

The Business Connector

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What's In A Name?

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We are all brought into this world in basically the same way, and when we are born, we are all given three things: A welcoming spank, a birth certificate and a name.

Regarding the third, for some of us our parents named us via a last-minute, heartfelt decision based on their mood or current events. For others, our parents deliberated for months to derive the perfect name. And for some, our names had been set for literally generations in advance.

Whatever the case, naming us was something our parents did not take lightly. They knew at that time that our official moniker – whether Fred, Jim, or Sally – was something we would carry with us for the rest of our lives.

Although there may have been times early in life where we are not entirely comfortable with our name or even wished it had been something else, for the most part our name has been and is a large part of who we are. We take pride in it. We long to have people know us by it. We endeavor to have it both spelled right and pronounced correctly.

In summary, our name is important to us. If it is important to us, then someone else's is just as important to them. And just like Tide signifies a particular type of laundry soap, our name serves to brand us.

“Remember that a person's name is to him or her the sweetest and most important sound in any language,”

remarks Dale Carnegie in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Knowing this, is not one of the best compliments we can bestow upon a new contact to remember his or her name?

This indicates to them that we value the connection with them and that they have made a sufficient impression on us. In short, this simple act makes them feel important, which serves to endear them to us, building the relationship.

Like anything, however, some of us are better at remembering names. For some, remembering names comes easy, almost like a clairvoyant gift. Others of us are not so lucky.

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For those of us not blessed with a knack for remembering names, there are two options. Our first option is to resolve that improving this skill of name memorization is simply not possible, which certainly limits our networking long term. Or, two, understand that our memorization skills can be sharpened.

For those of us committed to improvement, library and bookstore shelves are lined with books and articles proposing options to help. In fact, there are seemingly as many proposed methods of remembering as there are names.

Which one should we choose? Whichever one works best for us. No one is necessarily better or worse than another. Each works well for some and not so good for others. Our decision as to what works for us is as personal as our name itself.

Whether we would consider ourselves a master at remembering names or currently aspiring to that status, the reality is that at one time or another, our memory will fail us. It is at this frustrating and often embarrassing moment that we clearly recognize the face, but cannot place the name for whatever reason.

At this moment, although we have several options, there is only one proper course of action. Simply “fess up.” Avoiding the person does nothing to build the relationship. Faking our way through a conversation will not correct the problem. At best this option can serve to make us look foolish. At worst, we destroy our credibility.

In admitting our memory lapse, we can employ any excuse we would like, such as age, a busy week or temporary confusion. By simply acknowledging our temporary forgetfulness, we work to correct the problem.

More importantly, however, we have taken the opportunity to indicate to the person that their name is in fact important. And with this opportunity, even though we have forgotten their name, we have served to further build the relationship. ▼

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