How to remember Names and Faces.

Being able to remember the names and faces of people you meet either socially or in business is a great benefit and can be generally improved and in the case of listed attendees at meetings, workshops or conferences solved entirely with a little effort as demonstrated in this podcast.

This is a common struggle that people have with their memory and can be awkward in social and business situations. I will begin by admitting that I am also very bad at remembering faces. I have always put it down to being too vain as a teenager to wear my glasses and so until I got contact lenses in my mid-twenties people's faces were mostly a pink blur. I do have some suggestions that will help but I will start with names, and I am much more confident here with my answers. To quote Dale Carnegie "if you remember my name, you pay me a subtle compliment; you indicate that I have made an impression upon you. Remember my name and you add to my feeling of importance" – we all love it when someone remembers who we are.

The easiest situation is when the number is finite, such as attendees at a meeting, a workshop or a conference and I would advise using the alphabet and a numerical mnemonic.

For small groups the Shape system will take you up to 10, and the Rhyming system up to 20 and if you have 30 people to remember, you could run the 2 systems together. Using the Major System and it is possible to remember over 100 people and beyond. Begin by categorising your list of attendees alphabetically and then number them. All you need to do then is to attach the name to the number.

Now to remember the names:

This is a numbered, alphabetical list and I used the rhyming system as it goes up to 20.

I took this list from the most popular first names in the UK from 1970 – 1993 and the most common surnames to date. If you think it is a bit out of date, I apologise, but without knowing the age of your own circle of acquaintances, I cannot be topical with the first names and I think you will get the idea from my examples.

1. Brown Jessica
2. Clark Samantha
3. Davies Ashley
4. Evans Lisa
5. Green Amy
6. Hall Christopher
7. Jackson Matthew
8. Johnson Michael
9. Jones James
10. Roberts Jennifer
11. Robinson Jason
12. Smith Tyler
13. Taylor Emily
14. Thompson Amanda
15. Walker Michelle
16. White Sarah
17. Williams Andrew
18. Wilson Robert
19. Wood David
20. Wright Joshua

1. Brown Jessica – Sun, Bun, think of a Jessica you know or a famous Jessica – think of Angela Lansbury as Jessica Fletcher in 'Murder, She Wrote' eating buns and lying in the sun, turning brown or even the sexy Jessica Rabbit.

2. Clark Samantha – Shoe. Clark's are a famous shoe shop range. Think of someone you know called Samantha or choose someone famous. I remember Samantha Eggar in 'The Butterfly Collector', or Samantha from Sex and the City or the character played by Grace Kelly in 'High Society' and immortalized in the song 'Samantha'. If you know it – play it in your head alongside her image as she goes into the shop to choose a new pair of shoes.

3 Davies Ashley

Tree plus a famous Davies or one that you know. I immediately think of Alan Davies from QI. For Ashley, I would have the tree burning to ash or Alan tapping ash off a cigarette or Ashley from Gone with The Wind.

I do not need to go through the rest of the list as I am sure get the idea by now. Use people you know, famous people or whatever pops up into your mind. As usual, use movement, sound, humour, and exaggeration.

The full list of 20 is in the transcript, but I would suggest you start to compile your own list of people you want to make sure you will remember.

I would always do this as an introduction to my workshops so I can assure you that it is an easy exercise to learn and most impressive. Recently, I had a problem remembering the name of a lady I had just met, although through talking to her, I remembered her husband's name was John. So, the next time I saw her I - wait for it - asked her. It was Gillian – easy as I

thought of Jack (the Yorkshire name for John) and Jill going up the hill. At the time, she had difficulty walking so was using crutches, so I added that snippet of information to my mental picture, even though it was poor Jack who fell down in the nursery rhyme.

Asking someone for their name is so much better than just hoping that it will come out in the general conversation. I used to run a recruitment agency for putting secretaries on building sites and I would place great emphasis of the importance of getting the name of anyone you were putting through to your boss. It was particularly difficult for those poor girls as the caller could be quite impatient and brusque, but it was much better than putting through a Mr mumble, mumble. It has been suggested that once you have the name, then you use it as much as possible in the ensuing conversation, but I will admit that I personally find this a bit contrived and 'dare I say it' American, but it is a good idea if you can manage it naturally. Otherwise, you could make a note of the name if you have an occasion to nip to the loo or at least note it down as soon as possible after your conversation. After all, remember, this is a courtesy to the people that you meet, and will be much appreciated and hopefully – remembered. Last Easter I attended a service at a church I had not visited before and leaving, the clergyman came up to me and called me by my name which I assume he had got from a welcome lady I had met inside the church. I left feeling a warm glow and still remember it nearly 9 months later.

Faces – even if you are not as short-sighted and vain as I am, faces are a little trickier as they can change, especially in the case of women. They are more likely to change the length and colour of their hair. Of course, men may also grow a moustache or a beard - or shave one off. However, there are some things that do not change, and these are the questions

to ask oneself:

● The shape of faces - is it square, long, round, heart-shaped, triangular?

● In profile, is it concave, straight, or convex? Eg Reece Witherspoon is slightly concave and Alfred Hitchcock convex.

● In profile, is the nose straight, hooked, turned up, big, small, Roman?

● Ears - large, small, close to the head or sticking out?

● Ear lobes – do they have them?

● Eyebrows - are they thin or bushy, straight, arched, winged?

● Eye colour?

● Eye shape - round, slit, almond, slanted, large, small, protruding, deep set, hollow?

● Mouth - small, large, straight, turned up, turned down?

● Lips - thin, fleshy, bow-shaped?

● Chin - square, round, pointed?

● Distinguishing marks - moles, dimples, scars?

● Complexion - pale, swarthy, olive, red?

As I began, names and faces are clearly a problem for a lot of people, and it does take some effort. Make notes on people that you meet to help you remember who they are. We love stories and it will help your memory. Personally, I love it when people tell me stories about themselves: it is a bit like vicariously living a multiple number of lives and it gives pleasure to other people because you remember who they are and makes your own life so much more interesting.

Have fun with this. Practice by categorising the faces you see in newspapers or on the TV and online you can see many, many examples of difference faces and features. I look

forward to seeing you next time.