



"I want you to do a better job building relationships."

That's what your boss could tell you in a job performance review. If she did, how would you go about fulfilling such a request? Chances are, you wouldn't have a clue where to begin. If, however, you shift your focus from improving your "relationships" in general to evaluating how well you handle the specific factors that influence all relationships, this goal will start to really look much more attainable. This is easier than you might think, because there are really only three things that affect a relationship: your actions, your appearance, and your words.

Actions

The things we do can have various impacts. Imagine: You sit down at a restaurant table with a client. After a few minutes, your cell phone starts ringing. You answer it and start talking. Clearly, we are all aware that this action would create a negative atmosphere at your business lunch. What is a better action, one that will improve your relationship with your client? Simple: Either turn off your phone before meeting your client or let your client know that you're expecting a call, and then excuse yourself to the lobby or restroom area when your phone vibrates.

Appearance

The importance of clothes and grooming is obvious. Dress like a slob, and the people you are with will think of you as a slob. Body odor and bad breath- those are no-brainers. But what about body language? That falls under appearance as well: Twitching your foot during a meeting says you are either nervous or apprehensive, or you can't wait for the meeting to end. Improve your appearance by keeping your foot still- and staying calm, alert, and twitch-free in general- and you will build better relationships with the people you do business with

Words

Coarse language is clearly out of bounds. But say you're in a meeting and you blurt out, "Oh my God, Sally, what a great idea!" Later, you discover that some of the people present were offended that you took the Lord's name in vain. Suddenly, instead of thinking about Sally's great idea, those participants are focused on you and their negative perception of you.

One of the hallmarks of good etiquette is that it never calls attention to itself. When everything is going well as far as your actions, appearance, and words are concerned, your focus- and the focus of the people you are with- will be on the content of your discussion. Slip up with any one of these factors, however, and the focus will suddenly shift to the failure ("I can't believe he just did that"). By being aware of your actions, appearance, and words, and working to improve your performance in all three areas, you can directly enhance the quality of your relationships.

For more information on [Emily Post Business Etiquette Programs](#) contact Director of Sales and Relationships, Dawn Stanyon at Dawn@emilypost.com.