



DARCI LANG

FOCUS ON THE 90%

52 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION

1. Website:

Are you smiling on your website profile picture?
Is your website and webinar picture current; not a 20-year old picture?
Are you smiling and a good speaker on your company video?

2. Company directory:

Are people smiling or at least looking somewhat happy? Retake the pictures if not.
Is your biography written from a place of ego or something that is focused on the customer, your staff and/or your family? Is there anything else about you? Your hobbies, your interests etc. It's boring to only read about your credentials and doesn't make you look kind and approachable.

3. Email:

Have you spelled names correctly?
Do you say please and thank you?
Any all caps? Please don't use all caps, it looks like an order and not kind.
Do you give a nice greeting like, "Good morning" before you start typing? It takes two seconds to be friendly.
My admin assistant, Sandra, smiles when she writes an email too.

4. Group emails:

How do you talk to the others in a group email?
Read an email before you send it and ask, "Do I sound kind?"

5. Email signature:

Do you have a positive message in your email signature or a positive quote you change often?
OR a line from your mission or vision statement?

6. How does your voice mail sound?

Phone and listen to it. Did you smile as you recorded the message? Does it sound friendly?
Did you record your cell phone message while driving in the car or maybe through a tunnel and we can barely hear it?

What is your on-hold music? Is it something upbeat? Or better yet do you have a recorded message that helps me to learn more about your company or an upcoming sale as I hold?

7. Do you call me back?

A client referred me to her colleague. She never called me back. After the third call, the front desk said to me, "Don't expect much, she never calls anyone back." Really? Call people back! Encourage your staff to not tell me you are golfing, out for lunch or you didn't make it in today. It makes you look unproductive. Of course, you deserve to do all of those things but the customers think you aren't working. Say instead, "I am sorry they are not in right now; can I please take a message?"

8. Do you remember and use names during the call?

As soon as I pick up the phone and someone gives me their name, I write it down. That way I can reference that name during the call. That is why I love zoom calls- the name is displayed!

9. Did you leave me a message?

If you did, thank you! And did you take the time to fully focus before you left it. Was it a calm and intentional message? It is so obvious to me when your message was left during the designated time of day that you do call backs. The message is rushed and you don't finish talking before you even hang up. Did you use my name to start and end the conversation? Did you leave your number twice? Please slow down. Your rushed messaged leaves an impression that we are unimportant.

52 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION CONTINUED

10. Do you prepare for the webinar?

What does your home office look like in webinar calls? Our children love watching “YouTubers”. I was amazed at how many had messy rooms behind them. I tell them, “If a mom saw this video before it was posted she would say, *Clean your dishes up and make your bed before you post that video!*”
Google ways to set up your office with proper camera angles and lighting.
What does your title read on your screen?
Is your profile picture a smiling one?

11. Look into the camera!

I tape my notes on paper by camera with key words to remind me. Try not to read your notes off the side.
Look into the camera when you are speaking, not at the screen.

12. Do you ask, “How are you?”

I caution leaders to never ask, “How are you?” unless you have the time to truly *hear* the individual’s response. “How are you?” can be a great question to ask because their response tells a story. If you are actively listening and you genuinely care about the person, you will learn that there is a lot to learn in an, “I’m ok” response.

13. How do you sound on the conference call or virtual meeting?

Don’t read your welcome. Memorize that.
Do you introduce others on the call right up front?
Do you cut others off?
Do you let others shine?
Do you add something fun or uplifting?
What if you taped the call and played it back?
Don’t read the thank you message. Memorize that too.
(Download my 9 Webinar Dos and Don’ts!)

14. Outside of your building:

Go outside and make a list of your 10%’s — peeling paint, ripped awnings, dead plants, ugly ashtrays full of old butts, poor landscaping?
I have never seen better buildings than the ones owned by Warner Transportation. Every one of their locations is spotless and the buildings are in perfect condition. They exemplify pride! A well-kept building has an optimistic inviting feel to it.
Don’t put smoking people out front, they deserve their smoke but move them where they can get shade and buy them one of those awesome ashtrays that you can drop the cigarette in.

15. Parking lot:

Is the best parking spot in the lot yours? Does everyone who drives up know it is yours? If you don’t want to move your spot at least change the name on the spot so they don’t know it is you. Just put reserved.

Is there parking for those with a disability?

There have been the same cigarette butts and coffee cups in parking lots that I visit for years!

The car rental company I rent from all the time has a box of Christmas decorations that have been behind their kiosk for two years. I am not kidding, two years. That does not feel very inviting. Hire a cleaning company if you can.

