MODULE
Self Improvement

LESSON
First Impressions Happen Only Once: Make Them Great!
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Overview

Purpose

To teach students the importance of making first impressions in the workplace and how a good or bad first impression affects relationships within an organization.

National Career Development Standards

Standard 1: Understanding the influence of a positive self-concept.

Standard 2: Skills to interact positively with others.

Standard 5: Understanding the need for positive attitudes toward work and learning.

National Career Development Benchmarks

Students will be able to . . .

Benchmark 1.e: Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between personal behavior and self-concept.

Benchmark 2.c: Describe appropriate employer and employee interactions in various situations.

Benchmark 2.d: Demonstrate how to express feelings, reactions, and ideas in an appropriate manner.

Benchmark 5.c: Demonstrate a positive attitude toward work.

Benchmark 5.e: Demonstrate positive work attitudes and behaviors.

Think and Discuss

1. Can first impressions affect how long you stay in a job?

2. What are the most important first impressions that employees should know and do?
### Module: Self Improvement  
**Lesson: First Impressions**

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This lesson uses 10 of the 16 EFF Standards

- Observe Critically
- Listen Actively
- Speak So Others Can Understand
- Plan
- Cooperate with Others
- Advocate and Influence
- Take Responsibility for learning
- Learn Through Research
- Reflect and Evaluate
Teacher Preparation

Class Materials

Copy the following exercises for distribution to students:

- Exercise 1: First Impression Pre-Quiz p. 7
- Exercise 3: First Impression Facilitator Anecdote p. 13
- Exercise 5: First Impressions in the Work Place Worksheet pp. 16-17

Overhead templates for teacher use:

- Exercise 1: First Impressions Pre-Quiz p. 7
- Exercise 2: Anecdotes of the Day pp. 9-10
- Exercise 3: First Impression Facilitator Anecdote p. 13
- Exercise 5: The 12 Fundamentals to Making a Good First Impression on the Job pp. 16-17

Key Words

1. First Impressions
2. Customer Service
3. Productivity
Exercise 1: Pre-Quiz Directions & Answer Key

Teacher Directions

_This exercise should take only 5 minutes with some discussion after each question. A teacher copy is provided with the answers._

**Step 1:** Have students take the 5-question First Impressions quiz to check for understanding.

**Step 2:** Review the questions with students to correct misconceptions they may have with first impressions on the job. (Remember, the premise in this lesson is that first impressions can have a lasting effect on a potential employer and fellow employees.)

**Step 3:** Transition to the anecdotes of the day.

Answer Key

1. True
2. G
3. False
4. C
5. D
Exercise 1: First Impression Pre-Quiz

1. First impressions set the stage for what a person thinks about you for as long as you know that person.

   True
   False

2. Which of the following items DO NOT project your first impression to others? (circle one)
   a. Your Clothes
   b. Your Hair Style
   c. Your Smile
   d. Your Handshake
   e. Your Breath
   f. All of the above
   g. None of the above

3. By working harder and better than anyone else in your company, you will make a good first impression on everyone.

   True
   False

4. Outstanding Customer Service is:
   (circle one)
   a. Over-rated
   b. For cashiers and other retail workers
   c. A philosophy needed for everyone you work with and work for
   d. Difficult to define because everyone has a different expectation
   e. Both A and D
   f. None of the above

5. You can actually make a good first impression at work by:
   (circle one)
   a. Buying lunch for everyone in your department every Friday
   b. Letting your boss use your car on weekends
   c. Wearing $500 suits everyday
   d. Listening more and talking less
   e. Smiling every minute of every day
Exercise 2: Anecdotes of the Day

Teacher Directions

*Discuss with the students using the questions provided at the end of each anecdote. This exercise should take 10 minutes with some discussion.*

**Step 1:** Choose a student to read the anecdotes in class.

**Step 2:** Ask students the following questions to check for understanding:

**Anecdote 1:**

1. Does this sound like it is a lot of work for making a first impression? What would you do differently?
2. What are some other ideas you have that might also help make a good first impression on a person?
3. Can you remember a time when someone made a good first impression on you? What did he/she do to impress you?

