The Art of Professional Connections:
Seven Steps to Impressive Greetings and Confident Interactions

Overview of the Book

A professional connection is a connection that is made with the utmost adherence to business etiquette, protocol, and ethics. It is a behavior that engages in building relationships with great competence, exudes the highest standards, exemplifies professional presence, and commands business-building people skills. The need for strong people skills is on the rise! Employers are looking for people who will help them enhance their one-on-one interactions with clients, management, and peers.

This book is a guide to developing these interpersonal skills—the ability to establish and manage relationships—which are needed to get hired or to advance in a competitive business environment. It focuses particularly on the realm of meeting, greeting, and interacting with people in a professional and confidence-inspiring manner.

*Communication is about talking, listening, and sharing.*

—Lyn St. James, author of *Lyn St. James: An Incredible Journey*

The ability to connect with others in any venue is a critical business skill. Dynamic communication starts with the greeting and progresses throughout the entire interaction. To walk into a room and make yourself known, to show confidence as you engage in conversation with a wide range of people, and to put others at ease are all sought-after capabilities. It is this kind of social intelligence that identifies individuals with above-average interpersonal skills and determines who will make long-lasting business connections.

The objectives of this book are . . .

1. To help you develop communication skills that start with your first impression;
2. To show you how to identify elements of an individual’s personal presentation;
3. To help you master the components of an impressive greeting and confident interaction;
4. To give you the skill sets that take you from an interview or business event to high-profile individual meetings; and
5. To identify the conversation cues that will help you to close a conversation in an impressive way and plan your follow-up.

When making a major purchase, a smart consumer researches the product or service in question. Yet when attending an event, meeting, or activity, too often a hurried schedule or limited time frame may cause you to bypass the very important step of preparing for the communication that will occur. Our seven-step process will ensure the successful exchange that leads to a ROI (return on investment) on your time and money.

**Your First Impression Communication**

Nothing happens until you communicate! Communication—the act of conveying information, exchanging ideas, and formulating opinions—comes in three forms: visual, verbal, and written. Communication is irreversible. That means it happens, and then it moves on. Therefore, making your opening communication impressive and positive is a major key to your overall effectiveness.

The initial communication you make with another person transitions into the connection you develop with that person over time. The way you project yourself, even before you verbally greet the other person, creates a memorable first impression. Your visual presence, then, sets the stage for this interaction, and it comes in two forms: your appearance and your body language.

Furthermore, there are challenges. In a society consumed with individualism and informality, we send many mixed signals regarding first impressions and the appropriate levels of formality. Too many people not only do not care, but they are also not as concerned with the importance of maintaining a positive impression as were previous generations. However, in the business arena, you must care. It is how business succeeds and careers remain intact.
If you want to be remembered, make your first impression count! It represents a large part of your professional identity and is always the strongest impression you can make. These impressions typically happen in the first thirty seconds.

**Greetings Determine the Interaction**

A greeting is an acknowledgment of someone else’s presence. For some this is automatic and for others it is too often neglected. Yet, when people fail to greet, the end result is a negative assumption or hurt feelings that result in misunderstandings. In business, a confident, direct greeting is the professional thing to do. In social settings, it is the courteous thing to do. In all interactions, it is the right thing to do.

The greeting is oftentimes your first form of face-to-face communication. If you have communicated with someone by phone or in writing prior to the actual meeting, the in-person greeting should validate the anticipated impression. The goal is to be perceived as self-confident and secure in one’s identity instead of insecure or arrogant. Let your initial greeting sell your confidence and your professionalism.

If your greeting takes place in an office, begin by eliminating barriers. For example, avoid greeting anyone from behind a desk. This creates a barrier. The greeting (and the departure or farewell) should take place in front of the desk or in an open area. This creates a warmer, more open and friendly feeling.

Realize that every greeting leads to a farewell. Furthermore, how things end make a greater impression on people than how they begin. Make your greeting memorable from beginning to end. This process solidifies the initial interaction and will carry you through the development of the relationship.

**The Seven-Step Process**

Seven steps will help you perfect this all-important greeting and interaction. Each step is designed to meet your immediate needs and to serve as a guide for unexpected or unique
situations as they arise. Together, the steps provide a comprehensive resource.

**Step #1** demonstrates how you can make a powerful statement with your visual presence, and feel self-assured in the process.

**Step #2** identifies the various types of introductions and offers a formula for introducing individuals of rank flawlessly.

**Step #3** offers techniques to remember and repeat names confidently and accurately.

**Step #4** explains the messages different types of handshakes deliver and offers tips on how to make sure that your handshake sends the intended message.

**Step #5** focuses on how small talk can evolve into a meaningful discussion and offers tips on how to get beyond conversation dilemmas.

**Step #6** shares guidelines for creating your business card and demonstrates the protocol of a proper business card exchange.

**Step #7** discusses the importance of making a memorable departure and effective follow-up.

These seven steps define your personal presentation. Consider them a toolbox that will go with you everywhere in your personal and professional life. Formulas or memory joggers are included to make it all work.

The steps do overlap, so you will encounter some repetitive information. Furthermore, it is difficult to separate the elements of an exchange in real life. The purpose of breaking them down is to help you understand the important role that each step plays, from greeting to departure to follow-up.

*Champions work on the basics and doing the little things well.*

—Harry Huffman, Professional Dancer and Speaker
At the close of this book, you will be able to proceed from Step #1 to Step #7 confidently, professionally, and with ease.