

## Those Pesky Names (And What To Do With Them)

A special events planner was conducting a committee meeting when a member spoke up to correct her: She had been calling him the wrong name.

During a reception, you accidentally introduce a donor by her former husband's last name even though you know she remarried a year ago.

### ***Why is it so difficult to remember names?***

Memory experts agree that to remember names, we must first choose to do so.

Concentrate and look directly at the person while being introduced. Repeat his or her name as you shake hands, and try to remember a physical characteristic to associate with the name.

The person's black hair or green eyes, stout form, or unusual mannerism could be your cue. Another technique is to mentally associate the name with a common object or something about the person's business or personal life.

For example, Mr. Webster becomes Mr. Dictionary. I can remember people named Hill because that was my maiden name, and I instantly remember one woman's name because I associate her with the ruby ring she always wears.

Whichever technique you choose, use the name several times as you chat to reinforce it in your mind.

Take photos of VIPs, volunteers, donors, and board members at events. Mount the pictures in a notebook alongside brief biographies so that committee members, university administrators, and fund raisers can peruse them before events.

### **When You Forget**

It's inevitable that you will either forget a name entirely or call someone by the wrong name. When it happens, the late etiquette expert Letitia Baldrige said the best way to handle the situation is with humor.

She suggested admitting your lapse by making a joke at your own expense, "Since I've turned 40, my memory is failing fast," then quickly offering a sincere apology.

If someone calls you by the wrong name, again use a light touch to diffuse the situation before correcting the error.

If you sense that a person has forgotten your name, put him or her at ease by quickly offering it and reminding the person of the last time you met.

*“I’m Sally Smith; we met at the alumni meeting in Portland.”*

Never put a person on the spot by asking if she remembers you.

## **Which Name To Use**

Sometimes it’s not remembering the name that’s difficult, it’s determining whether to call a person by his first name or his title.

Baldrige again offered solid advice, “If you have to stop and think about whether or not you should use a person’s first name when you greet him, the answer is you should not.”

In the United States, the etiquette for use of first names varies by region. In California, everyone seems to be on a first-name basis, while in the South and in some large cities, people are more formal.

As a general rule, address individuals over 40 by surnames, until the person asks you to use her first name.

As work, a person of junior rank should call a person of senior rank by her title or surname until asked to do otherwise.

When working with a distinguished or very accomplished person, it is always best to use his or her formal title (Dr. Small, Dean Hoskins).

## **Making Introductions**

The rule of thumb for making introductions is:

- A younger person to an older person
- A peer at your school to a peer from another school
- A nonofficial person to an official person
- A junior administrator, faculty member, or executive to a senior administrator, faculty member or executive
- A colleague to a guest.