**Anecdote 2:**

1. Do clothes really make a difference? Can you make a good first impression in "street clothes"? Why or why not?
2. What about "Cheeto Boy" do you believe impeded his ability to make a good first impression?
3. What would you suggest "Cheeto Boy" do the next time his school has a job fair?

**Step 3:** Transition to Exercise 3: “First Impression Facilitator.”
Anecdote 1

“If you want to make a good first impression, then always pay attention to the DETAILS. For example, when someone meets you for the first time, he/she usually notices the smaller details like how your hygiene (your outer appearance – e.g., type of clothes, coordination of clothes, etc.) and your body language (facial expressions or body movements) fit certain expectations he/she might have. These expectations usually fit societal and cultural norms. If you brush your teeth, comb your hair, take a shower, wear clean clothes that fit the occasion (suit, tuxedo, business casual), and are friendly, accepting, and warm toward the other person, you will make a good first initial impression. I said INITIAL because the impression-making process doesn’t stop there. The first impression lasts the duration of your first encounter with that new acquaintance.

Paying attention to details begins before your first meeting. Plan topics for your discussions. Anticipate questions you might receive and have answers or materials available for that person. If you know ahead of time who you are meeting, research the person to know something about his/her job, career accomplishments, the company he/she represents, etc. It is very impressive when you take time to know something about a person before you have even met them!

If you are meeting during a time when people usually eat a meal, ask him/her if it would be appropriate to have breakfast, lunch, or dinner while you meet. Have a place planned out ahead of time. Good first impressions involve being prepared and leaving no issue unsolved. Have good manners and listen to the other person talk more than you talk. Get to know the person you are meeting because it will really make a good, lasting impression. Finally, ask the person at the end of your initial meeting if there is anything else you can do to help him/her with the items you discussed. Politely tell the person how much you enjoyed meeting him/her, firmly shake hands, and leave that person with your warm and friendly smile.”

- Career Counselor
Anecdote 2

“I was recruiting on the campus of a prestigious university recently, and I was shocked by what I witnessed at its job fair. Nearly 2,000 students attended and I personally saw six professionally-dressed students, and only three wore suits! Are students not concerned about dressing professionally because companies are not requiring it as often? In my opinion, dressing casually at a job fair (where one is trying to make a great first impression and get a job) is different than dressing casually at work. Many business leaders believe sloppy dress leads to sloppy behavior. Sloppy dress certainly leads to a sloppy first impression. This really hit home for me when a student at a job fair walked up to me wearing cut-off jean shorts and a dirty t-shirt. He strolled up holding a large bag of Cheetos, stuffing his face with handfuls at two-second intervals. He looked at our display booth and asked what our company does as he spit Cheetos shrapnel on my suit. Even if he was extremely qualified, the orange stains on his fingers said otherwise.”

- Career Counselor
**Exercise 3: “First Impression Facilitator”**

**Teacher Directions**

*This exercise describes ways to make a great first impression. This exercise should take 10 minutes with some discussion.*

**Step 1:** Have students read the handout titled “First Impression Facilitator Anecdote.”

**Step 2:** From the HOTEL ANECDOTE, discuss the first impression facilitators below, listed as items “A-F” (see below).

**Step 3:** Ask the class to identify the first impression facilitators that were missing from hotel “X” and compare those findings to how hotel “Y” met the first impression facilitators criteria.

**Step 4:** Ask students to explain how they could incorporate the first impression facilitator principle into their classroom studies or their part-time jobs.

**Step 5:** Ask the group to list all the ways they can think of that a person can make a BAD first impression and write them on the board or flipchart.

**Step 6:** Ask the group to list all of the ways they can think of that a person can make a GREAT first impression. Write them on the board or flipchart.

