



Power Up Your People Skills!

By Jane Foreman

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Contents

Please Read This First.....	2
<i>Terms of Use</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Disclaimer.....</i>	<i>2</i>
Contents	3
About the Author	5
Introduction	6
<i>The Importance of Personal Skills in the Technological Age.....</i>	<i>7</i>
Just Getting Along Is Not Good Enough	9
<i>Saying No.</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>When You are Asking.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>When they Say No.</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>4 Steps To Better Negotiation</i>	<i>10</i>
People are Very Different	12
Conversation Clues	14
<i>Ask Open Questions.</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Using Humor</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Get Their Details</i>	<i>16</i>
Dealing with People Problems.....	18
<i>Don't Ignore Negative Behaviour.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Don't Judge.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Try to Help.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Avoid the Blame Game</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Don't Argue</i>	<i>20</i>
Better Meetings.....	21
<i>Aim for Agreement, not Victory</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Set an Agenda.....</i>	<i>23</i>
Improve Your Telephone Techniques	24
<i>Making Phone Calls.....</i>	<i>24</i>

Calling to Resolve a Problem 25

Handling Conflict or a Complaint..... 26

E-mail 27

Valuable People Skills 29

Self Expression..... 29

Assertiveness 29

Constructive Criticism 30

Accept Criticism 30

A Little (Positive) Influence. 31

Accepting Praise..... 32

Facing the Fire 32

Cooperation..... 33

Delegation 34

Objectivity 35

Reliability..... 35

Making an Impact at Interviews 36

Prepare 36

Organize 37

 The Interview..... 38

Body Language 40

People Skills Power Up Your Life..... 42

Families: for Better and Worse 43

Competition..... 43

Introducing a New Baby..... 44

Introducing a New Partner 45

 Difficult Relatives..... 46

 Demanding Relatives 48

Too Busy to Care 49

Conclusion 50

About the Author

Jane Foreman's first job was part-time work in a fast-food outlet while she was in college.

Since then, Jane has worked in a variety of different industries and three countries at various levels, from factory floors to plush executive offices.

She has been semi-retired for the last few years after a serious car accident.

Jane says that the problems and challenges which people face in different industries and countries have lots of similarities.

Jane has mainly focused on the importance of good people skills in your work environment, but also shows how to use them to improve the harmony and understanding you have with the most important people in your life; your family and friends.

"Power Up Your People Skills" is her first book and based largely on her own experience as well as feedback from friends and the many former colleagues that have kept in touch with her since her retirement.

Jane intends to write more books based on her own experiences and then venture into other areas when she has the time for more research.

Jane believes that almost anyone can learn from her book to improve their personal and business interactions.

She said that this is the book she would have liked to have had when she started her first job. Jane believes that it can help people in almost any industry and may also be invaluable for those who aspire to improve their current employment prospects.

Introduction

I want to help you improve the results you get in your personal and professional activities.

We need to examine what might be holding you back now. This might be in your own personality or negative effects on you from some of the people around you.

Then, I will give you some great ways to improve your level of success in every part of your life.

You might ask why to so many of us have such great problems dealing with people since we have been doing it almost from the day we were born.

That's because we had to learn "on the job" and were never provided with a manual – until now.

We just had to learn from the people around us and from our parents and other people we respected.

Of course, they didn't have a manual which showed them how to teach young children either! Along with many valuable lessons which they had gathered during their own lives, they also passed on their insecurities, opinions and fears.

Now, you have a guide to improving your own working relationships based on my experience, research and input from many people who have shared their experiences and knowledge with me.

It is my goal that this book will help you to achieve greater success in whatever type of work you do in the future and also when dealing with people in all areas of your life.

This book will be of the greatest help to people that find it very difficult to establish good relationships in their work environment or private life. But, the tips and strategies will also help the rest of us when we have to deal with a situation which is unfamiliar or particularly stressful to us.

My book is intended to help overcome the effects of any negative influences

from early in your life or a lack of enough experience, training or confidence to communicate well with the people around you.

I wrote this book to help you improve your relationships at work, whether you are an employee and an employer. Many of these tips may also help you to improve aspects of your personal relationships as well.

I also included sections which briefly cover some important points that will help you deal with specific points of conflict and misunderstanding in some of your most important personal interactions.

The Importance of Personal Skills in the Technological Age

While I was writing this book, I saw some results from a survey conducted by Microsoft late in 2007.

They asked about 500 members of the boards of well-known companies whether interpersonal skills were as important, or less important, than knowledge and experience with I.T. (information technology).

The results were probably not what Microsoft was expecting; over 60% said that the ability to get along with others and work in teams were more important than IT skills.

Mr. Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft, said that communications skills were important but the need for IT skills was evident at every level and every kind of job. But, according to Tom Espiner of ZDNet UK, Mr. Gates also said that communications skills and the ability to work well with all kinds of people was necessary so that we could collaborate with and share ideas with other people, sit and talk with customers and understand their needs.

I believe that, if you follow the suggestions I give you, you could see benefits in all areas of your life.

The same methods that help you to reduce conflicts, misunderstandings and frustration at work will help you with your family and other personal relationships.

This may also help you maintain a healthier and happier lifestyle.

Recent research indicates that the parts of our brain which react to physical

pain or pleasure may be triggered by activity in those areas which are activated by strong emotional feelings, either positive or negative.

Letting ourselves dwell on negative thoughts may have a bad effect on our physical well-being and give other people the impression that we seem self-centered and negative.

Just Getting Along Is Not Good Enough

Do you find yourself agreeing to whatever demands people put on you?

Do you feel that you must, for whatever reason, accept less than you believe your effort or product is worth?

It may seem the easiest and best option, but it can be quite harmful over time.

The reason may be the desire to seek approval and be accepted by other people.

You may feel unsure that what you offer personally or professionally is as good as what other people have.

This negative self-image will reduce the level of acceptance and success you can reach and the disappointment you feel can then start to affect your general health.

Often, you may be the only person who does not recognize what great value you provide. But, most people will accept you at your own valuation.

Why would they want to pay more than you think you're worth?

Saying No.

If you find it difficult to refuse some people when their demands conflict with your own plans, realize that's hard for many of us.

