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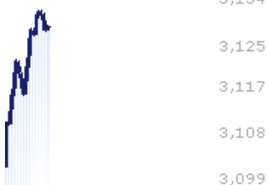
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	Chg	%Chg	Value
Morningstar	30	1.0	3,130
...	25	1.2	2,672

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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

8-Second Rule of First Impressions

Lori Turner-Wilson

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Lori Turner-Wilson

Eight seconds. It's the length of a successful bull ride. And it's also how long we have to leave an indelible impression on those we meet.

For the bull rider, that eight seconds is an eternity. For the rest of us, it's gone in the mere blink of an eye.

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In the first eight seconds after meeting a prospect, he evaluates your social standing. If he sees you of comparable business or social standing, you are considered suitable for further interaction. If you appear to be of higher status, you're admired and cultivated as a valuable contact. If deemed to be at a lower social level, you're tolerated but kept at arm's length.

It's a harsh reality, but one we must accept. Once this impression is formed, it's extraordinarily difficult to change, which is why it's vital to put your best foot forward. Not only is it essential in sales, but mastering the art of the first impression is a life skill.

While you can't control all aspects of that first impression, here are eight key factors you can:

A picture is worth a thousand words. What picture do you paint? Dress up a bit more than your prospect to be quickly assessed in high standing. Pay attention to the details. Carry a nice leather portfolio versus a free canvas portfolio featuring your bank's logo. Paper shouldn't protrude in a disorganized fashion. Less is more. Invest in a nice pen, versus the disposable Bic that's seen better days. Ladies, leave the giant purse in the car.

When you see your prospect enter the room, stand and walk to greet him versus waiting for him to walk to you. The latter demonstrates a passive, unsure style.

Know your opening line. Prepare so you have a point of connection ready to pull from your arsenal. A "point of connection" might be the referencing of a common acquaintance or a shared interest.

Attitude is everything. Carry yourself with confidence and genuine enthusiasm. Weakness is a repellent but arrogance can be an equal turnoff. Find the middle ground.

Don't fidget. Avoid nervous tie adjustments, touching your watch (which insinuates you're in a hurry), shaking your leg or fiddling with your pen.

Smile and make eye contact. We are naturally attracted to those who smile, and eye contact demonstrates confidence.

Stay focused. Tune out everything, staying completely attentive to your prospect. Avoid the temptation to glance away when someone walks by. Turn your cellphone off and put it out of sight.

Your handshake should of course be firm. Styles to avoid: the dead fish, the bone crusher, the two-handed shake, the controller where you pull the prospect closer, the politician where your other hand is placed on the

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BANKRUPTCIES	75	75	15,154
BUSINESS LICENSES	19	19	4,861
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	263	263	22,455
MARRIAGE LICENSES	39	39	4,782

It's time

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prospect's forearm or shoulder, the cupped shake where your palm doesn't touch your prospect's palm, indicating you're shy or hiding something.

The first impression you leave is a combination of competence, preparedness and likability. Make a good one, and you're on your way to a successful sale.

Lori Turner-Wilson is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Facebook and Twitter.

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