**Step 7:** Proceed to Exercise 4: Video Vignette: “First Impressions Only Happen Once: Make Them Great!”
Teacher Notes

*Review the 6 characteristics that lead to positive first impressions in the work place. The first impression facilitator criteria are:*

a. **Leadership** - A person effectively guides a group, project or discussion.
b. **Quality Focus** - A person gives 100% to everything they do!
c. **Interpersonal Skills** - Effective communicator, can handle conflicts, friendly.
d. **Integrity** - Honest, strong work ethic, truthful.
e. **Proven Performance** - A person plans his/her work and works his/her plan . . . to success!
f. **Commitment to the Bottom Line** - A person is aware of how she/he can save the employer time, money, or both!

*From the anecdote provided, have students review the A-Fs of first impressions.*

**Examples:**

Did the clerk at hotel Y exhibit good leadership skills?

Did the clerk at hotel Y exhibit effective quality focus?
First Impression Facilitator Anecdote (Student Handout)

A few years ago, I was shopping around to find a hotel that could accommodate our visitors from out of state. We typically use 500 hotel rooms, 30 banquets, a host of business meetings and luncheons at local hotels. My business account for this prospective hotel would be fairly sizable. I had the list narrowed down to two hotels and both were right across the street from each other.

Hotel “X” had a sales manager who offered me one free night stay in his hotel so I could give them a “test run.” I took him up on the offer, and he told me to “leave everything to him;” so I did. One week later, I arrived at the hotel’s front desk to check in for my one free night. I told the desk clerk my name and after two minutes of shuffling papers, she said that she had no record of my reservation. I told her to try looking under the sales manager’s name because he was going to reserve a room for me. More shuffling. No luck. Now a line formed behind me – other guests wanted to check in, but there was only one desk clerk. She told me there must be some mistake on my part, and she even asked me if I was sure I was supposed to be here tonight.

After getting a snotty attitude from her for ten minutes, I finally convinced her that the sales manager was going to save a room for me and she reluctantly gave me a room. I walked up three flights of stairs because the elevators were very, very slow. When I got to my room, I heard a noisy air conditioner rattling and thumping up a storm—and I hadn’t opened the door yet! Inside, there were food stains on the carpet and water damage on the ceiling. All this in a well-known, high-end hotel that is part of a global chain. I decided to tough it out for the night because it had to get better. It didn’t get better. The air conditioner kept me up all night. When I ate my room service breakfast, which took 1 hour and 20 minutes to get to my room, I found a hair in my scrambled eggs. At this point, I decided to leave.

Two days later, I visited hotel “Y” across the street. The sales person set up a night’s stay for me as well. One week later, I got to the hotel for check-in and the sales person greeted me at the desk and recognized me by sight and by name. With a big smile, she personally escorted me to their Presidential Suite. Inside was a basket of fruit and a bottle of wine, compliments of the hotel manager. The room was clean and quiet. The hotel staff took me on a tour of their guest rooms, their meeting rooms, the banquet halls, even the kitchen. The next morning, without my having to call and order room service, I was sent a large portion of breakfast foods. My company has been a customer of this hotel for 5 years now. The main reason: they pay attention to every detail. That is what we need for our clients when they stay in a hotel. The hotel’s image is my image. Great hotel personnel know that great first impressions build lasting relationships.
Exercise 4: Video Vignette: “First Impressions Only Happen Once: Make Them Great!”

Teacher Directions

*Play the video titled “First Impressions Only Happen Once: Make Them Great!” Discussion should follow after the video vignette. This exercise should take 5 minutes with some discussion.*

**Step 1:** Review the video vignette before introducing the video to your class. Specifically, review the Role Play First Impression Scenarios before introducing this exercise.

**Step 2:** Show the video in class and explain to the class that they will role play the scenarios dealing with first impressions in the workplace. Answer the questions posed by the RPC.

**Step 3:** Proceed to Exercise 5: “The 12 Fundamentals to Making a Good First Impression on the Job.”
Exercise 5: The 12 Fundamentals to Making a Good First Impression on the Job

Teacher Directions

*Before class, review our top 12 Fundamentals to Making a Good First Impression on the Job. Students will be required to work in groups of 2 to answer questions related to these fundamentals. This exercise should take 20 minutes with some discussion.*

**Step 1:** Review with your class the top 12 Fundamentals to Making a Good First Impression on the Job. Use your own experiences to complement the discussion.

