

-Nancy Weil

8.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

“HOW TO CONNECT ONLINE”

Frequently, our first impression is done through email, instead of face to face. Thus, avoid being too relaxed in an email introduction. Initially, treat your email like a letter, giving your writing style a conversational tone. Have a greeting, a body and a closing, until you get more comfortable with the person. Avoid text message lingo like emoticons and abbreviations. All of this tells the person that you took a little more time to write and that they are worth it.

-Constance Hoffman

Keeping your online appeal up-to-date is important today, since your first impression may be on the internet. Whether via your website or your LinkedIn profile, make sure that you or your brand are portrayed professionally. If you don't have a web presence, create one. Many people may search for information about you or your company, so make sure you have positive things to show.

-Shai Atanelov

Especially in today's environment, where most of our conversations occur online, you have to be careful with the words you use. They don't have the benefit of talking to you face to face, so they can't see your expressions or body language.

-Robert D. DaVia

Make your website a favorite: professional, simple to navigate, free of misspellings and grammatical errors, attractive not flashy, communicates authentically what you do and how you help solve their problem, provides an easy means to keep in touch and invites visitors to enter an ongoing relationship with a free gift of value.

-Zenobia Garrison

9.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

ADDITIONAL TIPS

As an expat, know the basic greetings in that person's language and even more important, know and understand their business culture.

-John Falchetto

Memorize several business quotes and apply them to virtually any situation or question. To illustrate, "Speed, simplicity, self-confidence"—the Jack Welch mantra—will fit a wide array of situations.

-Dr. Marlene Caroselli

Your "vocal image" on the phone and in person can make or break your career opportunities. Golden tones make a dramatic first impression. If your voice is confident, clear and concise, you will be perceived as such. You can't separate your voice from the rest of your body, so breathe deeply, stay hydrated and smile!

-Linda Shields

It's important to be present in all dimensions—physically, mentally, and emotionally when you first meet. We often try to multi-task when we should single thread. When expecting a call, blank your screen or shut off the PC. Focus on the caller when you answer. When meeting in person, turn off your ringer, or turn off the phone entirely. Vibrating phones are a mental distraction.

-Faith Fuqua-Purvis

Whenever you are engaged in a business building conversation, always set a clear and focused next step appointment by the end of the call and then, make sure you are on time for that next appointment and every follow up activity thereafter.

-Bill Gluth

Spend about 80% of the time illustrating an understanding of the key drivers of their business. To assure that the flow of the dialog is conversational and natural, couch it in a current event that is relevant to their company/industry. The other 20% is spent speaking about you/your business after they ask you, because now they believe you may add value to them.

-Mitch Pisik

10.

ADVICE IN 140
CHARACTERS OR LESS

ADVICE IN 140 CHARACTERS OR LESS



My tip is to be professional, but memorable. Push the boundaries to make you more memorable to the client in the future.

@Fire_Eater64

Don't forget to turn off IM and email during those demos!

@tjcairns

Make an impressive 1st impression by being an unsolicited answer to a need. Value discovery is memorable.

@COMMAKAZI

Curate, facilitate but don't try and control people.

@binoyxj

First impression advice: Be aware anyone could be someone you meet later in a business setting and treat people well.

@CaySedai

Choose Your First Twelve Words Carefully.

@craighton

Be confident but not so confident that it seems as if you already own the place.

@thehatch

To make a good impression as a web developer, meet your prospect with a custom-built iPad app that streamlines your meeting.

@_genare

Good first impression must be good 2 ways: breakthrough and true to who you are.

@ADVERTGIRL

If your website looks like it was made in 2002 you aren't going to make a good first impression with new clients.

@generalroshambo

11.

ADVICE FROM THE SMB EXPERTS

We'd like to thank the following SMB experts for participating in our Trade Secrets campaign. Each specializes in providing guidance to small business professionals in areas such as social media, entrepreneurship, branding and marketing. We encourage you to contact them through the provided links to find out how they can help you grow your business.

ADVICE FROM THE SMB EXPERTS

Give them an Answer, not a solution. Answer the question they put before you with the answer to their question and not an answer that fits a solution which you can sell them. Understand how that answer fits into the whole picture and not the problem they are presenting you with.

-Nicholas Butler | www.loudmouthman.com

Create a great first impression on your social networking profile using a professional photo/avatar.

-Krishna De | www.krishnade.com

One of my #tradesecrets is having my pic on my business card. People associate me w/card when they get back from a meeting.

-Howard Greenstein | www.howardgreenstein.com

When you're discussing setting up virtual meetings with colleagues or customers, remember that phrases like "tomorrow morning at 10am" or "next Tuesday afternoon at 3" may not be that for them if they're in different time zones to yours. Avoid confusion and make yourself look professional by being specific and clear, e.g., "Monday Jan 24 at 2:00pm GMT."

-Neville Hobson | www.nevillehobson.com

Talk in plain English. Say what you see. Be as honest as you dare. Enjoy yourself. Reference ABBA whenever possible.

-Chris Lake | www.econsultancy.com

It might sound trite, but people do business with people. If you're interested and engage with others, it's possible to tell from the outset and the relationship will likely flourish.

-Sam Michel | www.chinwag.com

SMB EXPERTS

Talk less and listen more. Be interested more than interesting.

-Barry Moltz | www.barrymoltz.com

Google them before the meeting. This way you will have relevant things to bring up that hit a chord regarding achievements or recent experiences. Also, pop over to <http://google.com/news> and pick out a few key stories to bring up saying, “Did you hear about?”

-Adria Richards | www.butyoureagirl.com

The best way to create a first impression is with authentic confidence. You attract what you put out there and if you don't believe in the value you provide, nobody else will either. Your confidence has to be authentic too fake and phony are easily noted and will have the opposite effect of what you are trying to achieve.

-Carol Roth | www.carolroth.com

Take the meeting. You never know if it's going to be a winner or dud, but I've found a meeting of minds becomes a path to possibility.

-Rich Sloan | www.startupnation.com

Think about others, in addition to yourself, and share knowledge with everyone around you. Be active in the social media space and consistently provide great value.

-Tamar Weinberg | www.techipedia.com