16. Front door:

A lot of employees enter through a different door than their customers. It’s important to come in the door like a customer once in a while to see what it looks like from their perspective.
Does it feel welcoming?
Do you have hand written, taped up messages on the door?
Scrape off the old 1987 Chamber of Commerce stickers!
Clean off the boot mats and racks.
Get rid of the dead plants, shovels and salt.
Donate your five-year-old lost and found collection hanging at the front door and in that box on the floor.
Get matching hangers for the client closet.

17. Reception or front desk:

What does the customer side of the desk look like? I wonder if anyone has ever stood on the side of the counter the customer does.
I stay in many hotels where you can see into the staff room right behind the front desk.
Can I see into your office or other offices behind the reception area?
Is reception friendly and a positive first impression of your company? Some don’t seem to like their job and they are not friendly.
Have a chime installed so they know you have arrived and apologize if you make people wait.
Remind reception that everyone in the waiting area can hear you on the phone and your conversations with staff as they come to the counter.
Do they say, “**Thank you** for calling”, “Can you hold **please?**” and “**Sorry** to keep you waiting” as they talk on the phone.
Listen to your intercom and the way people talk to each other on that. Are they too loud, too deadpan? Do they use common courtesies like, “Sara line one please?” Rather than shouting, “Sara line one!”
I am always very kind and friendly to those at the front desks. From my experience, they are the “gate keepers” of many organizations and they remember how you treated them!

52 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION CONTINUED

18. Counters:

Stand on the customer side of the counter. I am a super short person and some counters are just too high and uninviting. I love when people bring the bag around from behind the counter and hand it to you.

What do you see? One of my favorite restaurants post all of their staff's memos right behind the counter on a big peg board. Telling staff what they need to do better, cleaning lists etc. They need to move this to a back room. It's all we read as we wait for our order.

Behind a counter the poster read, "If you don't think that people rise from the dead, you should see this place on Friday." Jokes are funny but this one does not speak kindly of the staff.

I do a lot of work for the financial services industry and have mystery shopped dozens of banks and credit unions. As I wait in line, I can see behind the member service representative counter and can see into your offices, hear your conversations and see people visiting. I would limit the visiting when there is a lineup of people waiting. It makes customers angry and impatient even if it is not your job to serve them.

19. Waiting room or lobby area:

Walk into your lobby like a customer and see it as they would see it. Have you ever sat in the different areas to see what it is like for the customer?

Is your lobby accessible?

Are the people coming out of back rooms smiling and friendly as we wait?

Are there only old industry related magazines or magazines suited to your customers? Very few customers want to read industry magazines.

Are the books or magazines clean and current? Recycle them if not.

Is there is an area for children? Make sure the toys are new and clean! Get rid of old crayons and coloring books and put colouring sheets to color on. Are the high chairs clean and straps working?

Are the chairs ripped? Dead plants? Dirty silk plants? Outdated art on the walls? Poor lighting? Light bulbs all working? Ceiling tiles clean? Clean blinds?

I can't tell you how many dirty PPEs I have worn to tour companies!

20. Music playing or a TV on?

Every time I shop at my grocery store, they are playing some depressing music and I am sure it is affecting sales as I just want to get out of there! I would invest in a good playlist or satellite music that is upbeat.

What is on the TV? I wish airports would stop showing only the news. What if they ran motivational messages? Wouldn't that help weary travelers feel better?

21. How do you arrive at the office in the morning?

Are you tired, hungover or stressed out?

Are you taking ruthless care of yourself so you have something left for your staff?

What did you watch or listen to as you got ready?

What did you listen to on the drive in to work?

Would your staff know you were having a bad day by your behavior? Change that behavior.

Say good morning, don't just blow in fast, it is unsettling. Take a few seconds to connect with people as you go by. Focus your magnifying glass off of you and onto them. Do you smile at everyone waiting?

If you are standing around visiting with other staff members, disperse the second a client walks in.

22. Are you welcoming?

Learn how to shake a hand. I mentor a lot of young people and the first thing I do is teach them is to not shake hands like a wet noodle. Seriously. Learn how to shake a hand. When our teenagers were looking for their first jobs, we would role play and teach them how to shake hands properly.

I have a very firm handshake so I make sure I match my client's shake. Practice your handshake with others and make eye contact with them.

23. Meeting and banquet rooms:

Purge the cupboards and drawers. I have been in dozens of hotels and if you open the cupboards it is full of past customers lost and found. Broken decorations, old plates and company pens. Donate it and get rid of it!

Take the old posters down

Vacuum in the corners and behind doors, paint the paint chips and shine the tables and chair legs.

Get the dirty carpets and chairs cleaned.

