

Small Business Center at Forsyth Tech

“Increasing Business Success”



If you are an entrepreneurial thinker and would like more information about starting or expanding a business, contact the Forsyth Tech Small Business Center for free information, including small business seminars and one-on-one counseling.

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Magic Moments

By Zithobile Nxumalo

I'm a self-professed communication enthusiast. A lover of words, a surveyor of actions, and a believer in the magic of both. We all know that businesses are built on relationships. And relationships are cultivated and sustained by our communication. If forced to narrow the lessons down to 3 essentials, here's what they would be:

1. Be Courteous

There's a myth floating around that we can somehow see a person's level of influence with the naked eye. As a result, we may encounter someone, glance at them momentarily, gauging their worth based on what they may or may not be wearing. We, then, make a quick (often inaccurate) decision about whether or not to extend our courtesies to them.

This faulty external assessment is a huge mistake. Not everyone wears influence (or lack thereof) on their person. Yes, there's something to be said for discernment, insight, and “gut feelings” about folks. But, how many times have you encountered someone, only to find out later that you were *completely* wrong about them?

As a business owner or a career builder, courtesy and kindness are small characteristics that have the potential to yield massive results. In a moment's encounter, you have the choice to be courteous with a smile and a “hello,” or to quickly look away, avoiding the acknowledgement of another. Effective communication would dictate a choice toward the former.

It is vital to both our business and personal lives to extend courtesy in each moment because every human, regardless of their net worth (perceived or real) is deserving of it.

2. Be Prepared

You need an elevator speech. The term “elevator speech” refers to the few sentences you might say in the event that you find yourself riding in an elevator with a person who has the power or influence to carry you to the next level of your career or business. The idea is simple: If you entered the elevator on the first floor and noticed that it was occupied by “Mr. Big,” or whomever held the keys to your windfall-of-choice, what would you say?

Many of us would choose to ride in silence, blubbering unintelligible sentence fragments in our own heads, only to kick ourselves once he or she walked themselves out on the 8th floor. Business minds must be prepared to seize opportunities. Say *something*. Be ready.

An effective “elevator speech” has 3 main components: 1) a greeting, 2) an introduction, and 3) a request. It might sound something like this:

“Mr. Big? It’s a pleasure meeting you. My name is Ready Freddy, and I really admire the work you’ve done in (insert field). I’d appreciate the opportunity to set up a meeting with you to (get some advice/talk about possible partnership/pick your brain). Do you have a card I can take with me?”

In most cases, whomever it is will at least be willing to pass along their contact information or refer you to their assistant... giving you the opportunity to *actually* follow up with a phone call or an e-mail.

There’s a delicate balance, however. You want to be direct enough to be taken seriously, but not so aggressive that your audience can’t wait for their floor’s arrival so they can bolt out the door.

If they decline? No problem. Here’s where the 3rd lesson comes in:

1. Be Resilient

Sometimes an encounter can be a bit of a flop. Maybe you tried to introduce yourself and he or she interrupted your eloquence with an answered phone call. Or maybe they chose *not* to practice lesson one, missing their own opportunity to be courteous to you.

There’s no room for embarrassment. If you allow that feeling to settle in, it can dominate your thoughts and ruin your whole day. Or, God forbid, an entire season of life.

So, mind the magic of each moment. Be kind, be prepared, and be resilient. Business as usual.

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