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To build your business, appear professional in all that you do

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This column is offered to help educate agents new to commercial and investment brokerage and serve as a review of basics for existing practitioners.

In our business you get one opportunity for a first impression. When meeting a client or customer for the first time you need to be prepared, have a positive attitude and dress like you deserve a big commission!

Preparing for your first interview requires research. What do you know about the person and company you are about to meet? The Internet gives us the ability to do such research. Look for commonality with the person you will be meeting; perhaps you both belong to the Chamber of Commerce, a local service club or attended the same schools. Find out what their company is all about; what do they do?

Is your market knowledge up to date? Are you familiar with all the properties that are on the market in your area? How much are typical office buildings selling for per square foot? How much a month will a typical 1,000 s/f store rent for? This is essential information in setting a listing price or guiding a customer what to expect. What kind of impression would you make if the client asks you about a building, on the market in your area, and you know nothing about it?

Demonstrating a positive attitude is important. We are dealing with successful people who run businesses; very busy people. Expect that you will be asked to wait when you arrive for your appointment. Do not let that frustrate you or change your attitude.

What will the client see when they come out to greet you? Are you sitting there reading a comic book, or a magazine, same difference? You do not appear to be busy! Making notes from your last appointment or planning the rest of your day shows you are just as busy as your client. Being on the phone is acceptable, provided you immediately get off the phone when your client arrives.

Avoid casualness; the professional will always appear in appropriate business attire. I hate ties, but I wear a suit and tie because it is a part of my first impression and business "uniform."

Your professionalism must continue throughout your relationship with your client or customer. My greatest concern today is the changes in our language. When did words like "pissed off" and "sucks" become part of acceptable language? They did not! This is crude and rude language that unfortunately, I am hearing all the time from salespersons. These words and worse also appear in e-mails and text messages; which can be posted or forwarded to anyone. Using this street slang may turn off a client, end a relationship and cause a deal to collapse.

Text messages and e-mails are loaded with chat acronyms and text message shorthand. But not everyone is versed in what these abbreviations mean, for example: CYE - check your e-mail, IMO - in my opinion, or PCM - please call me. You need to be clear in what you want to communicate and use proper sentences and punctuation. Be aware of your choice of wording, be professional in what you say and transmit.

To build your business, focus on appearing professional in all you do.

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