It does not feel like a nice vibe to open dirty cupboards.

52 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION CONTINUED

24. How is your customer service?

In my customer service presentation, we talk about codes. Codes are what we can use when a customer is in our building so they know you are focused on them and leaving a positive impression with them.

Codes are things you say to each other, in front of the customer, that lets them know you are a professional, customer-focused business.

There is nothing worse than waiting in line and some leader comes out of a back room and announces, "I am going for lunch." Of course, they deserve to go for lunch but everyone waiting is thinking, "I would like to go for lunch but I am waiting in line at your business." I ran a tuxedo store and if someone was going for lunch they would say, "I am just going in the back to iron the pants." That way the other staff knew we had left the sales floor but didn't announce where we were going. We even had codes for angry customers. If we had a customer we could not seem to make happy, (weddings were stressful for our customers) we would spell each other off. I would sense it wasn't going well for my team member and I would walk over and say to her, "I am so sorry to interrupt you while you are with a customer but the shirts you ordered are here so I will take over here so you can sign for the shipment."

Build your own codes that make sense for your company. I shared this code idea with a bank I worked with and the next time I called the bank and asked to speak to the manager her assistant said, "Sorry she is ironing pants!" Lol. Make the code specific to your business like, "She is in the vault and I'll have her call you."

25. Don't interrupt your team members:

I have seen leaders come out of back rooms and walk right over to their staff, while they are serving a customer and interrupt the customer to talk to them! Don't do that. Apologize if you ever have to interrupt someone who is serving your customer.

I have been with a sales person and their leader calls. They say, "I am sorry I am busy with a customer. Can I call you back?" And the leader does not stop talking! Give your team full permission to say to you, "I am sorry I am with a customer and I will call you back as soon as I am done" and let them hang up on you! No one is more important than your customers.

Our son, John, loves cars and has had many he liked to fix up. He called a dealership to inquire about a car he was interested in buying and the person answering the phone said, "Our sales people can't talk to you, they are all in a meeting." She didn't ask for John's name or number? What? I said to John, "What meeting is more important than a sale?" She could have said, "I am sorry no one is available at this moment but I will have someone call you back right away." He bought a car from a different dealership.

26. What does your personal office look like?

Is it clean?

Have you sat on the other side of your desk in the chair I sit in? Does the silk plant in the corner catch in my hair? Do my knees hit the desk?

Are the blinds on the window behind set in a way that makes it visually hard to look at you? I can't tell you how many times half open blinds make me dizzy and then it's hard for me to focus on you. Do your staff have to look at that every day?

Do you have positive, motivational books on your shelves?

Do you have pictures of family, crafts from your children, holiday mementos or motivational posters? What is the picture on your screen saver? I have seen some very weird things.

Can you see your gym runners, your garbage and lunch kit under your desk?

My office is my sanctuary. It is beautifully decorated and reflects who I am. I have a sage candle, diffuser always dispensing essential oil, a cross, a Tibetan singing bowl, Himalayan salt lamp, glass on top of my desk with pictures of my family and our holiday adventures under it, and some best mom ever "kid art" from when my children were little, framed copies of my book covers, my Speaker Hall of Fame plaque, a couch for my adorable pets to sleep on while I work and a palm tree. Heaven.

27. Kitchens and back rooms:

These need to be cleaned up. It is pretty rare that I walk into clean kitchens and back rooms. Someone needs to be in charge of keeping these areas clean.

Open the cupboards and donate all the dishes and cups that are not being used!

Clean the fridges!

Can a day be set aside to power through and clean these? Much like parking lots, some of the back rooms, bellman rooms and kitchens I see have been dirty for years. I have stayed at five-star hotels that had terrible back rooms.

If there is a door that can be shut, shut it so no one can see in.

No one wants to watch staff eating their lunch.

Can you make lists that are clear so if people are standing around, they know what to do? Put that list in a place that everyone can see it?

For staff memo boards, make sure they are updated and refreshed often or no one will look at them.

Watch your wording. Do you say please and thank you on those memos? I saw one memo that said, "Whoever left the stove a mess last week will be killed."

Remember customers can often hear you in the kitchen and back room. I can't count how many times I have spoken at a hotel or banquet center where the client has to go in the kitchen and tell the staff to please be quiet as they are interrupting the meeting.

52 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION CONTINUED

28. Bathrooms:

This is a no brainer but they have to be clean.

Add nice personal touches where you can.

I worked at a mining site that by the nature of the work had dirty buildings. The bathroom was like a spa! The staff had taken the time to decorate it and bring in beautiful lotions, etc. Nice touch!

