

FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST AT ALLIANZ BREAKFAST

Young Professionals learn the art of being a winner and a dazzler in the first few minutes

For people beginning their professional careers, making a good first impression isn't just an important networking move – it is a must. With that in mind, members of the Young Professional Protégé program gathered for breakfast on Sunday morning to hear from an expert in corporate relationship-building, Nikki Heald, and meet some of their peers from other states. The event was arranged by the program's sponsor, Allianz.

The company's Chief General Manager Broker and Agency, Greg Fisher, said it is "more important than ever" that the industry focuses on the needs of young people and building their knowledge to ensure they are adequately skilled to lead the industry in the future.

Convention Chairman David Gamble told the breakfast attendees the Young Protégé Program and support from Allianz is "just what the industry needs to keep the focus on young people and ensure the industry continues to grow".

Ms Heald – Managing Director of training solutions company Corptraining – told delegates they have "a very small window of opportunity in which to meet and impress people".

In fact, Mr Heald – whose company provides contemporary training solutions for a number of high-profile companies – says people only have between three and 30 seconds to make a good impression with people they meet.

"Remember that people don't remember good, ordinary or average," she said. "People believe what they see is what they are going to get, and perception is powerful."

She says about 55% of a person's perception when they meet somebody new is based on that person's presentation. Another 38% of their perception is based on the person's body language and just 7% is based on what they say.

Ms Heald says these statistics are a key reason behind why many people don't remember a person's name after

they first meet them.

"With 93% of their perception based on a person's physical appearance they are not taking much notice about what the person is saying," she said. "Most people don't remember names essentially because they are too busy checking the other person out!"

Her tip for remembering names: use the new name two to three times during a conversation with the introduced person.

If a name is forgotten, people should apologise and say their mind has gone blank rather than saying they have forgotten a person's name. "That just makes it look like they're not important enough to have their name remembered," Ms Heald said.

"Also don't immediately shorten a person's name, even if other people that know them are," she said. "Wait until you get to know the person then ask them what they would prefer to be called."

Interacting with people over the phone is entirely different to meeting somebody face-to-face, Ms Heald says. Perceptions of people over the phone are totally based on their phone manner.

"Mobile phones can be a terrible distraction in an open-plan office. People should be mindful of their vocal volume.

"Also, put away your phone if you're at a function or meeting and turn it off. Don't just leave it on the table in front of you."

Corresponding via email can also land professionals in trouble, according to Ms Heald. She says simple mistakes such as incorrect spelling and punctuation can show a "lack of attention to detail".

People also assess each other on handshakes – something Ms Heald says a number of people don't get quite right.

Handshakes such as the "wet fish, the dominator, the politician and the bone-crusher" should be avoided at all times.

"A firm handshake from an appropriate distance is acceptable," she said. "And men should not kiss women on the cheek when they first meet them." ■