You may be concerned about the reaction from the person making the demand of you, but you have every right to refuse an extra commitment where it conflicts with your own plans or might be something you would not be comfortable about.

You can do that without offending your friend or relative by thanking them for asking you (which shows that you are not ignoring their request) and then giving them a reason for you not being able to agree to it.

"Dorothy, I love to go to concerts and thanks for thinking of me, but I have to prepare for a very important exam."

"Geoff, thanks for asking me to give a talk for your son's Scout Group but I

can't do that in the near future because I am already heavily committed."

Don't let yourself become upset even if they continue to press you. That will not help either of you and might put pressure on your relationship.

Continue to repeat the same reason for not agreeing to their request, rather than adding more reasons.

If possible, keep the discussion light-hearted.

When You are Asking.

Now, let's consider the reverse situation, where you ask for a favour from someone else.

You will get better results by keeping the needs and views of the other people that are involved when you are setting up your request.

Make your request at a time which is as convenient for the other person as it is for you.

Give them time to consider the request.

Focus on facts and avoid criticism of other people or company policies (in a work situation).

If you want a benefit for yourself, like more money, training or other benefit, try to find and be sure to mention any compensating benefit which other people or your employer will gain from agreeing to your suggestion.

When they Say No.

It's also important to accept being turned down in a mature way when that happens.

Always ask for the reason(s) for the negative response. Then, if they are not overwhelming, you probably can put the request again at a later time.

But, the feedback will be invaluable to you because it will give you some guidance for future requests whether they are to the same people or not.

4 Steps To Better Negotiation

This is the basis of all negotiation:

- Respect for other people's views.

- Understanding of each person's goals
- Give everyone involved the opportunity to express their position and goals.

Always set a bottom line; a minimum outcome that you will accept.

People are Very Different

There is a theory that, for every human being, there is someone that looks exactly the same as them, somewhere among the teeming mass that inhabits our small, frail planet.

That's possible, but I'm more confident about the other half of that theory; that everyone else is different from us in many significant ways.

Of course, that's a good thing. But, it does encourage friction or worse, especially as the pace of everyday life increases so rapidly for us.

There are many differences which can affect our attitudes and actions. They include;

- Location
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Cultural values
- Sex
- Age
- Economic circumstances.

There are many other factors, including physical and emotional imprints from our forebears and family.

Each of us also can be significantly affected by many strong influences on us from teachers, family, friends and other adults that became part of our life in our first, formative years.

Their input was largely responsible for the person we became.

But, it is vital that we accept responsibility for our position in life and don't try to keep blaming other people or "Luck".

You will probably meet a lot of people in your personal and business activities that truly believe that their situation cannot be improved, however hard they try because of past events and disappointments.

If you agree with them, their negativity will start to affect you.

If you disagree with them, they will just think you are another person that is putting them down.

The only way to help these people is to provide a positive example.

That may help them to realize that, whatever occurred in the past, it is up to them to start to build a better future for themselves from where they are.

Respond positively to any positive comments or actions they make but end the discussion if they just continue with their habitual negativity.

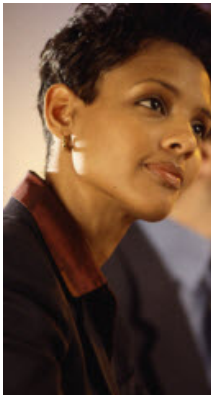
Conversation Clues

In formal and informal situations, both business and personal, we need to make the best of any opportunities we get to talk with a wide range of people.

This is another skill which most of us need to work on even though we've been doing it since our earliest years.

First impressions are very important. You never know how any relationship you start in a casual or business situation could develop. One of the people that you meet at a local club or when having dinner at a business conference may become, over time, your partner in business or life, your best customer or your best friend.

But one casual remark, signs of indifference or just a negative facial expression could ruin that relationship before it even starts.



Here are some of the tips which have been most helpful to me:

The most important conversational skill is to be a good listener!

Ask Open Questions.

What does that mean? An open question is one that encourages the person you asked make their answer longer with some details which you can use to develop a conversation.

This is the easiest way to develop a conversation with someone you have just met.

"Do you like Opera" is a closed question; it can be answered with "Yes" or "No." That does not give you much opportunity to develop a conversation from it, does it? That's a closed question too!

But, "Who is your favorite singer?" gives the other person plenty of scope with their answer if they want to continue a conversation with you.

Let others have their say. Monopolizing a conversation will probably kill it

instead.

When someone finishes talking, make a positive comment which includes a specific reference to something they said. By including some of the information they gave you in your reply, you show your interest in what they say and encourage them to share more information or opinions if they want to.

Listen carefully without interrupting or making any distracting gestures.

Keep your comments on the topic which you are discussing. Don't introduce a new topic until you know that everyone who wants to has had their say about the current subject.

Encourage the quiet person to join in the conversation. If someone shows obvious nervousness or reluctance to put their point of view, ask them for their opinion of what you, or someone else, just said.

If you know they have some special knowledge of the topic, ask them a relevant question which you are confident they can answer well.

Look at the eyes of the person you are speaking to.



Smile. Practise in front of a mirror so your smile looks natural! This is something else which many of us assume we do perfectly as we have done it so often. But, your friends are unlikely to tell you if your smile is overpowering (like a shark) or looks insincere. Unfortunately, many smiles really do give those impressions to people.

A glazed, sickly grin has stopped many a budding friendship.

Always keep your conversation on topic.

Unless you're in a sales situation, don't get too serious too quickly.

Some people tend to rush because they feel they are not good at small-talk. But, don't worry; nobody is going to examine you about the quality of your small talk.



It's just a means for each person to become familiar with the others.

A little lightness can make the later conversation much easier for everybody.

Using Humor

Be very careful about using humor. Just as we are all individuals, our views on what is funny vary enormously.

Keep any jokes short and easy to understand for everyone in the group.

The only person that you should ever make the butt of a joke is yourself.

Many professional comedians do that because it works. When you use a joke to run some other person or group down, you do not show yourself in a good light.

Always listen and respond appropriately to someone else's joke even if you heard it one hundred times before.

