

Making a Good First Impression

We only get one chance to meet someone for the first time and “WOW” them with our products and/or services, so it’s important to really put your best foot forward.

With advances in technology, we are no longer limited to meeting prospective customers, clients, or referral partners face to face like we used to. Technology now allows us to meet these same prospects via email, phone, or our websites (read Andrew Muollo’s article for tips on designing your website).

With these advances, and the ever increasing fast-paced world that we live in, are we sacrificing good old fashioned common sense etiquette protocols?

- Are we still making a good first impression?
- Are we identifying ourselves as professionals?
- Are we clearly stating the reason for our contact?
- Are we being clear and concise about the purpose of our inquiry – whether it’s a support question or a request for additional information?

Let’s compare the various methods in which we initially meet people.

Traditional Meeting:

With a traditional face to face meeting we have two or more people in a group. Everyone exchanges names, handshakes, and a brief introduction of themselves, their company and what they do for a living. A bond is instantly formed by human contact and an impression is made, good or bad. Lasting relationships are made because certain people are remembered. As these people leave this initial meeting, the memory of the meeting and its participants will remain, and when they are with other groups of people and conversations occur it is quite likely that someone will say to someone else, “I met someone the other night that does that let me give you their name and number.”

Email:

We all use email every day – it’s a fast and effective means of communication, but it’s cold, impersonal, unclear, and used ineffectively. It lacks the interpersonal contact of the traditional way of meeting someone.

Email is also the source of many viruses and is frequently used by spammers, so we should all pay close attention to how our email is perceived by the person receiving it. Let’s begin with the basic sections of an email:

The “From” section: When we first setup our email account, no matter what email program we use, we all have an opportunity to include our name, which we all should take advantage of, because let’s face it you will know that you are yourname@website.com, but will the person receiving the email have any idea who you are?

The “Subject line;” This is the reason that we are contacting the person in the first place. It should be short, clear, and concise. Above all it should state the reason for your email; whether it’s an inquiry about a product, a service, or in response to a support question.

A blank subject line is a big ‘no-no’ and may be immediately blocked or sent to their spam folder. If it

© 2004-2005 Intuit Developer Network Advisory Council (IDNAC). All rights reserved.
This article is strictly for informational/educational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement.

Intuit and the Intuit logo are used with permission.
Visit us on the web at www.idnac.org

does make it thru, it is often a red flag for the person on the other end, because it could be a virus; and therefore the message you send could be immediately deleted, and your inquiry will never be answered.

The "Body" of the email: This is the true purpose for contacting the person that you send the email to. It should be clear, concise, and to the point – when you compose the email always try to think about what you would say if you had that person on the phone or better yet, if you were talking to them in person.

The "Signature" or "Contact" block: Create a standard "signature" to use on all of your email that includes your name, company name, and telephone. This clearly indicates to the receiver that you are a professional, and provides them with additional information on how to contact you.

As a Developer, I receive countless emails on a daily basis, some good, some not so good. Let me give you an example of a "not so good" one.

From: someone@somewhere.com
Subject:
Message:
What is the cost of the program?

Let's analyze this email for a moment.

- I do not recognize the email address and there isn't a person's name (this is a red flag)
- There is no subject (again, this is a red flag – and usually by this time I'm ready to delete it)
- What is the cost of the program? (I always have the preview pane option in my Outlook turned on so I did see this, and while some of you might not think there is anything wrong with this question – there really is. We have 3 products, and while the sender obviously knew which product they had in mind – I as the receiver, didn't have a clue)
- No name, signature line, or identifying information about the person who sent the message, so I have no idea who I am 'talking' to and no way to try to figure out which program they may be referring to. What could have been a simple response, now becomes a more time-consuming response and both myself and the sender will have to do a lot of extra work in order to get the information that was desired.

While this may seem picky, it's really all about conveying a clear message to the person that you are corresponding with, and when this does not happen, you do not portray a good first impression.

Phone:

As a professional, how do you answer the phone when it rings in your office?

Do you simply say "hello?"

Do you say "Hello, Company Name, this is (your name)?"

Do you say "Hello this is (your name)?"

How does the person calling in respond? Let's look at two situations:

The person calling you also identifies themselves. Pleasantries are exchanged. Next you get to the heart of the call – whether it's an inquiry for product, service or support. Words are exchanged as the conversation develops. When the call ends, a lasting memory of that conversation remains with each person. Hopefully, a good impression is made and you look forward to the possibility of another encounter with that person.

In the second scenario, the person calling in does not identify themselves. No pleasantries are exchanged. You are immediately bombarded by questions that are not clear. You pleasantly attempt to

**© 2004-2005 Intuit Developer Network Advisory Council (IDNAC). All rights reserved.
This article is strictly for informational/educational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement.**

Intuit and the Intuit logo are used with permission.

Visit us on the web at www.idnac.org

steer the conversation toward a more positive interaction while trying to determine if this is a current client/customer, a prospective client/customer, someone that you met, etc. in order to give the caller the appropriate information. Abruptly the conversation ends. You feel frustrated, and wonder who the caller was and if you were able to assist them in any way. A bad impression is made and you hope that you never hear from the caller again.

Websites:

Many prospects are now meeting us for the first time via our website, and it is equally as important that we also make a good impression in this manner, after all it is the first glimpse that the prospect has of the product or service that we offer, and ultimately us as people.

Your website should be a formal introduction to your product/service, your company, and yourself. Your website should portray why the prospect should choose your product/service over your competitor. A website should be designed to make you stand out in a crowd, not appear like you are no different than the competition.

Your website should focus on what you can do for the prospect, what benefit they will derive from your product/service and not 'drone' on about who you are. It is important that your website have an "An About Us" page where you can provide a bit more detailed information.

To find out more about creating a good website, don't forget to read this month's article by Andrew Muollo (www.legrandcrm.com) on "Making a Good First Impression" with your website.

Until next month
Nancy

**© 2004-2005 Intuit Developer Network Advisory Council (IDNAC). All rights reserved.
This article is strictly for informational/educational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement.**

Intuit and the Intuit logo are used with permission.
Visit us on the web at www.idnac.org