

# 30 Business “No No’s” (6)

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## It’s a “No No” to make a bad impression with influential people!

**When you go out to dinner with an influential person, mind your manners:** Don't gobble your food, don't talk with your mouth full. And don't stuff yourself; bridle your appetite. Solomon<sup>1</sup>

When you sit to dine with a ruler, **note well what is before you**, and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony. Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive. Solomon<sup>2</sup>

## Making a great first impression!

*"You never get a second chance to make a first impression"*<sup>3</sup> Unknown

### Your manners are insight into your character!

At our first ever Maxim for Leaders lunch hosted by the Riverview Chamber, and sponsored by Panda Express the principle of making a good first impression was on display. One of my friends came dressed in a full suit. I actually dressed in a sports jacket, pants, and a brightly colored shirt. The reason for so many well dressed people is the power of a first impression. As I have been reading on the importance of a first impression I discovered that it only takes us thirty seconds to decide what we believe about someone. It is unfortunate that we make such snap decisions but from what I have been reading our first impressions are generally trustworthy.

Solomon's wise advice to us is that we "mind our manners." I remember sitting at the table with my parents and being instructed on how to eat in a way that wasn't embarrassing. We had to hold our forks a certain way. We couldn't talk with food in our mouths. We were required to ask for the food that we wished to be passed to us. We weren't allowed to take more than we could eat. We had to chew our food without smacking our lips. Over and over we were corrected on our table demeanor.

Your manners are an insight into your soul. A person who eats like an animal is likely more aggressive. A person who exercises self control in the area of his appetite will likely exercise self control in other areas of his life. I believe it was the habit of officials to watch how people ate to determine a person's character. We should take "note" of "what is before" us. A meeting with an influential person is nothing more than their opportunity to assess where your character is.

### Some simple steps to a great first impression!

Here are some simple steps you can take to make a great first impression. **Stand up** when you meet someone for the first time. I like to greet people standing if I can. It is just something that you are taught in seminary. **Make eye contact and smile.** It is important to be friendly and to look the other person in the eye while smiling. A smile can help put the other person at ease. **Introduce yourself** briefly with your full name and title when appropriate. **Shake their hand firmly.** I don't think this has ever changed. A firm handshake is essential to show strength and confidence. **Use proper titles and last names.** You should never speak to an authority such as your boss, a prospective client, or an influential person by their first name unless you are given permission. **Use self depreciating humor to lighten the mood.** If you can make a person laugh it is a huge plus and makes you easy to remember. It also lightens the uncomfortable feelings that come with first time meetings. (Blog **10 Steps for a Great First Impression** by Dallas Teague-Snider)

*Your goal within the first few minutes of meeting other people is to make them feel comfortable and to put them at ease so they will want to do business with you. When you are confident of the rules for those critical initial encounters, you will have a solid start for long-term profitable relationships.*<sup>4</sup>

## Don't miss a great opportunity to meet with a person of influence!

*I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one. ~Mark Twain*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MSG; Proverbs 23:1-3

<sup>2</sup> NIV; Proverbs 23:1-3

<sup>3</sup> [http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/first\\_impressions/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/first_impressions/) April 2, 2009; 11:33AM

<sup>4</sup> <http://makeyourbestimpression.blogspot.com/2008/06/10-steps-for-great-first-impression.html/> April 2, 2009; 1:30 PM

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.quoteagarden.com/opportunities.html/> April 2, 2009; 1:50 PM

You should be seeking out meetings with influential people as **opportunities to learn and build relationships**. Pursue building a relationship with the influential people in your community. Influence is essential to doing great business. Build relationships with up and coming executives and managers in your community. I have discovered that most people who are very good leaders are also great learners. The door was always open to me if I want to ask a question or to run something by a person who was a leader. Influential people love to be around people who want to learn and desire to be better leaders. Pursue these relationships as opportunities to learn and build relationships.

When you are meeting with an influential person **be mindful of their time**. Come prepared with a question or clear idea for the purpose of the meeting. Everybody hates time wasters. You should also understand that you need their assistance more than they need your assistance. That is why it is a great opportunity for you. Meeting with you may not be such a great opportunity to them. A clear understanding of the purpose of your meeting will help move the meeting along. If you waste an influential persons time you will likely never get their audience again.

When I was coaching basketball we were given the opportunity to take our team to a Rick Pitino coaching clinic. Coach Pitino was then the University of Kentucky men's basketball coach. We took the opportunity and I got to learn from one of the best on how to run a pressing offense and defense. I don't think he remembers me but the opportunity to be a part of the clinic was a great chance to learn from a great basketball mind. It was also an opportunity to watch a great coach run a camp. His demeanor, and the way he took charge were as important as what he was saying. I likely missed my opportunity to make great first impression, but as you can tell Coach Pitino did not. This is why Solomon tells us **to "consider what is before us."** When you get the chance to meet with a person of influence it is a great opportunity, so, **don't miss it**.

## **It's a "No No" to make a bad impression with influential people!**

### **Round Table:**

Who are the influential people you are seeking out?

Who is the most influential person you have met? What was the result of your meeting?

How important are manners in meetings? What is inappropriate behavior for a business meeting?

How important is your first impression to a potential client?

