



THE REVIEW

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This Edition:

The Chief's Desk Page 2
'Seven Super Revealing Things Your Handshake Says About You'Page 3
'Hell on Earth'
40 years ago, a historic fire at the MGM Grand
.....Page 3

"How can you tell the difference between truth and propaganda? If you agree with it, it's the truth. If you do not agree with it, it's propaganda."

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The Chief's Desk

In my opinion, the Fire Service does not do a good enough job preparing our personnel to communicate effectively. Honestly, I don't think we spend enough time on the topic for anyone in the Fire Service whether in Operations or Non-Operations. A person's ability to communicate has a direct impact on their level of credibility. Whether written, verbal, or non-verbal the way you communicate sends a message about who and what you are to others around you.

As part of the *Executive Leaders Program* through the Naval Post Graduate School, I was introduced to Allen Weiner PhD. His firm, Communication Development Associates, focuses on helping leaders develop or hone their communication skills. I just finished reading his book *So Smart But...: How Intelligent People Lose Credibility – and How They Can Get it Back*.

Allen has been kind enough to offer us a one hour presentation called *Managing Competence and Credibility*. I am currently working to schedule the program virtually for our managers, senior staff, and Battalion Chiefs. Ultimately, I would like to engage him for the Fire Chiefs Academy, and have recommended him for consideration to the Battalion Chiefs Academy.

So, what is it about communication that is so important? Just about everything we do revolves around communicating some message to someone other than ourselves. The further you progress through the ranks, the more responsibility you will have for conveying who we are as an agency both internally and externally. It may start with something as simple as being a Fire Pal and culminate with filling in as the keynote speaker in front of a large audience that was expecting the Governor. That went really well, but was a bit nerve-racking between receiving the call in the late afternoon on a Thursday and being prepared to speak at 1000 Friday morning.

Just about everything we do conveys a message. We will talk about non-verbal as well as verbal communications in a bit, but right now think about your grooming standards, what clothes you wear, your posture, etc. They all convey a message to your audience. For us in the Fire Service, what we wear is pretty straightforward, and provided for us. Do I wear the blue pants with the blue shirt today, or the blue shirt with the blue pants? That said, I tend to wear business casual with slacks and a uniform polo or logo button-up. For the situations I typically find myself in, business casual is the most appropriate attire.

However, there are times that my Class A uniform is the best choice. When I spend a day at the Capitol, I'm typically in my dress uniform. First, it makes me stand out against the sea of suits so legislators know I'm there. Two, it has our logo so legislators know that CAFMA is involved. Three, it is a professional representation of the Fire Service. We want people to know that we are present, that we are part of a profession, and that we are professionals.

Continued on Page 4

Upcoming Events:

Nov 23: Office, try to visit stations
Nov 24: AFCA Virtual Mutual Aid training
Nov 25: Office closes at 1400
Nov 26: Office closed
Thanksgiving

Board Meetings:

November 30
CAFMA – 1700-1830

‘Seven Super Revealing Things Your Handshake Says About You

By: Jennifer Cohen

Everyone has heard of the phrase, “a picture speaks 1,000 words.” However, what people may be unaware of is the idea that a handshake does as well.

A handshake is the unspoken word that initiates a conversation in almost any social or professional get-together. This form of introduction can make or break the tone of your environment. According to a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, everyone should pay close attention to their handshake. People are making judgments and basing their initial opinions of you off of this small, but formidable gesture.

The goal here is to make this quick and easy gesture your best friend and secret weapon. However, first, you must discover what the handshake that you currently have reveals about you, your personality and the first impression that you give off.

Like the tale of Goldilocks, a great handshake is not too firm, not too limp, but just right. Let's find out if your handshake is a deal maker or deal breaker.

1. The Limp Noodle: If your handshake can be mistaken as a light grace, you might be exposing a weak inner-being. In fact, many employers and business associates will see this as a sign that you lack confidence and ability in what you do. If you're trying to be "gentle" with a female colleague, think again. Female professionals will appreciate and respect you for treating them just as you would a male counterpart.

forbes.com

‘Hell on Earth’ 40 years ago, a historic fire at the MGM Grand

By: Shea Johnson Las Vegas Review-Journal

Not long after the fire burst out of the deli, sending columns of thick black smoke shooting up inside the MGM Grand hotel tower, then-Nevada Gov. Robert List arrived at the flooded casino floor to survey the damage.

It was dim, and the debris was blackened and torched. Bodies were on the ground or slumped over gaming tables and chairs. The scene was nightmarish: “It was hell on Earth,” he recalled.

“That time in that casino is etched into my memory just like a tattoo that would never come off,” List, 84, said. “It was just tattooed in my mind: that terrible smell and the blackness without color, and the bodies that were there. It was awful.”

Other memories can fade with time, so after the devastating fire, rookie Clark County fire Capt. Jerry Bendorf dictated personal recollections to his wife to type. He said he had done so in order to remember specific accounts of his experience to tell his children and grandchildren.

