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Whether you acknowledge it or not, one of the greatest sounds in the world is the sound of someone saying your name. Even those who claim they can’t stand the name they were given at birth find a liking to the sound of it. This is why so many successful people in the world go out of their way to remember people’s first names. Even businessmen and women who can remember and put emphasis on other people’s names attract more customers, have more contacts, and can solidify more deals. People like the sound of their own name.

Back in the early twentieth century when Andrew Carnegie, who controlled the Central Transportation Company, was battling with railroad tycoon George Pullman to get Union Pacific Railroad’s business in Pennsylvania, they were outbidding each other to the point that neither would end up making a profit should they win the contract. While both men were in New York to meet with the board of directors of the Union Pacific, they ran into each other in the St. Nicholas Hotel and Carnegie said to Pullman: “Good evening, Mr. Pullman, aren’t we making a couple of fools of ourselves?”

“What do you mean?” Pullman demanded.

Then Carnegie suggested a merger of their two interests, expressing the mutual advantages of working with, instead of against, each other. Pullman listened attentively, but he was not wholly convinced. Finally he asked, “What would you call the new

company?” Carnegie replied promptly: “Why, the Pullman Palace Car Company, of course.” Pullman liked the idea and made the deal to merger.

People like hearing and seeing their name. And it’s not just the business dealers. It’s also the workers in the field, factory, or office who appreciate it when the boss comes around and addresses them by their first name. Benton Love, who used to be chairman of Texas Commerce Bank, believed that the bigger the corporation gets, the colder it becomes. “One way to warm it up,” he said, “is to remember people’s names.” The executives who tell me they can’t remember names is at the same time telling me they can’t remember a significant part of their business and are operating on quicksand.

I often say people’s names to them when I greet them and when I say goodbye to them, whether in person or on the phone. So much so that some people ask me why I do that. When I receive a phone call from my friend Tim, I don’t just say “Hello, how’s it going?” I say “Hello Tim! How’s it going?” When hanging up it’s not just “Goodbye,” it’s “Goodbye Tim, I’ll talk with you later.” People like hearing their name. To their ears, it’s the sweetest sound.

When meeting someone for the first time, it can be very difficult to remember their name. How many times have you forgotten someone’s name just minutes after being introduced? This happens because we are more conscious of other things in our minds when their name is stated to us. If we don’t take the time and energy necessary to concentrate

and repeat and fix names indelibly in our minds, we risk quickly forgetting a person’s name.

Napoleon III, Emperor of France and the nephew of the great Napoleon, was able to remember the name of every person he met. His technique? Simple. He would repeat the person’s name during their conversation and tried to associate it in his mind with the person’s features, expression and general appearance. The moment he was alone he wrote the name down on a piece of paper, looked at it, concentrated on it, fixed it securely in his mind, then tore up the paper. If he didn’t clearly hear the name distinctly in the introduction, he would indicate such and ask to have the name repeated. If it was an unusual name, he’d ask how the name was spelled.

Always be aware of the magic contained in a name and realize that this single item is wholly and completely owned by the person with whom we are dealing--and nobody else. The information we are imparting or the request we are making takes on a special importance when we approach the situation with the name of the individual. For instance, when the person making your sub sandwich is wearing a name tag, say their name and they’ll load up your sandwich. Or even the person bagging your groceries will be more cautious and orderly if you greet them with their name.

Remember that a person’s name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.

~ The End ~