

The Engagement Factor

Quick Tips for Accelerating Success through Relationship Building

“The Engagement Factor” does not refer to an agreement to marry. Instead, it has a broader and more subtle application ... engagement for personal and business success. Subdefinitions in the Encarta Dictionary define engagement as a commitment *to attend*, an arrangement *to be present*, an act or condition of being *activated*. In Wikipedia, a marketing and advertising term, engagement refers to a *meaningful interaction*.

We have about 30 seconds to make a first impression, and that first impression (positive or negative) is generally lasting. Why then, in a world filled with steady demands, multiple urgencies and corresponding ripe opportunities, do so many continue to act like jerks or be lost in their own world, not recognizing the valuable asset standing right before them?

Based on our own less-than-humble experiences, we believe that the majority of folks are simply more distracted than being truly uncivil. (However, we all know that real jerks exist, and we can each likely name several!¹) Unfortunately, in this blur of distractions, we are losing many tangible benefits in new relationships, fresh ideas and “low-hanging fruit” opportunities.

Perhaps you have experienced meeting someone new on an airplane or in line, who has turned out to be a fabulous new friend or, even better a new client or referral source. For you

¹ (For a great read on how to recognize and deal with rude, mean-spirited and hostile workplace behavior, we highly recommend a quick, humorous and valuable read: *The No Asshole Rule, Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't*, by Robert Sutton Ph.D.).

to get this result, people have to get that you are genuine—authenticity rings true. Think about it: don't you want to know that people you are doing business with are sincerely interested in you, your company or your family? According to marketing and consulting experts I have had the privilege to train under, Alan Weiss, The Million Dollar Consultant®, and Patricia Fripp, award-winning executive speech coach, “People do business with people” not companies. Aren't we much more likely to do business with someone we know and like, or at least someone who is known and liked by someone we know and like? Absolutely. So, it's simple: *BE someone they know and like*. Take advantage of the ocean of opportunity to form new relationships everywhere you go – the bank, lunch, on the airplane, bus or train, even the elevator! Remember, you have 30 seconds to make a positive impact.

The more you practice, the easier and more fun “engaging” with others becomes.

Six easy tips to get you started.

1. **Unplug!** The more you are on your cell phone or blackberry, the *less available* you are to those around you. You are missing opportunities.
2. **Look up and at those around you.** (Assuming you are in a safe place, be willing to smile at others and look them in the eyes.)

3. **Be interested (more than interesting).** You don't have to be an amazing conversationalist to talk with others and form new relationships – you just have to be interested in them, and you do this by asking meaningful questions and then acknowledging that you're hearing and understanding them. For example, “Hmmm, tell me more about that” works wonders to learn more.

4. **Make sure to exchange business cards or information.** How can you follow-up if you have no contact info?

5. **Consider your personal presentation/self-image.** This may seem to be an odd tip, but remember, when we look good, we feel better about ourselves, and when we feel better about ourselves, we exude more confidence. When we are more confident, it seems easier to extend ourselves to others.

6. **Ask yourself, how can I help?** If there is anything, however small, you can do to assist your new acquaintance, to add value now or in the near future, this is almost certain to seal the deal on a return favor. This helps ensure the start of a great new relationship that can benefit you both.

If you are *attending to*, *present* and *activated* with those around you, you are creating a *meaningful interaction* and you *will* benefit.

Engagement – the simple start to promising relationships that will help you succeed. Don't believe us? Try it out.

Best wishes in your relationship-building endeavors.

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