Bendorf, 75, recalled sitting against the wall in a lobby as he watched other fire personnel give CPR to victims and thought about how he could relate to Hollywood's depiction of the fog of war.

"I didn't feel like it was me there," he said. "I kind of thought to myself: This is like being in a movie or something. It wasn't real."

He was just one of more than 200 firefighters who responded to the catastrophic MGM Grand fire in 1980, the worst blaze in Las Vegas history. It killed 87 people and injured hundreds more inside the Las Vegas Strip property, changing so much about the valley 40 years later.

reviewjournal.com

Chief's Desk Continued

The way you shake someone's hand is also important and is part of a first impression. I can look the part in the right uniform, but if I have a weak handshake, one that is too strong, too fleeting, or lingers too long, I will send the wrong impression. Part of a handshake includes eye contact and a smile.

Understanding that a majority of your message is delivered via non-verbal communication is extremely important. Let's say you're meeting someone and they push your buttons. You may walk away from the tense moment thinking you did a great job because you didn't give into your desire to provide a proper tongue-lashing. However, your lowered brow, narrowed eyes, deep red face, forward posture, and clinched fists said more than your words could have relayed – you failed. Call this an opportunity to practice normal face. It's tough, but we all need to learn to control our emotions and respond to whatever is around us.

Your posture whether sitting or standing sends a message. Checking your phone during a conversation, looking away from the person speaking, shifting in your seat incessantly, lack of eye contact, how you hold your mouth while you're listening, how you hold a piece of paper while you're speaking – all send a message. Sometimes good, sometimes not so good. It is important that you practice being in the moment with the person or persons with whom you are communicating. I at least try to tell someone that I am expecting an important message, so I may have to check my phone or take a call during our meeting. While I'd prefer not to interrupt someone, there are times when it cannot be avoided. In those instances, give a courtesy heads-up. If your message, or phone call, will take a significant amount of time away from the meeting, see if you can change the meeting time. Not valuing someone else's time sends a message – they're just not that important.

Your words do mean something, even though your non-verbal cues relay a majority of your message. While my undergraduate degree is in Mass Communications, I am by no means an expert. I used to think

I needed bigger words so that I would sound more better smart. However, studies have shown that smaller words convey a message far better than larger or more technical words.

When you are speaking to a group of people it is important to have command of the stage. I still get nervous before a speaking engagement, so I usually start with some sort of icebreaker just to calm myself. Walking the stage too much is a distraction. Standing with your hands frozen by your side, or with a death grip on the podium are a distraction. Saying ummmm or uhhhh too much is a distraction. Studies show that if you are reading from a paper as part of your presentation, it sends a better message if the paper is held at an angle rather than straight up and down. A little tip I learned from Allen – who knew??

For the love of all things holy please no death by PowerPoint, and do not read the slides. Many presentations do require a slide deck, but the slides should serve as a guide, not as the entirety of the presentation. I think we all need work in this area. Don't speak too fast, don't speak too slowly, and avoid being monotone. Remember the teacher in the movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*? Don't be that guy. You have to at least sound like you are alive, that you have command of the material you are presenting, and that you are happy to be where you are. Have fun with it, use appropriate humor, and be cautious of your language.

With technology today, written communication has become even more challenging. Has anyone ever conveyed the wrong message in a text or an email? If you could see me, my hand is up. Yes, I have written angry emails, ignored my own advice, and hit send. No bueno. If you have a difficult message to deliver to someone, your best approach is to do it in person, or if that's not possible, a phone call. If in person, and it's a difficult conversation, going outside for a walk may be advisable. Apparently, bad news is better received when moving. Much of the message we are trying to send is lost in our written communication today. A final tip, smaller words are better in writing as well as when speaking.

One of the issues with what we will call "toxic leaders" is an inability to communicate properly whether in writing or in person. You can be blunt without being an ass about it. How you approach the message you are sending is vitally important. Again, your non-verbal cues will send more of a message than whatever words you use. If you have negative feedback, focus on being constructive not destructive. Your tone of voice, choice of words, and location of the conversation all send a message and potentially not the one you're trying to share. The goal is to help change a behavior or improve a situation, not make it worse.

Finally, be more concise. I know, I'm not the person to send this message, but I'm working on it. One of the things I'm learning is that I do not have to provide every single detail, nor do I have to address every argument that may exist regarding what I am presenting. I need to package my message in a way that delivers the core, and provides opportunity for my audience to ask clarifying questions. For example, I have worked for five years on our ambulance concerns. This also means I know a majority of the arguments against my recommendation, as well as all of the arguments in support of my recommendation. However, I have to understand that I cannot cover five years' worth of work in a 10 minute presentation. What I have to do is figure a way to condense the message down to a smaller, yet more impactful, package.

There is a lot more to this topic than I can cover in just a couple pages. I hope that these bits of information will help you understand the importance of spending more time developing your

communication skills. We didn't even touch on active listening or the communication loop. Another time, I've used up my word limit for this week.