After someone tells a joke, give them time to get their applause and laughter before telling yours.

Get Their Details

At non-business occasions, take note in a special notebook of the names and contact details of people you meet.

At work or business-related events, ask for their business card and give them yours if they want it.

Carry some blank business cards and ask people you want to maintain contact with to put their business details on it if they don't have a card with them.

Write down any commitments you make, whether it's a lunch or a two thousand dollar contract.

If you do not understand something which someone tells you, ask for more details right away. You may also be helping others in the group who also did not understand the meaning of what was said.

If you did not hear their name clearly enough, ask them to repeat it and, if necessary, how they spell it. No-one in my experience has ever minded

spelling out their name – it shows them that you are really interested in them and your discussion.

You must not abandon your own values or opinions without good reason, but you can try to continue a discussion with someone when you don't agree with their viewpoint.

If someone wants more from you than you think is reasonable, just say to them, "I understand what you are saying but I cannot go all the way with your suggestion. I'd like to discuss it further with you and try to find something else that will suit you."

Dealing with People Problems.

This section gives you some of my best suggestions for dealing with difficult people, whatever the situation when you encounter them.

The first step is to try to recognize what type of negativity they are, often unconsciously, trying to infect you with.

The worst reaction is to react like most of us do – negatively. This can cause friction and worse that can pollute everyone's work environment. It may also, in extreme situations, cause your own personnel record to get a negative comment.

Don't Ignore Negative Behaviour

It can be almost as bad to ignore the negativity.

That can only result in you becoming more stressed and negative over time. This can affect your health and your work performance.

It also ensures that the people can affect others by their behaviour.

Don't Judge



Sometimes, we may be completely unaware of circumstances in a colleague's life which affect them to act in ways that are annoying or worse to us and others in the workplace.

We should try to be certain that we have sufficient facts to base our opinions and any further action on before the situation is

escalated.

I remember being told, months after the event, about one person that started arriving late and then falling asleep at his desk almost every day. He reacted irritably to any interruption to his siesta and never offered any explanation even to his closest associates.

Many theories were offered around the water cooler and much silent anger was felt by his colleagues because his absence and low work rate made

difficulties for them.

But, then someone found out that the man's daughter had left home without telling anyone. He and his wife were searching for her and any information through each night.

Try to Help

Many people that have these problem behaviours are really good people that only act that way from habit.

Where the behaviour is minor, it might just take someone; maybe you, that takes a little time to dig out the person behind the habit.

I put some emphasis on "a little time" because no-one can expect you to put your own life on hold while you try to help someone break away from a behaviour which they put years into developing. Leave that to the experts!

Avoid the Blame Game

We cannot, and should not, spend any time with regrets or anger about whatever kind of start we got in life.

There is plenty of evidence that people who really want to, and are willing to put in the required effort, can rise to almost any height, without regard for the situation they started from.

Few people give all the credit for whatever success they may achieve to their parents or family, but many people are very willing to blame them for their failures, even many years later.

Focusing on past disappointments makes it almost impossible for that person to achieve their own goals, reduces their ability to be successful socially or in business, and often leads to depression and other disorders.

You may find it difficult to interact with this type of person unless your own focus is also negative. Misery loves company, but don't expect any beneficial results from your association.

Sometimes you cannot avoid them, so try to maintain a positive focus and keep your discussions to the matter which you are both involved in.

Discourage negative comments or claims about other people or organizations, especially if they are not present and cannot put their own views forward.

Don't let them infect you with their negative vibes.

If you can find some positive aspect to their actions or conversation, take the opportunity to give them positive feedback.

This can sometimes be a real help for them.

Don't Argue

Everybody is entitled to their point of view and frank discussion is a sign of a healthy environment.

Trouble can start when someone tries to insist on someone else accepting their point of view without good reason.

If you encounter someone who demands that you, or the group you are both part of, always defer to them and you have tried to discuss other matters with them without any deviation from their position, you can try the approach which works most often for me; ask questions.

Use a normal tone of voice and don't, of course, load the questions with unfriendly inferences – you're a colleague, not an inquisitor.

Sometimes, this will get you some meaningful responses when they realize that you are genuinely seeking the reasons for their view.

If it doesn't, you will at least have tried. Be polite, but stand your ground and agree to differ.

Giving in to bullies, verbal or other physical, is never a good option.

Better Meetings

There are few events where more people waste more time, energy and money than meetings.

This section gives you a few ideas how you can make the meetings you organize, and even those which you are just another attendee, better by working with, rather than just reacting to the personality factors which I've explained in other sections



Aim for Agreement, not Victory



It's nice to win and even small victories are sweet.

If you're in charge of a business or a division of one, you will make decisions and expect them to be carried out. But, every wise executive will find out the views of those who will have to implement the decision and the people

(customers, employees or "concerned citizens") who will be affected by a significant decision.

There are times in families, sporting clubs or offices, when we discuss something before making a decision, even if it's something which only a couple of the people involved will make the decision.

It's very important that everybody, as far as possible, is given an opportunity to put their views and get responses about any questions or concerns they have.

Little progress will be made if at least the majority of those involved and affected by the action to be taken do not feel they have been part of the process, even if they don't all agree with the decision.

If you are in charge of such a discussion, try to ensure that everyone gets

enough time to express themselves.

You may have to try to draw some people out when they find it difficult to express the real reason for their concern.

One tip that I have found useful in that situation is to repeat some of what they said in your reply to show that you are giving them full attention and then ask them if they want to be more specific about what they feel?

With other people, you will have to tactfully but firmly respond to the points they make and then get them to give someone else a chance to put their views.

It's not just actors that like center-stage!

It is very important to ensure that everybody avoids negativity and any focus on personalities. This can be hard to do, but such comments can seriously reduce the positive benefits of the whole process.

Keep the focus on the main topic and facts, not personal feelings or prejudices.

Make sure that any criticism is constructive, focused on the decision – not the person, and accurate.

Although you may have all the authority you need to impose your views, you will get better results by offering them as proposals for discussion when that seems appropriate.

It's not always possible to get full agreement but as many of those involved as possible should feel they were part of the process.