**Step 2:** Have students work on the “First Impression in the Workplace” Worksheet. Have students work in groups of 2.

**Step 3:** Proceed to Exercise 6: Wrap Up: “First Impressions Only Happen Once: Make Them Great.”
The 12 Fundamentals to Making a Good First Impression on the Job

1. Dress professionally.

2. Smile and have a positive attitude.

3. Never speak badly about anyone. (Show some workers bad mouthing someone who walks by as they giggle and sneer.)

4. Always mind your personal business. (Show some people goofing around and throwing paper airplanes, laughing and roughhousing, etc. while “Good Employee” stays focused on job or moves to a quieter place without getting lured into the bad behavior.)

5. Never give an opinion unless asked for it. (Show someone who always butts into a conversation to give an opinion. Show someone who tells people what to do or how it should be done without being asked. Show how people react to a know-it-all or to unwanted suggestions.)
6. Ask questions when you need help or are confused. (Show a new employee sitting at his/her desk, visually lost and frustrated with paperwork. She/He gets up and walks into the boss’s office to simply ask for clarification. The boss gladly helps and they smile as they work together. The employee leaves the office smiling and sits back down with clear direction and enthusiasm.)

7. Help others without them having to ask you for help. (Show a co-worker trying to put something away on a high shelf and having trouble with balancing the items. New employee can step up and hold something for co-worker while the items are shelved. Co-worker #2 is copying and collating tons of papers and looks flustered. New employee has some time before a meeting so she/he steps in and collates and staples while co-worker puts the packets into folders.)

8. Ask your co-workers to have lunch with you. (Show what happens at lunch with co-workers when you are a new employee. They chat about such things as: How long have you been with this company? How do you like your job? What do you do exactly? What are some tips for new people to remember that will help us fit in more quickly?)

9. Say “hello” to everyone when you enter the office. (Self explanatory—cheerful, smiling, waving, shaking hands, stopping by someone’s cubical entrance to get the person’s attention, instead of just walking past.)

10. Say “good night” to everyone when you leave the office. (Same as #9.)

11. Get to work 30 minutes early every day and leave 60 minutes late every night. (Show the new employee getting in when very few people are in the office. Maybe even before the boss gets in. Show her/him leaving after the boss leaves, maybe she/he is the one to turn off all the lights when leaving. Show that she/he is not a clock watcher, but is conscious of arriving early and leaving late.)

12. Be cooperative and have a “can do” attitude; never tell someone you can’t do something without first trying. (Show examples of what happens when colleagues ask for assistance and the new employee always says NO. Show the negative implications it has on co-workers. Show how it hurts morale. Show how positive it can be if the new employee agrees to try the assignment or actually gets it done with a “can do” attitude.)
# First Impressions in the Workplace Worksheet

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1. Why is it so important to dress appropriately for work?

2. What can smiling and positive attitudes do as far as first impressions at work?

3. What effect can speaking badly about others have on you if you participate in such activities (especially as a new hire)?

4. Explain why minding your own business is looked on favorably by your employers.
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<td><strong>5.</strong> Should you continuously give your opinion to your employer or peers even when it is not asked for? Why or why not?</td>
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<td><strong>6.</strong> Explain why it is important to ask questions of your employer if you are confused or need help.</td>
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<td><strong>7.</strong> Explain why it is important to help other workers even when they have not asked for help.</td>
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<td><strong>8.</strong> Can going out to lunch with your co-workers be helpful as a first impression? Why or why not?</td>
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<td><strong>9.</strong> Explain why saying “Hello” is an important part of modeling a good impression at work.</td>
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Teacher Directions

*Have students answer the following questions in their journals:*

1. Can first impressions affect how long you stay in a job?

2. What are the most important “first impression” fundamentals that employees should know and do?