



PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE – PRO SCENARIOS

By Peggy Noe Stevens

Discovering the Power of Poise



Why didn't Bob purchase the equipment from Jim?

Too often, people get nervous in the presence of other people who don't act exactly the same way they're acting. Jim was intimidated and he, therefore, experienced a "quiet panic". This prevented him from carrying out the full sales process. This example illustrates the powerful effect that body language has on others, as well as its role in how people perceive you. Unfortunately, we cannot control others or read their minds, so we simply must adjust.



What did Jim do wrong?

Rather than listening, Jim made an assumption. He didn't take the time to understand the needs of the client prior to their meeting. He didn't understand who his client was. Of course we would love to have everyone act in a way that makes us feel comfortable, but Jim failed to do anything to help Bob feel comfortable.



What could Jim have done differently?

Jim should have allowed Bob the opportunity to talk. Had he uncovered his client's needs beforehand he may have understood that Bob did, in fact, need new copiers! Furthermore, Jim could have made conversation with Bob to make him feel comfortable. Never forget

that people typically enjoy talking about themselves. Just by asking Bob questions about himself, Jim may have developed a better understanding of his personality and even learned perhaps, that Bob was simply having a bad day. During his pitch, Jim could have established a better connection with Bob, had he stopped to ask for agreement or feedback. Again, we are not mind readers and people generally do not expect us to be!



What lessons can you can apply?

Whenever you are entering into a new situation, be prepared. This includes not only knowing your product or what you're going to say, but also knowing your client. Be prepared to make others feel comfortable by asking them questions so that you can learn about them. Also, follow up with people. Timeliness is extremely important as well. Follow up quickly after a sales call and continue to check in as needed. People often have a lot of options when they're choosing who they'll buy from, so continue to cultivate the relationships you have with people whether they're prospective clients, colleagues, or vendors.

Mastering Business Etiquette



What did Judy do wrong?

As a result of Judy's e-mail, the fifth member of her team, Ellen, is horrified. Not only did Judy embarrass her once, but leaving her off of a list, she drew even more attention to Ellen when she thought she was offering her help. Also, the inclusion of emoticons does not replace real-life emotions or gestures. In addition to coming off as just plain rude, Judy's use of emoticons and abbreviations makes her seem immature or careless.



What should Judy have done?

Judy should've followed the golden rule of e-mailing which is to review before you hit "Send". Then perhaps she would've have modified it or even decided against sending it at all. An extremely positive accomplishment, especially one that directly affects the company for which you work, should be celebrated! An achievement of this magnitude should not be recognized in the form of an e-mail. If not at all impossible, Judy should have gathered her team together or mentioned Rob's feat when they were all together in a meeting. Also, in sending an e-mail, people are probably processing only the negative aspect of the message, which nearly defeats the original intent. This could have been altogether avoided by keeping it brief. The portion of the message meant for others not receiving praise should have been addressed separately and only with the person.

In short, all business e-mails should be treated like business letters. No unnecessary banter, no slang or abbreviations and if you are able to get your point across better by saying it in person, than do!



What lessons can you apply?

Always think twice before sending an e-mail. Ask yourself whether it's something that may warrant a phone call or even a face-to-face meeting. Once you've decided that an e-mail is acceptable, read it before you hit the "send" button to ensure you've said what you intended to say. Also, make sure that you keep all business e-mails professional, that way all recipients will perceive you that way and you'll avoid sending a message that may be misunderstood.

Developing Touchpoint Etiquette



What happened to Kelly's business?

Kelly possessed the experience to take her career to the next level, but fell short in realizing that it takes a lot of strong relationships to be successful and some that you don't focus on, can actually be the most detrimental. Kelly had a great restaurant, but without good, quality food, a restaurant cannot survive.



What could Kelly have done differently?