Sometimes, you may be able to suggest that the decision and its effects be reviewed after a specific period of time to evaluate its effectiveness and check if any improvements or other changes are needed.

If you make that undertaking, be sure to keep it or it will affect your reputation and credibility in future discussions.

Be sure to welcome anyone who has not attended a meeting of this particular group or is new to the organization before beginning the formal proceedings.

Where possible, keep formal procedures to a minimum and focus on the goal for the meeting.

You can also help keep the meeting on track by;

Starting on time: I've heard many people say that they prefer to have a few minutes of general chat at the beginning of the meeting to allow for the inevitable late-comers.

This has two negative effects:

- × When people realize that you allow that leeway, more will ignore your set starting time and the actual start time of the meeting will become later and later.
- × This will inconvenience those people who have organized themselves and their schedules to ensure that they get to your meeting at the right time, but then find several minutes wasted to allow for the less considerate.

Set an Agenda

Ask everyone that will attend the meeting to send you details of the points they want to be covered at the meeting beforehand so that you can circulate an agenda.

This will help everyone to be able to prepare their input, pro and con, on all the items which affect them.

Improve Your Telephone Techniques

Almost all of us have lived all our lives with one or more telephones close at hand.

In most developed countries, teenagers and even young children often have their own personal mobile phone today. In fact, the number of children who develop symptoms of repetitive strain injury or similar complaints from overuse of the keypad on their mobile phone is a growing worry.

Despite our familiarity with the device in its many current forms, we have to remember that it takes practice and focus to get the best use from the telephone.

Despite this, many people still have a stressful experience when they have to use their telephone, whether it is for business or personal reasons.

Even some professional salespeople tend to avoid making phone calls which could increase the income and value to the company they work for. They can always find good enough reasons to delay returning calls to clients, especially when they believe the clients have problems or complaints to discuss with them.

It's important to remember that a client with a problem should be contacted as soon as possible so that the matter can be resolved. If we delay our response, the client is likely to magnify the problem in their own mind and resolution will quickly become more difficult or even impossible.

Making Phone Calls

Getting the best results from your telephone is fairly simple process.

Always prepare for important calls. Spending a few minutes to organize yourself and ensure that you have everything you may need during the call can pay big dividends; your results will improve as will the impression which you leave with the person that you call.

Always have a notebook or writing pad and a couple of pens (in case the first one doesn't work) so that you can make notes about the discussion, including any commitments or other important points which each of your

raises during the call.

When the call is really important, mentally rehearse the main points you want to make and give equal consideration to the responses you could give to any problems that the other person might raise during the call.

Consider drafting a short but detailed summary of the discussion as soon as possible after the call ends and sending it to the other person for their comments and confirmation.

This can help to remove the possibilities of any misunderstandings or other problems arising from what was discussed, because each of you will have a written record of the main points.

Ensures, as far as possible, that you will not be interrupted during the call so that you can give your full attention to the person you call and the topic of the discussion.

I have always found it very helpful to smile when I start a phone call. I not sure of the underlying reason, but smiling seems to put me in the best possible mood for the discussion and, somehow, the person on the other end of the call seems to get positive vibrations from this simple act.

If you do not hear the name of the person that takes your call any other important information during the call clearly, always ask for it to be repeated.

Nobody minds if you show that you want to get their name right.

Treat any commitment that you make during a phone call just the same as if it was a written and witnessed legal contract. Many people forget undertakings that they have made during a phone call but you can be sure that the other person will remember.

Calling to Resolve a Problem

Always remain calm, even when the other person shows anger or other negative emotions.

If you are upset when you make a call, but you cannot delay making it, try to remain calm during the discussion.

Showing anger at the person you talk with can only have negative consequences; you will have, in most cases, less cooperation from them and the heated atmosphere will make it less likely that you will get the results you want from the discussion. That will cause more delay and perhaps larger problems later on.

It can be a great help to write on a separate sheet of paper all of the points which you want to ensure that you cover in the discussion.

Ensure that you ask for and write down the name of the person you discuss your concerns with and the time and date of your call. This

Make notes during the call about each significant point in the discussion and then write up your recollection of them more fully. This sort of detailed record will not take much effort or time but can help you get a quicker and more satisfactory resolution of your problem.

Handling Conflict or a Complaint.

If you get a call from someone with a complaint or other problem, it can be stressful.

You know that how you respond to the caller and the degree to which you are able to resolve that person's concerns could have significant ongoing consequences for your company and yourself.

It's essential that you remain calm and professional.

Ask the caller to spell their name necessary because it is vital that you get it right and also that you pronounce it in the way that the caller prefers.

You must get all the essential details of their concerns. Then, repeat back to them the main points so that you are both sure you understand each other.

Do not become defensive; show respect for the caller and their concerns.

Make sure that you get all the necessary details. Try to use open questions which will encourage the caller to give you more information rather than closed questions.

Even if you have a ready-made script or list of questions which you refer to,

it's important to make the caller feel that you are a real person and concerned about their problem, not just an automaton.

Give the caller the time they need to explain the problem and its effects on them to you.

Then, repeat back to them the most important points which they made, so they can be sure that you are really listening.

Ask the caller to tell you exactly what they feel needs to happen to resolve the matter.

Suggest any other options which could be more acceptable to your company. Emphasize that your suggestions are just that and not to be taken as firm commitments at this point.

Do not admit to any fault by you or anyone connected with your company unless you are sure of the facts and believe that is the only course open to you.

Tell them that you will make sure that their problem will be followed up and give them direct contact details if you can. Some companies use complex digital call-handling systems and no-one with what they believe is a legitimate complaint wants to have to go through them multiple times.

Try to resolve the problem immediately where you have the authority and resources to do so.

This approach will often help you to resolve the matter and retain the client's confidence and business.

E-mail

Many of us now use e-mail to reduce the time spent on phone calls.

This can have several advantages but there some important points that we all need to keep in mind.

The main advantages of using e-mail are that you can send and receive messages at whatever time is convenient to you and both of you have a written, printable record.

You can sometimes be less formal in e-mail correspondence than you might be with a regular letter. That can help you to connect better with the person your messages are going to.

