



Unit: Networking

Skill 24: Creating Positive First Impressions

Activity A: First Things First

Activity Skills:

Small group interaction, brainstorming, listening and discussion.

Leadership Skills:

Understanding what it takes to make a good first impression.

Suggested Level:

Beginning

Time:

30 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Pens and pencils to write.
- Paper for individuals or groups.

Do Ahead:

N/A

Source:

Developed by:
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Based On:
Other Interview Tips
www.youthquestwi.org

BACKGROUND:

According to *Make the Right Impression at Interviews: Petro's Jennifer Scott Offers Expert Tips* by Thad Peterson at www.monster.com,

“The rule of recruiting is that a decision is made [by the recruiter or hiring manager] in the first five minutes, and [the hiring manager] spends the next half-hour trying to defend that decision.”

This quote is true not only for job interview, however, but for first impressions in general. When meeting someone for the first time, especially in a professional context, the first impression means everything. This view is supported by Harry Beckwith and www.jobinterview.com in his article *Selling the Invisible* when he says,

“Busy people – almost all people today – are apt to make snap judgments of others and then base all their later decisions on them.”

How, then, does one ensure making a good impression? First impressions are created by a mere two factors: How you Look and How you Act. The basics of controlling these factors are:

How To Look

- BE CLEAN!!! This includes your clothes, hair and, well, *YOU!*
- Avoid strong scents, like overpowering gum and mints or too much perfume/cologne.
- Prepare your outfit ahead of time- both choosing what to wear and making sure that it is appropriately pressed or ironed and that your shoes are clean.
- Guys, be sure to carefully shave before the interview.
- Girls, be sure to double check your make-up before going in to the interview.
- Lastly, remove everything from your appearance that could detract attention from your qualifications for the position. This means removing nose rings or other piercings and avoiding ostentatious jewelry.

How To Act

- Make eye contact with the interviewer.
- Show that you are paying attention when the interviewer is talking by smiling or nodding at the appropriate times. *Do not* start laughing unless the interviewer laughs first.
- Keep an even tone of speech and an even pace. Don't whisper or shout, and don't rush through your responses.
- Try to remain relaxed. Lean forward slightly to show the interviewer that you are interested. *Don't* lean back - this will make you look too casual.

Skill 24: Creating Positive First Impressions

Activity A: First Things First

Notes:

- Always pay close attention to what the interviewer says and never interrupt.
- If you're not sure what to do with your hands you can try holding a pen or a notepad. You can also rest your arm on the chair to appear at ease. *Don't* wildly gesture while you speak.

WHAT TO DO:

Take a few minutes and discuss first impressions with the whole group. Introduce them to the idea that how you look and how you act are the factors involved in first impressions. Without going over the basics that are listed above, break the participants into small groups to brainstorm for themselves what behaviors, preparations or other activities they think belong under the headings of How you Look and How you Act. If you would like, you can have half the groups work on one topic and the other half the other topic.

Have the groups brainstorm for approximately 10 minutes, recording their results. Begin discussion, bringing up any basics that the participants have not reached on their own.

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- Was there any behavior or preparation that all groups thought was necessary?
- Which factor is more important, How you Look or How you Act? Could they be equal?
- What could be some results of *not* doing some of the basic things to make a good impression?

Apply:

- Do you remember a time in the past when you made a poor impression? What was the result?
- Do you think most people try their best to make a good impression at all times?
- What situation in your life would be harder if you hadn't made a good impression? Easier if you hadn't made a bad impression?

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

Have participants keep a list of all the things that they do when going out to meet someone. Does it fit all the criteria of making a good

Skill 24: Creating Positive First Impressions

Activity A: First Things First

impression? Do you need to add or remove anything from how you prepare?

Resources and Web Links:

Selling the Invisible www.jobinterview.net By Harry Beckwith

Make the Right Impression at Interviews: Petro's Jennifer Scott Offers Expert Tips by Thad Peterson (www.monster.com)

www.youthquestwi.org