



AVOID THIS – the absolute worst way to start a first date...

By Andy Bounds

Picture the scene: you're having dinner on your own in a restaurant. And the person of your dreams walks in. They come over to you. There's good eye contact. You can feel a connection between you already. Breathlessly, they whisper "It's great to meet you. Tell me about yourself..."

How would you respond?

Like this...?

"Great to meet you too. Luckily, I've got this book with me (you ceremoniously whip the book from your pocket). It describes my family history – where we live, how many of us there are, all our names, the things that are different about our family. It really is a One Stop Shop describing what's special about us... Hey, hold on, I haven't finished yet... Where are you going...?"

Don't go...

Come back!"

Devastating. Your one chance to make a first impression – totally ruined.

A weird example to give you? After all, nobody would behave like that when first meeting someone, would they?

So, why is it that some people feel it's essential to take a brochure with them to first meetings with potential customers?

They've never seen you before. They don't want to be looking over your shoulder, reading stuff about you. They want a *chat*. One you both find interesting and stimulating. One you both enjoy. And one that – like a first date – if things go well, leads to something much better for both of you...

So, when you're meeting someone for the first time:

– Don't take a brochure (you wouldn't want to read theirs, so why would they want to read yours?)

– Prepare (in advance):

- a list of questions to ask them, to get the conversation going, and find out more about them
- a couple of interesting, useful things you could say about yourself (a good rule of thumb is "facts tell, stories sell. Tell stories about what you've done for others; don't just list facts about what you do)
- 1-2 useful bits of info/advice for them, so they get value from the meeting
- Your opening line, so you feel confident going into the meeting
- Your closing lines - for the two situations of:
 1. If the conversation's gone well, how you're going to ask for Date Two
 2. If things aren't going so well, how to end the meeting politely, with integrity but without a follow-up

– Diarise (again, in advance) to follow-up with them immediately after the meeting.

Since you've read this far, I guess you're finding this advice useful? So, while I've got you, let me just quickly show you my holiday photos...

No, don't go...

Please...

Action Point

For your next meeting with a stranger, leave the brochure at home and follow the advice above. Both of you will be pleased that you did...

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About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success. Marketing legend Drayton Bird said Andy had taught him '... more about effective communicating than a lady who'd taught two American Presidents'.

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