You must keep to the subject and not waste the other person's time by including irrelevant material in the e-mail.

A disadvantage which many people overlook is that you often cannot be sure that only the intended recipient will see your message.

If they are in a busy office, other people may read your message while it is on the recipient's monitor. They may decide to send copies of your message to other people without your knowledge. It is their property and you have no control over it once you send the message. Of

E-mails sometimes get lost, either during transmission or, more often, in spam filters and junk folders at the receiving end. If you do not get a response in a reasonable time to an important e-mail which you sent, always contact the other person and confirm whether or not they received it.

Be especially careful about sending attachments. If the attachment is a large one, it's probably a good idea to check first with the person you are sending it to whether their e-mail system is set up so that they can accept attachments and, most importantly, whether they want it.

Many businesses do not accept any e-mails which have attachments of any kind for security reasons. You might want to put the files on your website and include a link in the e-mail so that the other person can download them from there.

Side note: always use your virus scanner to check any attachments which you get yourself, even if you trust the person that sent it to. It sometimes happens that people may not be aware that the file they are sending or even their whole computer system could be infected.

Valuable People Skills

Self Expression

This, like interacting with people, is something which we get plenty of practise in from the day of our birth.

But, it's fairly rare to find someone who is naturally skilled to the point that they are understood by almost everyone they meet and express themselves so well that people enjoy listening to them.

For the rest of us, some training might be a worthwhile investment.

This is one area where many parents and relatives of young children possibly spoil the child's natural ability.

Some will be so strict with the child that he or she keeps quiet around them instead of learning from their greater knowledge and vocabulary during those vital early years.

Other parents will allow their children so much freedom of expression that they do not learn that it is as important to listen as it is to speak and to speak to the subject.

I joined a ToastMasters® club several years ago and, though I never felt that I reached the standard of most professional speakers, the techniques discipline and confidence which their course taught me has been invaluable.

It was also a great place to meet a wide variety of people in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. So, I recommend that you check for a ToastMasters® club or similar organization in your area.

Assertiveness

Assertiveness has been likened to bullying by some people but it just means to me that the person who has it will stand up for themselves and for the values they profess.

Every baby bird that breaks through the shell of the egg they were born in is showing assertiveness. If we don't, we must depend on others to help and defend us. That is, at best, very limiting.

Constructive Criticism

This is one of the rarest skills but we can improve our ability to give and accept constructive criticism by studying the person that asks for it and always being respectful and helpful with our comments.

If you want the privilege of commenting on other people's work, you must be prepared to accept and acknowledge their views about yours.

You may disagree with them, and perhaps even think that they are unqualified to criticise something, but that's part of the commitment between you.

You will find that some people are unable to handle any criticism of themselves or anything connected with them, however much they may ask for criticism. Be wary of these situations and leave your comments as impersonal and brief as possible.

Always try to find something which you can comment favorably about, but never give praise where it is totally undeserved because this can cause the person to suffer much greater disappointment later on.

Criticism which contains any negative elements should be given in private. Always, start with something positive. Give the person you are evaluating time to collect their thoughts and ask them for their comments. Give them further feedback to show you are listening to them.

Praise should be shared with the person's colleagues whenever appropriate.

- ❖ Don't wait until someone whose work you supervise does something major, praise small victories when they occur. You never know what seeds of future successes you may be planting.

Accept Criticism

This is the other side of the previous point. Just as it is a business truism that only somebody that has been a good employee can be an excellent supervisor, only people that are aware that none of us are perfect and are willing to accept constructive criticism are likely to be able to give it to others.

When someone offers you constructive criticism, it is very easy to become defensive or try to turn the criticism back on them.

Thank them for taking the time to discuss the matter with you.

Listen carefully to the points they make and ask for more details if anything is not clear to you.

You need to know exactly what is being complained about before you can make any sort of reasoned response.

Agree with any part of the criticism which you believe is accurate and thank them for bringing it to your attention.

But, you should also try to clarify any comments which you think are not correct.

A Little (Positive) Influence.

If you had the chance to have a positive and lasting effect on someone's life which would cost you no money and almost no time or effort, would you do it?

If you're hesitating, you've probably been approached directly or through advertising for any number of "worthy causes" with a question (or pitch) like that.

One person's worthy cause can be a worthy cause or a cosy tax haven in someone else's view.

But, my question is sincere and without any catch. Almost anyone can have a positive effect on another person's life almost every day just the way I said.

All we have to do is to say, "thankyou" sincerely when someone does something for us.

Or, you might get the chance to praise a child's efforts at drawing or skateboarding. Whether it's your own child or someone else's the effect of a sincere. "That was great!" can last a lifetime.

Or, you might just thank an overworked shop assistant as she or he lifts your shopping into your car for you.

The pity is that so many people are too absorbed in their own thoughts that thousands of these opportunities are wasted every day.

Accepting Praise.

It is almost as difficult to find someone that can accept praise graciously as it is to find someone that says, "thankyou' like they really mean it.

I've heard many people that reply to someone's sincere praise of them with a joke or something like, "It was nothing, not at all!" They must think it's big-headed to accept any praise.

It would probably be considered a bit big-headed if your response was all about how hard you worked and how much you deserved the praise.

But, accepting praise with a simple, "Thankyou" when you did something notable, however small, is appropriate and also reflects well on the person who offered the kind words to you.

Deflecting the praise is not likely to cause any noticeable upset. But, it might cause that person to decide not to offer any praise to yourself or others in future. That would be a bad result that a little understanding could prevent.

Facing the Fire



From time to time, in either your personal or professional life, you may become aware of some negative currents (resentment, unhappiness or even anger) just below the surface in your home or business.

Or, you may realize that you have done or said the wrong thing which has hurt someone else, even if only slightly.

It's fairly common to take a hands-off (do nothing) approach and wait for the problem to surface.

But, if you think about when something like that has been done to you, you will realize that any hurt becomes magnified over time unless the person is really well balanced emotionally and has learnt to shrug off minor wrongs

and get on with their life.

So, the best course is to seek out the person and apologize.

"Frank, I wanted to apologize to you for that joke I made at your expense the other day."

