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Spotlight on Business

Good first impressions - communicating, not just talking

We all know the power of first impressions. How people perceive us during the first few seconds of an encounter has a major influence on whether they will trust us, be attracted to us, or want to do business with us. To create a positive first impression, we need to know how to connect immediately with others regardless of their age, gender, ethnic background, mood, or the situation.

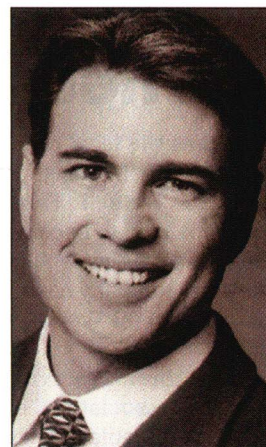
Let's begin by testing your "first impression awareness." What would you think of the waiter in the following situation? You're having a business lunch with a potential client. She's telling you about what she doesn't like about her current supplier. You're thinking, "This stuff is gold - please keep talking." Suddenly, the waiter comes in and starts his canned speech, "My name's Mike, I'll be your waiter. And

how are you today? Today's specials are..."

Chances are, your first impression of the waiter would be negative. In fact, that waiter's speech is a great example of what not to do when meeting someone for the first time. Ironically, he was probably doing just what he was told to do.

Unfortunately, most managers don't provide competent training for their employees on how to establish rapport. Huge mistake - as we see in the waiter example. Instead, employees are given a script to read. Franchise operations love scripts. They think that this "systematic" approach to dealing with customers is their greatest strength - which is true. But it's also their greatest weakness.

The problem with the canned script approach is that the customer recognizes a script, senses that the employee has no genuine feeling or empathy with what the



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customer really needs, and therefore does not trust (or in the case of our wait-

er) even like the employee.

Instead of canned speeches, use a thirty second technique that generates trust, feelings of empathy, and makes people want to do business with you. Unfortunately, there's been a lot of misleading information out there about this method. Let's get the real story about how and why you can get such phenomenal results when you properly use a technique known as mirroring.

The Mirroring Technique

Mirroring is based on the assumption that we tend to feel comfortable with people who communicate non verbally the way we do. In other words, we are drawn to people when their body language (gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, eye contact, dress, and so on) is similar to ours.

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