Kelly knew that she was building her professional brand by pleasing the customers she worked for as well as her internal customers, or her staff. She should have been cultivating the same relationships with her vendors. She probably could've handled her conversations with her vendors a lot differently. Clearly, though, she didn't realize their value. People want to be treated fairly and sometimes you may have to adapt to the limits they have. Communicating and understanding these limits is crucial.



What lessons you can apply?

While people may change jobs fairly often, they are less likely to change careers. This means that the likelihood of crossing paths again with people we've worked with in the past is fairly high. The people with whom we surround ourselves make us who we are, so how we treat these people is important. Whether or not you work again with people you've

worked with before, you never know how they might enter again into your life. Someone in your past can be a key to your future. This is why prospective employers ask for references.

So, whether dealing with your boss, your co-workers, your customers or your vendors, make sure you clearly define your expectations. This will ensure open communication and a mutually respectful working relationship. These relationships will add value to your brand for the life of your career.

Dressing Your Brand



How big of a part did Mary Ellen's unprofessional attire play in the clients' lack of faith in her?

It played a huge role. As previously discussed, we are conditioned to respond to visual cues, and the impression we give (positive or negative) through visual style have significant impact. Continuing to dress like a college student, though apparently not important at her office, left clients with the impression that she couldn't possibly be qualified to lead their significant project. Mary Ellen being in a traditionally male dominated industry simply added to this concern.



Where did the company err?

Every company, regardless of size, needs a clear and written dress-code policy. The policy needs to consider, not only the culture of the office, but that of their clients and the image the organization wants to convey.



Where did Mary Ellen err and, what should she do now?

Mary Ellen did not appreciate the value of her own personal brand. She thought since attire was unimportant at the office that it couldn't possibly matter to her professional advancement. Although she did not have a female senior leader as a mentor within her firm, could she have found one within a professional organization?



What lessons you can apply?

Understand your company's dress code. If they don't have a formal one, air on the conservative and professional side. Study the most successful people in the organization.

How do they dress and present themselves? When going to a client's office, know their dress code as well. If their attire is extremely relaxed, you don't want to arrive in a grey pin-stripe suit. That looks like you are not in touch with them. However, dressing a notch or two above their every day attire does show respect and that you have given thoughtful consideration to how you look when visiting them.

Managing Your Personal Life



What did Matt do wrong?

He made a few mistakes. 1) He let himself become the “go to” guy for all extra work others in the office did not want to do. While this can be beneficial to a point, it can quickly get to the point of appearing to be a push over. So, not only are you working 80 hours a week, no one is taking you seriously either. 2) He underestimated the impact that taking on the management of his home would have on his work and rather than developing a plan ahead of time and speaking with senior management, he thought he could just make it all happen magically. 3) After being removed from the key accounts, he initially goes to his boss in anger rather than with a proactive plan.



What did the agency do wrong?

The agency let Matt initially take on more than he should. Although bosses are not mind readers, they should be smart enough to not let too much ride on a single individual for fear of burn out or finding themselves with a huge void should someone choose to leave the organization. Well rounded employees that have a good balance between work and personal lives are almost always the best performers in the long term.



How did they both turn things around?

Once there was finally an understanding of what was going on the agency gave Matt the opportunity to work on a plan. They then supported him in a reduction of after hours requirements which ultimately wound up being a good thing for all.



What lessons can you apply?

You have hopefully completed the work/life gap analysis on page and thought of adjustments you need to make. That is a great first step. I would also recommend, however,

that you repeat this exercise again every year or so. Situations, both personal and professional do change over time and what works for you and is purposeful now, may not feel that way a couple years down the road.

Running Effective Meetings



What did Brad do well?

Brad did lots of things well! He obviously took the task seriously, was respectful of everyone's time and ran an effective and efficient meeting. He even handled the curve ball of the surprise guests very well. In the end, the very obvious reason for their presence and the way Brad handled it, made his superiors all the more confident about their choice for the job.



What should management have done?

