

Making a Great First Impression by Darren Hardy

People judge you.

That's a fact, not a threat.

In 7 seconds someone has made a decision about you.

They do it unconsciously, whether they want to or not and whether you like it or not.

Thus you can say based on how you show up that within 7 seconds you've lost the sale, connection, date, investment, client or opportunity.

Done, game over.

And once that first impression is made it takes a very long time to change it, if ever.

First off, a good first impression starts on the inside, not outside.

You cannot fake a good first impression.

People are (intuitively) smarter than that.

Here's how it works:

We are equipped with these mirror neurons that unconsciously look for, well, its mirror, someone just like itself. While there are undoubtedly visual cues, it is more of a "feeling" function, an intuitiveness.

For instance, I have met other impeccably dressed people who I have been repelled by. It wasn't how they showed up on the outside that repelled me, it was more interpersonal. Ultimately, this is how "birds of a feather" end up flocking together.

I always find it interesting when I observe a room full of people who don't know each other. After they mill about for a while, without fail, by the end of the day the "like birds" will have found each other and flocked. It's high school all over again: the jocks, the nerds, the Goths, the band and the stoners all find each other. While the "flocks" can also look alike, it is their shared values and attitude that brought them together. The visual cues just helped them sort faster. To put a spin on a Jim Rohn quote, "A good first impression is not something you pursue, it's something you attract by the person you are."

Point No. 1: Become an attractive person—from the inside out.

Here's how:

Who do you want to make a good first impression with? What caliber and type of person?

1. Write a long list of their attributes. These are attributes of character, attitude, mindset and philosophy.

Make a long list and then boil it down to a half-dozen.

2. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 on each of those half-dozen attributes. Now wherever you are short you now have your personal development plan to improve your first impression to your intended flock.

3. Write out all the observations you make about your desired flock. How they walk, talk, carry themselves, shake hands and interact with others. How they dress, what they talk about and care about. Start adopting these behavioral and visual cues.

Point No. 2: Stop faking it.

Be real, be transparent, be authentic and be yourself... hopefully your improved self after working on point No. 1.

Too often people spend incredible amounts of energy trying to project themselves as something they're not. Most of their conversation is spent trying to impress and they think they have everyone snookered.

Here is the reality: no one is fooled.

People are always transparent... even when they think they aren't.

I'm sure you meet people all the time who say all the right things, look the part, but you just know, in your gut, even if you can't put your intellectual finger on it, that they are full of hooey.

We are all intuitive and sensitive beings. We can feel the truth. We can sense authenticity and we can sense when it isn't present. Projecting pretense only pushes people away from you—quickly and regularly.

Your real self—the one that isn't king of the hill, has fears, is concerned about family and has a genuine passion for a product, service or helping other people succeed—is far more attractive to people than anything else.

I think the era of “fake it till you make it” of the '80s and '90s has passed. People are smarter today and more than ever are looking for authenticity.

Now let me be clear, no matter where you are in your business, in your financial success or in life, I DO want you to start dressing the part and walking the walk. I want you to start representing your elevated self. I want those things to be demonstrations of your new commitment to be better, show up better and live better. I'm talking about not fibbing on the truth.

Point No. 3: Treat people... like people.

I remember a mentor of mine when I was in real estate corrected me on this. I was having a discussion and I showed him my “Hit List” of target prospects. He said, “Hit List? Who wants to be your next HIT?! These are real people, real families, who will be going through one of the most emotional transactions of their life, involving the most valuable asset they own—their home. Not until this list is considered the list of those families whom you will help, protect and fight for next, will they be interested in what you have to say.” That was great advice. It is not just semantics; it is an entirely different philosophy, mindset and emotional approach to every conversation and human interaction.

Don't treat people like targets, capital, pawns or even prospects or just customers. Treat people like people... people with real desires, fears, hopes, wishes, worries, dreams and ambitions... just like you.

Point No. 4: Take a sincere interest in other people.

The best way to do this is to talk less and listen more. Make fewer statements, ask more questions.

Everyone wants to work on their script: What do I say? Instead, it's better to work on your questions. What questions will draw people out so they talk about their real values, interests, hopes and desires. Once others express what they really want, it's much easier to match your potential solution to their real and personally expressed needs.

Point No. 5: Always be positive.

Be the one who brightens a room and every conversation you enter. It is easy to pile on to a complaint fest or add to the rousing gossip, but you will actually be perceived better by others if you don't join them in that talk.

I am always supremely impressed when I witness someone turn down the opportunity to talk negatively about someone else, even if it would have been only to agree with the one speaking or join the company of misery talk.

Let your reputation and brand become those of positivity, grace and class. These rare qualities are what people look for in others. Be the standout.

Point No. 6: Recognize others.

Give people honest and sincere appreciation. Take a page from Catherine the Great's book: “Praise loudly, blame softly.” Catch people doing things right and acknowledge them. Congratulate others on their accomplishments; celebrate others' victories. Find at least a dozen ways to compliment, congratulate or

appreciate someone else's work, contribution or successes every day.

Be so busy giving other people recognition that you don't need any yourself. Do that and people will swarm to you like bees to honey.

Point No. 7: Give.

Most people are only after getting... and they wonder why they don't. Look for ways to contribute, provide, help, offer and assist. This goes back to the golden rule of relationships that Zig Ziglar taught us, "You can have everything in life that you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want."

Give first, give often and give last. Give, give and give.

I see my relationships as bank accounts (psychologically, not emotionally); the more I deposit the more valuable I am to that person and the more I have on account with them. There might come a time when I need to make a small withdrawal, but I always want to be on the positive side of the ledger. My objective is to create a great surplus of wealth in as many accounts (or people) as possible by depositing as much as I can as often as I can.

This is how I use social media and my blog. All I want to do is give value, distribute value and contribute value, not to sell, promote or "get." I use those platforms to help, serve, give and contribute. Each tweet, each posting on Facebook, each article on this blog, is completely focused on providing ideas, insights and resources to help people become more successful. As a result, I think, if the numbers and comments you leave me don't lie, I am perceived to be a very valuable relationship for tens of thousands of people. Very rarely do I recommend something I own or benefit from, and if I do it's because I know it will serve the subject we are discussing and the other person's goals or objectives.

That is what I recommend you do—seek to help, give, assist, empower and support. Build a reputation as one who wants to give and help others... and as Zig promises, in return you will GET everything you want in life.