You will usually find that your apology is accepted with good grace and the relationship will improve over time. Most people will appreciate the effort you have made as long as they believe you are sincere.

Sometimes, the other person will not react positively. The only comfort you can get from that situation is that you will still have removed some of the hurt which might have built up in them if you had not apologized.

The wisest course is to try, as patiently as possible, to get the people concerned to discuss it with you in private before the matter becomes bigger and probably harder to deal with without a lot more disruption.

This can be more difficult but even more important when the person that is the focus of the unhappiness is you.

If you let it simmer, the eventual explosion could cause much greater damage and be unable to be resolved in a way that will satisfy everyone.

It's important that matters of this nature are discussed privately, all people concerned are given a fair hearing and no decisions are made in haste or anger.

Cooperation

Like many people I know, I had some difficulty in my first job learning to work as a member of a team.

Some people continue to find it hard to merge their contribution and ideas into the team environment.

But, there are major advantages with the team approach.

Few people can reasonably be described as all round skilled workers, able to do almost anything required on a particular project to a professional standard. Even fewer, if called on to complete an entire project on their own

could bring it in on time and without exhausting themselves.

So, a major advantage of being part of a team is that other members can provide support when you need it, a wider range of experience and members whose skills complement your own.

With a committed team, and a fair division of responsibility and potential reward, you can have an increased expectation of success which can often be achieved in a much shorter time than if you had worked alone.

Delegation

This has long been one of the most valuable skills of many successful executives and entrepreneurs. The latest, and possibly the best, description of an ultra-successful delegator is Timothy Ferriss' description of how he runs his business in his book, "The 4-Hour Workweek".

The basic idea is to test and prove a method of doing a task, then to list all the steps in minute detail and employ someone else to do that task repetitively for you.

You can, in fact, employ several people to do the task while you test more procedures for the effectiveness and profitability.

This can multiply your income several times over because you are paying less for other people to produce the same results that you did at a lower cost and minimal personal involvement on a day-to-day basis.

In a regular office environment, senior staff can pass mundane, relatively simple tasks to some of the people that they employ so that they can concentrate on those responsibilities which most require their personal attention and are likely to return the greatest dividends for their time.

This is also the basis of franchise marketing. The original entrepreneur develops, tests and proves the potential of his marketing plan and products.

Then, they offer for a substantial fee to clone their successful operation and let their franchisee take the responsibility and most of the profits.

As with regular delegation, the franchisor insists that the franchisee operates their business as an exact copy of the original, proven design.

This helps to ensure that, with proper commitment and effort, equivalent results can be highly possible.

Of course, success depends on the employee or franchisee following the instructions and applying equal effort to that of the originator.

Objectivity

People that can take into account the other person's point of view as well as their own and their objectives under pressure and with out allowing themselves to be distracted, are likely to be more consistent in making sound judgments and gaining successful outcomes than people that are focused almost exclusively on their own side of a discussion or deal.

Reliability

I would have to rate this as the most important quality for anyone, whatever their position or goals, in any kind of enterprise.

Nothing will enhance your reputation faster than word of mouth recommendations from people you have demonstrated your reliability to.

Nothing can cause greater damage to your reputation than word spreading that you are unreliable.

It's not the size of the contract or the possible reward that matters; it's that you keep your commitments every time, whatever the circumstances.

Making an Impact at Interviews



I know many people who consider interviews in the same light as an extended session in the dentist's chair.

But, you can improve your performance at any interview with these simple tips.

Prepare

You probably do prepare before any interview because you realize the importance of the outcome to your future prospects.

One point that many applicants overlook is the usual time they are given after the panel's questions have all been asked. Someone will usually offer you a couple of minutes for any comments or extra points that you want the interviewer to consider.

That's the last thing they will hear you say at the interview, so you should give some time to preparing about one or two short paragraphs which will help boost your chances of being called back or getting the position.

It's also important that you prepare yourself as well as your C.V. and other materials when you want to make the best possible impression.

A friend told me that he had always had trouble sleeping the night before an important interview.

He had tried a variety of sleeping tablets and potions, from the drug-store and also one or two that were suggested by another friend who dabbled in natural medicines.

But, nothing helped him very much.

Then, the friend that supplied the natural preparations suggested that he do some extra physical exercise the day before the interview, get an early night and set his alarm to wake him half an hour earlier on the day of the interview.

Then, it was suggested that he do some relaxation exercises before he went

to the interview.

He also did not have any coffee or other liquids containing caffeine for 24 hours before his interview.

He said that he got the best night's sleep he'd ever had in that situation and he felt that the exercises (the energetic ones on the previous day and the relaxation routines on the morning of the interview) also helped him to be more alert right through the interview itself.

He was soon back on his heavy caffeine habit but he adopted the exercises as part of his regular routine shortly after he started in his new job!

I can't say that will help you to the same extent or at all.

But, I've also had good results since I started following the same sort of routine.

I went one step further and gave up caffeine almost entirely. That wasn't easy!

Check the heels of your shoes and the hems of your clothes at the back. Make sure they look as good as the front because they will be the last thing the interviewer sees when you leave the room.

Organize

Don't leave anything to chance.

As well as preparing everything well before the day of the interview, give yourself time to check everything before you go to the venue.

Try to prepare answers for the questions which you expect the person or panel interviewing you to ask.

If there are any topics which you hope that they won't raise, make sure that you prepare the best response that you can to each of them because, in my experience, it is almost certain that one or all of them will be raised and you need to be as prepared as you can be.

If possible, don't smoke or drink anything except water for a while before the interview.

There is always a chance that you might spill the liquid or ash on your clothing or that some tobacco could stain your fingers or linger on your breath.

You must be sure to be at the right location well in advance of the time of your interview. Give yourself plenty of time.

Always be very polite and businesslike with other staff as well as any other candidates that you meet on your way to the interview and afterwards.

The Interview.

When your interview begins, shake hands if the interviewer offers to, then sit comfortably and keep your eyes on the interviewer's face.

When you have settled comfortably into your chair, just sit still. Try to avoid making any distracting movements with your hands or feet.

I believe it is best to politely decline any offer of coffee or other drink during the interview.