Brad's manager should have spoken to the two "drainers" when they arrived uninvited to the meeting. Since they were not on the project, they had no reason to be there. Sitting in that meeting, was not only intentionally confrontational, but also unproductive.



What lessons can you apply?

Always stay calm, cool, and collected when running a meeting. You've determined this meeting is valuable, so treat it accordingly and give yourself the respect that you've given others when you prepared for the event. There is no reason to let yourself be derailed by unexpected guests – you've just got to exhibit the confidence that earned you your seat at the table.

Interacting with Colleagues



What did Mary do wrong?

Mary underestimated the thought, time and attention it takes to host a top notch business event in her home. She assumed that since she'd hosted casual gatherings of friends that this would be no big deal. She also got out of her comfort zone in the kitchen and attempted

a number of difficult recipes she'd never made before and didn't give enough thought to the bar. She also did not budget time for herself to relax and dress before everyone got there.



Where did the company go wrong?

They assumed that just because the partner who always hosted the party in the past made it seem easy, that it actually was. They should have offered significant guidance, expectations and ideally advised Mary of her ability to use a caterer and other professional assistance.



What could Mary have done differently?

She should have gotten a clearer picture of what had been done in the past and been realistic with herself about what she could really do on her own. Just because the former host of the party liked to do everything on his own, doesn't mean she was necessarily ready for that.

Knowing Your Team



What happened?

Brenda was complacent. When challenged, she wasn't interested in learning. This combined with her attempt to negatively influence others around her, led her to stunt her own career.



What could Brenda have done differently?

If she was ready to move up, she should have acted accordingly. She could have taken more initiative to uncover improvements on her own. Once Brenda didn't get the job, she should have used that opportunity to learn why so she would know more about what she could do the next time a promotion became available. Also, she could have tried to build a relationship with her new boss. Instead of seeing him as a threat, she should have seen him as her ally – the way she saw the people on her team.



What lessons can you apply?

If you are interested in advancing in your career, always work towards your next job. Take on more than you're given and understand what could be out there for you. Don't be a bully. This is never a productive use of your time. Instead, work on seeing things through the eyes of your boss. You have both been hired to work toward the success of the company. Also, do your best to take your emotions out of the situation. You may end up hurting yourself, otherwise.

Communicating with Transparency



What did Jonathan do wrong?

Perhaps Jonathan wasn't a good fit for the company and he was right to leave, however, had he put more effort into his role, he may have gotten more out of it. He let go of an opportunity to grow within an emerging company.

Could Rebecca or Emily have done something differently to change the outcome? As Jonathan's boss, Emily should have given Jonathan more direction and feedback. She was accustomed to a natural work flow with Emily, so she didn't see that taking the initiative wasn't exactly Jonathan's strength. Once she began noticing that Jonathan was having problems she should have given him the opportunity to explain himself, by simply talking to him. Rebecca, being Emily's boss, could have noticed the problems that they were having and addressed them as well. Both Emily and Rebecca missed out on an opportunity to offer Jonathan coaching instead allowing a potentially talented employee unsatisfied.



What could Jonathan have done differently?

Jonathan should've been more honest with his boss. Emily thrived because she communicated openly with her boss, but Jonathan gossiped to his friends instead. He also neglected to take initiative. Rather than going above and beyond or finding new ways to help out, he did merely what was asked of him and without a sense of urgency. Finally, if he was dissatisfied with the amount he was paid, he should've had that conversation with Emily. Perhaps there could be established an incentive for a pay increase or more work he could've taken on had he just asked.



What lessons can you apply?

Always look for opportunities to make your boss's life easier. They hired you for a reason – they needed help! The more of this you can offer, the more valuable you'll be to your employer.

Positioning yourself this way can not only pay off later in your career, but it can also make the work experience more satisfying. So understand expectations, always complete assignments on time, stay organized, anticipate needs rather than simply reacting, go above and beyond and speak your mind!

Managing with Hospitality



Why didn't Scott get the promotion to General Manager?

