

Why Women in Business Should Shake Hands

By Carol Kinsey Goman

Apparently there is some controversy over the question of whether businesswomen should hug or shake hands.

My vote goes to the handshake. Here's why:

A study on handshakes (by the Income Center for Trade Shows) showed that people are two times more likely to remember you if you shake hands with them. The trade-show researchers also found that people react to those with whom they shake hands by being more open and friendly.

People with "good" handshakes (firm, web-to-web, palm-to-palm) are evaluated as being extroverted and emotionally expressive. And this is especially important for women in the workplace – because women with firm handshakes are evaluated as positively as men.

Touch is the most primitive and powerful nonverbal signal. Physical touch and warmth are established through the handshaking tradition, and this tactile contact makes a lasting impression. It may well be what someone remembers most about meeting you.

The thing to keep in mind is that the purpose of a handshake is to greet someone or say good-bye or express congratulations or to signal agreement on a deal. As such, it should be perceived as warm, friendly, and sincere. So, if you are going to shake hands,

here are 11 tips to make the best of it:

1. Be the first to extend your hand.
2. Look directly into the other person's eyes and smile.
3. Stand when being introduced to someone and when extending your hand.
4. Make sure your right hand is free to shake hands. Always shift any briefcases, papers, beverages or cell phones to your left hand before you begin the greeting so your handshaking hand is ready for action.
5. Keep your body squared off to the other person – facing him or her fully.
6. Make sure you have palm-to-palm contact and that the web of your hand touches the web of the other person's. Research with salespeople indicates that if customers don't get this full palm contact, they wonder what the other person is hiding. If so, they may remain uncomfortable for the rest of the interaction and less likely to purchase.
7. Offer your hand with your palm facing sideways. When a person offers his hand with the palm faced upwards, it is considered to be a submissive gesture. Conversely, when someone offers his hand with the palm faced downwards (or twists his hand downward during the handshake) it sends a message of superiority. But people who offer a sideways hand to shake send a

message of equality and confidence.

8. Shake hands firmly. Women with a firm handshake make a more favorable impression and are judged to be confident and assertive.
9. Hold the other person's hand a few fractions of a second longer than you are naturally inclined to do. This conveys additional sincerity and quite literally "holds" the other person's attention while you exchange greetings.
10. Start talking before you let go: "It's great to meet you" or "I'm so glad to be here."
11. Make sure that when you break away, you do not look down. (It's a submissive signal.)

Remember the next time you extend your hand and reach for someone else's hand to shake that hidden within such a seemingly simple formality is an opportunity to make a lasting impression.

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