It means that you don't have to juggle a cup and saucer when your mind needs to be focused on the main game.

Always avoid any negative comment. I have heard of candidates running down their current or previous employer or workmates!

That probably sounds disloyal to the interviewer, even if the comments are accurate.

You have probably read books about body language and maybe even studied Neuro Linguistic Programming.

I can assure you that people who do interviewing for major companies have too. Some could probably write books from their own experience of those subjects themselves.

So, don't think that a quick flip through those books will help you to hide anything from the interviewer.

Your best tactic is to present yourself as you really are rather than use tactics which they will have encountered many times already.

After you have made your short but interesting closing statement that I suggested previously, thank the interviewer and leave.

Body Language



Keep your body language as well as your comments positive.

What is "Body Language"?

"Body Language" is the way all creatures, usually without conscious thought, signal their emotions and intentions to others of their species.

Although there are hundreds of books and even many expensive courses, devoted to explaining Body Language and improving your use of it, it is not a science.

There are many cultural differences and the significance, or even the meaning, of some signals cannot always be relied on, especially when we're observing human beings.

The value of body language signals depends on the fact that they are not consciously controlled by the person making them.

Of course, some people practise masking techniques but these are usually self-defeating because they are contrary to the emotions actually driving our body's responses.

But, a few liars and even some sales people have themselves so convinced about the tales they tell that their Body Language signals can be in synchronization with the false message they are telling you.

Any interpretation of particular signs you learn needs to be considered in conjunction with what you know of the particular person and the current situation you are in.

Folded arms may be a signal of disinterest or disagreement but they may just indicate that the person is cold.

I still believe that body language is valuable in both business and personal situations but it should not be the main resource you use.

It's a good idea to examine your own body language because many people use Body Language as an indicator of your attractiveness and even your truthfulness.

If you have a movie camera (even a phone which can take short, fairly low resolution movies, use it to get yourself onto your computer screen so you can see the messages you are sending.

As I said before, you will not be able to modify your real Body Language but you can, through practise, modify any traits which might be giving other people false bad vibes about you.



When you are near someone, do you hover over them like a vulture?

Do you keep your arms folded, as if defending your heart and your wallet?

When someone is talking to you, do you watch their face, other parts of their body or roam the room like you

might be looking for someone more interesting?

When you speak, do you hold your hand near or over your mouth? This is regarded as an indicator you may not believe what you are saying. It's very common with men in stuffy conference rooms.

Do you fiddle with a pen, your glasses or parts of your clothing? That's a sign of lack of interest in what someone else is saying. It's also not very professional.

Watch the mannerisms and stance of other people and see what reaction that gives you.

People Skills Power Up Your Life

As well as using your people skills to improve your job performance and satisfaction, you will also find that they can be equally valuable for increasing harmony between you, your family and friends through better communication and understanding.

Every family has their ups and downs, both minor and major. No-one can tell you how to totally avoid them. Sorry, but building and maintaining a happy relationship takes work and constant care and attention. There's no Magic Formula, either written or in a bottle.

But, I hope that the tips and strategies that we share in this book will help you to reduce the number and negative effects of crises and misunderstandings which are part of everyone's daily lives.

I'm not a trained counsellor, and there can be situations when only professional help will be effective.

Actions you take and even just words that you say can have important, long-term effects for you and the other people. So, always think about the needs and desires of all the people involved.

My suggestions are intended only to give you some ideas and approaches to consider and some encouragement from myself and other people that have successfully overcome common problems in their own families.

Your results could be different; better or worse.

Families: for Better and Worse



"You can choose your friends but not your family", especially in your early years. Most of us are pretty lucky; our family nurtures, protects and teaches us to the best of their ability with the resources that they have.

The first lesson which most of us learned was that, usually, the quickest way to get our needs and desires fulfilled was to do what others wanted or expected of us.

Our parents appear to be all-powerful fonts of knowledge during those first few years.

But, as we grew older, we found that they were really only human beings, who mostly learned how to be a parent from their own parents.

Very few of us get any professional instruction about one of the most important tasks we will ever undertake.

It doesn't surprise me that we encounter upsets and disappointments within our families; it amazes me that so many of us have such a wonderful family life and great memories of our parents and siblings!

There are many reasons for problems developing between family members.

I will just mention a few important ones and offer some suggestions where your improved people skills may help in preventing or, at least, reducing the negative effects.

Competition

All humans are competitive by nature. Throughout our lives we will test ourselves against our peers, other people and members of our family.

Families grow and change like any other living organism. Another child either as a baby or by being adopted, or a single parent may begin a new

relationship or remarry.

When someone new becomes part of the family group, there is a strong possibility that one or more of the current members will be upset or even angry because of actual or possible changes to their status within the family group because of the new arrival.

This is human nature at work and you will often see similar reactions among workmates or members of any other organization when a new person joins the group.

But this can be more disruptive and distressing to a family member because the position in the family is part of their self-image.

Introducing a New Baby

Your other children, your pets and even your partner may need some special attention for a while when a new baby arrives.

The pet may need to be supervised every time is near the new arrival until you are sure they are completely trustworthy and accepting of the new member of your family.

Your partner may, despite their confidence in the strength of your relationship, feel a bit neglected as you will naturally focus most of your attention on the needs of the new arrival.

With young children, you should share with them your excitement and happiness as the birth comes closer.

Try to spend extra time with each child on a one-to-one basis as the birth comes closer so that they are reassured of your love for them and their position in the family.

You might want to consider giving a small gift to each of your other children when you bring the baby home and saying that they are from their new brother or sister.

Don't be surprised if there are still some signs of sibling jealousy despite your best efforts. Be understanding.

Let them "help" you to care for the new arrival. That can help build a stronger bond between them all.

Recognize and thank them for any positive actions which they take to help you or their new sibling settling.

Introducing a New Partner

Before you introduce the new love of your life in person to your children, it might be a good idea just to bring their name into conversations with them. That way, it won't be a shock when you all first get together.

The experts suggest that first meeting between them should be in a park or other open public place rather than in your home.

Watch your children for any signs of stress or anxiety and be ready to listen to any concerns they have.