Scott didn't get the job for a few reasons. Namely, he didn't manage his team well. There was no training. He would never be fully capable of managing an entire hotel if he didn't take the time to lead his own team. Since he didn't take the time to appropriately train his team, mistakes were made which ultimately reflected upon him as a leader. Given he wasn't a very good leader; he didn't have his team's support. Specifically, his team had no direction. Taking on work yourself is fine, but when you take it away from someone, you are stripping them of incentives and likely satisfaction associated with doing their jobs well. Furthermore, Scott didn't communicate with his team. The mark of a good leader is one that can train their team so that he or she can move up. In other words, you shouldn't be scared to train your replacement if you feel confident that it's time for you to move on with your career. You would want their support, right?



What could Scott have done differently?

Scott should've taken the time to train his team so he would be free to manage them properly. He should have taken the time to communicate so they would understand what they were supposed to do. He also should have taken the time to understand what motivated Jessica. Had he done so, he may have uncovered her desire to move up. He then could have even trained her in the position of Front Desk Manager. Perhaps if he had, he would've had his replacement as well as his colleague's support when it came time for him to be considered for a promotion. He would've had a team where he was already an established leader.



What lessons can you apply?

Always be considerate of your colleagues and know that how you treat them forms their perception of you. Be clear about what you want and what you expect of others so that there is no confusion on either end. This creates a productive work environment and also contributes to your future success.

Surviving a Performance Review



What did Julie do wrong?

Julie misunderstood what was actually a wonderful opportunity. Instead, she saw the review as an attack. She was determined to close herself off to any of the positive points made seeing them as criticism. She didn't give her boss a fair chance.



What could Julie have done differently?

Julie should've seen the performance review as an opportunity, not necessarily to defend herself, but rather to talk about her experience with the company. She probably had accomplishments that she was proud of, or ideas that she could have shared. She could have returned the boss's questions about her personal life asking him about what brought him to the company and how he likes working there so far. Instead of getting upset, she should have asked him to clarify what he meant by saying she wasn't challenging herself. When he accused her of gossiping, she should've have considered what it was she was gossiping about. If something is making her and others unhappy, now would have been the time to share that information.



What lessons can you apply?

Performance reviews should be viewed as an opportunity. Often, companies implement reviews so they can ensure open communication with their employees. It shows that they are dedicated to the success of their business and they see their employees as a vital part of that success. They are also a great tool for keeping yourself and your personal goals in check. Ask for criticism. Find out ways you can improve. Perhaps if Julie would have been more open to the process, she would have uncovered that Steve actually thought she might be worthy of a promotion. Keep an open mind and a positive attitude when entering into a performance review to make it a more productive and mutually beneficial meeting. You should walk out with a renewed enthusiasm for your professional success!

Synchronizing Your Brand with Your Organization's Brand



What is Stacey doing wrong?

Many things make up who we are, or our “Brand”, but Stacey leaves out of her personal life such a significant part of her professional life. Leaving this out is preventing Stacey from cultivating her brand. Also, she isn't learning the names of people in her community because she isn't talking with people enough to establish relationships.



What should Stacey do differently?

Stacey is a positive influence at work and yet it sounds as though she has a lot of opportunities to be a great example outside of work. She truly believes in the brand and encourages her employees to lead healthy lifestyles. In her personal life Stacey is very active herself, but she needs to drink the product herself and talk to others about it asking them for feedback. Additionally, Stacey should look into why they're serving what they are at the ballpark. Perhaps her company would be interested in sponsoring the team or even the park. At the very least, this is a great place for her to be seen with one of her sports drinks in hand.



What lessons can you apply?

Be proud of what you do and if you're not, then find out what would make you happy. We are all representatives of the work our companies do and we need to support the effort in everything that we do. In our case study, Stacey is an influencer at work, but she doesn't embody that spirit outside of the office. Network or talk to people around you sharing YOUR brand with them.