Do you have a budget to put someone in charge of making the washrooms special?

Can we put stickers with positive messages on the mirrors?

I love posters that say, "Text this number if there is a problem with this washroom."

29. Do you have a quiet place?

Many companies have a quiet place for people. A dimly lit room with comfortable chairs to meditate or just chill out in. With high rates of mental health problems, I personally know many who would benefit from a safe, calming place.

30. How do you treat people on a tour?

Do you smile, make eye contact and say hello to those we pass?

Do you introduce them and share something personal about them like, "Tony has been here 11 years"? Some leaders try to connect with their staff by making weird disconnecting jokes as they pass. The staff do not appreciate this.

Are people leaning on door frames talking to other staff? It makes them look lazy.

Are you kind to the advertising representative, the security guard and the courier?

Did you take me to meet the senior leaders first? One of my favorite Co-op clients said, "I am going to take you to meet my frontline staff first. They are the hardest working people around here."

Did you listen in the past and remember some personal information about them you share as we pass them?

If people are sitting around visiting, make sure you teach them to smile and then jump up and disperse if a client is on tour.

31. How do you address people?

Please get names right. Learn names, learn how to pronounce and spell them and use them often. Don't say, "I know you have worked for me for five years and I still can't pronounce your name." Learn it, practice it and get it right. It means so much. Be patient with people who have accents. I can tell when you are getting frustrated.

Do you use all encompassing words like, gals, girls, ladies, geeks, nerds or techies? I don't have a problem with "ladies" but I know a lot of women who do. Unless they want to be called that, I would check what they prefer. We are working in VERY sensitive times with very sensitive employees. Get it right.

Don't make jokes until you have cleared them. I watched a leader get up and say "My staff are not morning people so they will all

be all cranky this morning." They were not impressed.

Are you excited for people when you announce that they are away on holidays or do you make a weird joke about it? People deserve holidays, acknowledge that. "So happy for Susan and her well-deserved Mexican vacation." Not "Don't we all hate Susan because she is in Mexico and we are not?"

What do you say if someone has left the company?

32. Body language:

Do you face people, sit across or lean in? Sit at eye level, turn your chair to face them, make eye contact and lean in. I can honestly tell the sincerity of a person by the degree to which they lean in and truly listen. Bring your chair around to the other side of the desk if you can or, better yet, set up an area to talk so you are sitting beside each other or are at the corner of a boardroom table. Though some people might feel more comfortable with a desk between them, I don't like a big desk separating people. Ask your staff what arrangement they prefer for the meeting so you don't freak anyone out by sitting beside them.

33. How is your vehicle?

Is it clean?

Darren has a beautiful SUV we keep clean and polished for road trips. I have a mom van I use to haul kids around and we use it to get building supplies and plants for the yard. I would not dream of picking up a client in my sweet, old van!

34. When you go for lunch or coffee:

Your low self-esteem or high self-worth will come through in how you treat and interact with the barista and wait staff.

Did you eat healthy? I am a super clean eater so no judgement but it shows how you take care of yourself.

35. What does your print material look like?

Your folios, business cards, brochures, menus, tent cards, printed cards?

A person came to our house to give us an estimate on her work. Her folio was so ratty and worn out and she kept apologizing for it the entire meeting. Get a new one!

52 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION CONTINUED

36. When we toured your community:

Do you smile and leave a positive impression everywhere you go? Your level of self-importance will shine through. Remember you are a billboard for your organization.

I was eating breakfast in a local restaurant and the front page of the local paper had an article that read, "There will be doctors visiting today to decide if our community is where they would like to live and set up their practice. Please be extra nice to everyone you meet today. If you do not know someone passing on the street or shopping in your business make sure you smile, say hello and be as welcoming as you can." I smiled as I read the article and I thought, "Wouldn't this community encourage people to do that ALL THE TIME?"

Do you shop in your community? We expect others to support us but do we support them?

37. Are you charitable?

Is your company charitable? Most of the leaders I interviewed for my *Lead the 90%* book, had a very positive community presence. Is your staff involved in the community/charitable events you host? Do they have a say in what you are involved in? Is there a schedule set up for the year to have staff involved when and where they like?

38. How is your driving?

I see people driving terribly and throwing garbage out of the windows of their company vehicles with "How is my driving?" written on the back door.

A van was driving beside me. I needed to get in front of him to make a turn so I sped up and had to cut in front of him to pass. As I turned the corner, he pulled up beside me and gave me the finger; with his company logo, like a giant billboard, on the side of his van.

39. At the meeting or conference:

How did you arrive? Early, happy and friendly? Were you rested, nourished and centered?