The common symptoms which you should watch for include;

- Changes in temperament
- Changes in the way they treat you or other members of the family
- Lack of interest in family activities or their own favorite games etc
- Mood swings

It's important to reassure them by your attitude, actions and words that your feelings for them will not change and that you will still spend the time they need with them up.

If the relationship develops to where you move in together, don't spring this as a complete surprise on your children.

If your partner also has children of their own, try to get everybody together at a neutral location before setting up your new accommodation arrangements. This will give both of you a chance to demonstrate that you will treat the other's children just as you do your own without reducing the attention or love you give them.

Difficult Relatives

As well as helping us to minimize problems with our family members, improving our people skills will help us to get more enjoyment and satisfaction from our dealings with our other relatives.

Do you and the members of your immediate family enjoy getting together with your relatives when you visit each other's homes, or at Thanksgiving and other holidays or special family occasions like weddings and birthdays?

For many people, a lot of their enjoyment of the occasions can be spoiled by the actions or words of some relative. They probably know that this will happen before they agree to attend, but they continue to make the trip and try to join in with everything because of their warm feelings for the other relatives and a sense of obligation to the tradition and the family as a whole.

Our meetings may not seem to be as good as previous times. That may be caused by us remembering past events as being more enjoyable than they probably were at the time.

Some relatives may give no consideration to changes in our circumstances, lifestyles or other interests and responsibilities which we have developed since previous meetings.

If your sister Jane and her husband have hosted the family Thanksgiving or some other celebration each year, they may appreciate someone like you offering to take on the responsibility and cost from time to time?

If you have invited everyone to your place or a venue which you arrange for the event, try to ensure that all the relatives are contacted for their input and ideas for it.

You also need to check about any special requirements (accessibility or food allergies for instance) which they have.

When you are the host, you accept a lot of responsibility but you should be assertive enough to ask others in the group for help and support when you need it.

If you don't ask, it's very likely that you will get few offers because everyone

will want to enjoy as much of the festivities as they can.

If no help is forthcoming after you ask for some, you'll have to keep doing the work but don't raise your work-rate to a level that you cannot comfortably handle; don't risk your health trying to do what you know is just other people's unreasonable expectations of you.

When you plan to be at a function hosted by another relative, ask them if they want any help with the arrangements or whether you can help by bringing some supplies. This might be food or perhaps plates, cutlery or other equipment, especially if they are holding the function in their home. Keep your expectations reasonable.

Take responsibility for yourself, everyone that you bring with you and any mess they make.

Keep your conversations positive. People like to talk about themselves, so you might start a conversation by asking about their recent successes or their favorite remembrance of previous family events.

Use the conversation tips in the earlier section of this book to show that you are genuinely listening and interested in them and what they say.

Avoid negativity, especially about the event, other family members or their partners and friends that they brought with them or, especially, people that are not at the event.

Keep your alcohol intake lower than you normally would. Disagreements fuelled by alcohol can erupt and might cause a rift between family members which could last for years.

Don't spend all your time with just one or two favorite relatives.

Introduce yourself to relatives and their friends or partners that you don't know or have not seen at previous events. Help them to meet and mix with other guests by including them in your conversations and activities.

If you say that you will contact someone after the event, make sure that you do so. If you don't want further contact, don't make the offer.

Avoid confrontation with relatives that you know will upset you.

If you know that you will have to interact with them while you are both at the event, try to mentally run through what you will say and do to minimize any possibility of friction before you go to the event. Keep it positive. This can be surprisingly effective.

If you feel that these encounters or anything else about the event could be too stressful or you have other sincere reasons for not wanting to attend (for instance, the cost or time involved) then you should consider letting the hosts know that you won't be attending.

But, be sure to give them as much advance notice as you can.

Demanding Relatives

Do you have a demanding relative?

That's someone, usually a parent or some other close relation that intrudes into your life or requires your help or attention to a level that you feel is unreasonable or which is affecting your ability to fulfil your other commitments and family time.

Changing the nature of the commitment which they have put on you is not likely to be easy or without any cost in time or hurt feelings.

But, the price you pay for letting them continue to exert that level of control over your activities may be far greater over time.

Too Busy to Care

Many people tend to give little thought to how they interact with those around them, even their family and others who are most important to them, until there is an argument or other disturbance to the smoothness of their everyday routine.

If that is just something minor, it may be enough to make them realize that they need to improve the way that they treat people and perhaps give them more recognition, encouragement or time.

But, sadly, those good intentions evaporate when the crisis is over as they resume their hectic day to day activities.

They may have cause to regret that they did not follow through at some later time when a more important disagreement occurs, but it may be far too late by then.

Flowers for the Living.

People often make excuse to themselves for not acknowledging how much they value some of the people closest to them.

There are always many things which may seem more important than slowing down and spending a few extra minutes with your child or partner.

And, it's very easy to call a lonely elderly relative on the phone rather than drive miles to spend maybe only an hour with them.

But, each of these people may place much greater value on that time together than we realise and there will be a time when we too may regret that we didn't take the opportunity to talk face to face while we could.

Conclusion

I hope that you have got many useful tips from my book and that you will start to apply them to your own situation immediately, if you have not already done so.

I can confirm that the ideas and suggestions in this book are not just idle theories. Every one of them has been tested in business or personal situations.

But, of course, the results you achieve will depend on many factors beyond my control. Sometimes, you will not be as successful as you might expect. I would not be surprised if some of you achieve much better results than I have at this point.

I hope you do because the point of passing on knowledge is to help the person receiving it get better results in the future. That will mean that I have succeeded passing on something valuable to you.

Don't let yourself be discouraged by occasional setbacks. Gather any lessons that you can learn from experience and get back to work as quickly as possible.

There may even be some occasions where you find that repeated attempts do not result in a workable relationship between yourself and someone else. Only you can decide whether you should keep trying or focus your efforts on other people.

Ask yourself if you believe that the other person is investing as much emotional and physical energy in the attempt as you are?

And, you also need to be sure that the business or personal relationship that you are focused on achieving will be worth all the effort that you are giving to each attempt.

I wish you all the success and happiness that you believe you can achieve.

Jane Foreman

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