

Going to **COURT** to Remember Names

By Paul Mellor

A gentleman on the street recognizes you and shakes your hand for a job well done. He says, "Since the trial, Max is doing much better." You remember the case: it involved a broken fence, a loose dog, and a rambunctious boy. Unfortunately, you don't remember which one is Max. The puzzled look when you ask, "Is he still drinking out of the toilet?" tells you it wasn't the dog. Oops!

The ability to call a person by name shows that you care, you listen, and that you're interested. As someone who teaches memory training to attorneys throughout the United States, I've learned the five keys in remembering names and how they can make you more powerful and more influential. But first, you have to go to COURT.

C-Concentrate

Stop and think about the last time you introduced yourself to someone. Were you thinking about what you were going to say and making a good first impression? Of course you were; we all do. That's why 99 percent of the population has uttered, "What did you say your name is, again?" It's not that we don't care,

only that we weren't concentrating because we were focused on what we were about to say.

To remember a name, it's vital to concentrate. We can do this before the name is given or any words are spoken. As you make your approach, tell yourself to concentrate on the name. You know it's coming, so get ready for it. First the handshake, then we hear, "I'm Wendell Wriggleman." "Hi, Betty Bakerman." "Good evening, I'm Stan Jones." Too often, those names never arrive at our ears because we weren't concentrating on listening.

O-Observe

It's almost impossible to remember any name if we're busy looking at the chandelier in the center of the room, the plateful



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of shrimp carried by the waiter, or the stained carpet underneath the table. If we aren't observing the person who is giving us their name, we're at a disadvantage in remembering it. Yet for many people, our eyes are not locked onto the other person during introductions. We're looking down, away, or at the next person we're going to meet.

Make sure that when the name is given, you're observing the owner of that name. Look into the person's eyes when the name is announced. This simple gesture will be appreciated; it indicates his or her importance. And who doesn't want to feel important?

Train yourself on studying facial features. What's the first feature you observe? Is the nose long, the mouth small, or the eyes wide apart? First and foremost, we are people who deal with people every day. Doesn't it make sense to start observing them?

U-Understand

Have you ever called Janet "Janice"; Christina "Christine"; or Jay "Jake"? If so, you may not have noticed. But I promise you that Janet, Christina, and Jay did. Names are important and any slight variation in how they're pronounced puts you behind the 8-ball.

In a conversation, information is coming fast and furious, with names a part of that mix. If you don't catch a name, ask her to repeat it right away. If the name is unusual, ask for its spelling or origin. She will be flattered, not offended, because you took the time to understand it. It will also tell you more about the person, her family, or where she's from.

R-Repeat

When you get a name, give it back. Make the first word uttered be that person's name. When you hear, "Hi, I'm Barbara," say, "Barbara, nice to meet you." Repeat the name immediately.

There may not be a big difference in saying, "Nice to see you, Jackie," vs. "Jackie, nice to see you." But there is when you have to rely on your memory. In the split second you begin with, "Nice to see you..." you can easily forget the name. Take the pressure off your memory by saying the name first. Then repeat it in the conversation. "Joe, glad you're here. So how long have you been with the firm, Joe?"

T-Translate

Many of us have common names that are not easily remembered, such as Mary, Jason, or Ben. It's difficult to remember names when they create no meaning or memorable visual image. It helps to mentally visualize pictures. We can visualize a "ray of sunshine" a lot better than the name "Ray."

Translate the name you hear into a word that is tangible. It takes practice, but soon you'll have standard pictures when you meet someone. Practice by reading names in the newspaper or hearing them on television. For instance, translate "Beverly" to

"beverage"; "Vivian" to "violin"; "Tracy" to "tracing"; "Tom" to "tomato"; and "David" to "DVD."

If you're meeting Cheryl, a woman with long hair, translate her name to "shovel" and picture shoveling her hair. If you meet a person who shares the same name with someone you know, associate the people together as business partners, roommates, or neighbors. By making a link, it's easier to remember the name.

As attorneys having spent years of study, your success not only comes from knowing the rules of law and skillfully making your case, but also from understanding people, working on their behalf, and continuing to serve in a proud profession. In essence, it's all about people. The first step is remembering who they are.

C – Concentrate on listening, instead of what you're about to say.

O – Observe the owner of the name: look into their eyes as they say their name.

U – Understand the name and its pronunciation.

R – Repeat the name immediately.

T – Translate the name into a word that is tangible. ■

Paul Mellor, author of Memory Skills for Lawyers, is a national speaker on memory skills. His interactive programs have been delivered in all 50 states, including programs to numerous bar associations and firms.

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