How do you treat your staff, the audio visual and hotel staff? Some staff show up at meetings and conferences with anxiety about being there. At one event, the leader took the time to go over and sit beside each one of her staff members as they arrived in the banquet room. She smiled and intentionally listened. She was so calm and loving it put her staff at ease.

40. Did you make me feel welcomed?

Did you introduce me to people as we wait?

At one meeting, my client brought me a green tea. She said, "I Googled you and found out you liked that." Wow.

41. Decorations and theme:

I bring magnifying glasses and my message is about focusing. Why don't you plan the theme of your meeting around the

speaker's theme? I have clients do wonderful things with the magnifying glass and the focus theme to decorate the halls and staff rooms. Why would you call the conference, "Shoot for the Moon" unless the speaker actually went to the moon? I often arrive at live and virtual events where the client has told the audience to all wear red, bring something personal from home or bring food for the food bank. Please include the speaker so we can participate too.

42. Food:

Please serve something healthy. Most people do not eat white flour, dried-up pastries. I speak at wellness events and they serve donuts. There are so many different diet restrictions, ask what people need and don't look annoyed that you had to accommodate them.

43. Name tags and cards:

Have name tags or tent cards with felt markers and let people fill them out. It helps take the stress away of others having to remember names. If you are going to print them, make sure you don't use last names unless you have asked first. Not everyone wants their last name on the card.

I like how some hotels have name tags with not only the first name of the guest service representative but the country they are from or a hobby they are interested in. It is a great conversation starter.

A leader wrote "4 Years, 3 Months, 2 hours and 1 second left". His attitude went with the name tag.

44. Where did you sit?

Did you hang out with your leadership team or sit amongst the staff? Don't hang out with the senior leadership team all day.

45. How do you introduce people?

Don't say, "I am going to have to read this", just read the introduction. No one expects you to memorize another person's introduction.

Don't try to be funny, or make weird statements. I had a principal of a school introduce me and say, "Well now we get to hear if she is any good." The staff apologized to me for how rude he sounded. My grandma said, "If you have nothing nice to say, don't say anything at all."

46. Did you listen?

Don't stand at the back of the room with the other leaders. The last oil and gas event I spoke at, the leadership group stood at back leaning on the counter laughing and visiting like they were standing at the bar. The entire day! You organized the event for employee engagement – please be engaged!

52 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION CONTINUED

47. How do you speak?

Take deep cleansing breaths before you go up and then just stand for five seconds before you start. If you are alone, you can stomp your feet before you go on stage. It helps to stomp some of the nervous energy out.

Don't start by saying how you don't like speaking or you aren't very good. Just start.

Tell a story to open. Don't read slides and notes. Welcome everyone and tell a great story to illustrate your point.

Then share the agenda and most importantly the intention for the day. Why are you meeting? Is it for a 90% reason or a 10% reason? Go right there. Don't skirt around it. It calms people when they know where they are headed.

Weave in the conference theme. It honors the group who worked hard to come up with it.

Say please and thank you as much as you can. Invite others to the stage with professionalism and grace.

When someone is changing slides for you ask to **please** change the slide. You might be nervous but it sounds rude to just say, "next slide" say, "next slide, please."

Get a clock and stay in your allotted speaking time. I have a clock I rest on the first table in front of me so I never have to wonder what the time is. If you do go over your time, apologize! It screws up the entire agenda when you do and does not make you look like a kind person when you don't seem to care.

48. How do you wrap up?

Did you pay attention to the day and do a recap of what everyone said and what it meant to you?

Did you thank the committee for all their hard work planning an event you might have just showed up to at the last minute?

Did you thank others involved in the day, the catering and the audio-visual staff?

Did you thank your speakers? I am very blessed to receive some amazing thank you gifts!

49. Do you thank people for referrals?

ALWAYS say thank you for a referral. If you refer me to another client who might book me as a speaker, you will get a thank you from me. If you don't thank people who refer business to you, they won't do it again.

50. How do you treat your family?

What if I asked your family if they think you like your job, what would they say? Do you use my "Door Knob Theory" and put your hand on the door knob at the end of the day? Do you wait to come in the door until you are positive? Live life with integrity and exemplify that in your personal life.

51. What do you post on social media?

I don't post anything on my personal page. Of course, you are entitled to have a personal life but everyone is watching you. All

the time. Be very careful what you post.

How do you deal with the trolls? All great leaders nip negative comments in the bud. You have to deal with trolls right away. Deal with them in a kind but firm way that shows others we will not put up with bully behavior.

52. Do you add kindness?

Take the time to add kindness to everything you write, the words you speak and to the people that you meet, lead, serve and love.