

Ask Mike: Telecom Q&A

November 2009

Q: *Dear Mike:* I have trouble remembering names. It's embarrassing at meetings and social events. Any tips to help me remember names?

A: This is a common problem. It can create embarrassing situations. I'll give you three tips that have helped me remember names.

Change your thinking: Henry Ford once said, "If you think you can, or if you think you can't, you're right." The first thing to do is change your thinking. Think positively. Believe that you can remember names. Before a meeting or social event tell yourself, "I will remember the names of the first 10 people I meet."

Exercise your memory: Start a habit of remembering things. Practice memory techniques before you need to use them. There are many fine books and internet resources available with techniques and exercises to improve memory. A good exercise is to memorize the names of all the presidents of the United States. Relate the name with something unique about their appearance or fact about their life.

Practice active listening: When you're introduced to someone, your total focus, for that moment in time, should be on the other person. For instance, block out all distractions for at least 3 seconds and listen to the name. Then, look directly at the person (but don't stare), and repeat that person's name as you shake hands or acknowledge one another from across the conference table. If you didn't hear the name clearly, ask the person to repeat it. If you forget a name, don't panic. Listen for someone else to say the name to remind you.

One memory method I've used in meetings is to get a business card from each person. I discreetly lay them on the table in front of me in the same order people are seated around the table. I also write the names of each person on a notepad, when business cards are not exchanged, and then silently repeat the name as each individual speaks.

-Mike

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