

How to Become More Likable

BY MICHAEL LOVAS

Being liked by your clients should have absolutely no bearing on how well you do your job. Terrell Owens is one of the most disliked people in professional football, but he does his job well enough make millions of dollars. Having made that point, it is ultimately meaningless unless someone brings you clients and forces them to do business with you. The point is, if your target market does not like you, they will not hire you.

On the flip side, professionals who are liked by their clients prove to be more successful because they get more clients. In our personal search through a ream of reports and research findings, we discovered that scientific researchers continue to look closely at what makes a person likable. Further, they have determined exactly what it is. Bottom line – if you want to become more successful, become more likable. And, now, I'm going to list five ways you can do exactly that.

First, please recognize that my firm deals in psychology, not magic. Likeability is not the result of luck. It's not a gift inherited by only a few anointed people – it's a skill set. Following is what researchers say happens to people who develop this skill set:

1. They're more successful in business and in life.
2. They get elected, promoted, and rewarded more often than those less likable.
3. They close more sales and make more money.
4. They get better service from all types of service providers, including Doctors and other health care providers – so, they'll probably live longer as well!

There are three aspects to likeability. These aspects determine the degree someone likes you. They are: verbal, vocal and facial. In future articles I'm going to expose the verbal and vocal qualities of likeability. But, today, we're going to look deep into the face.

The Face and Likeability

I'm referring to the sincerity of your facial expressions. Think of the last time you were in a romantic relationship. Did you wear a sour facial expression? Ever smile at a baby, only to have the baby burst into shrieks of terror? Ever see anyone laugh at the news of someone's death? There is something amiss in each of those examples. Something in the face was wrong. And, when something is wrong in the face, it's really important. This aspect accounts for 55% of likeability!

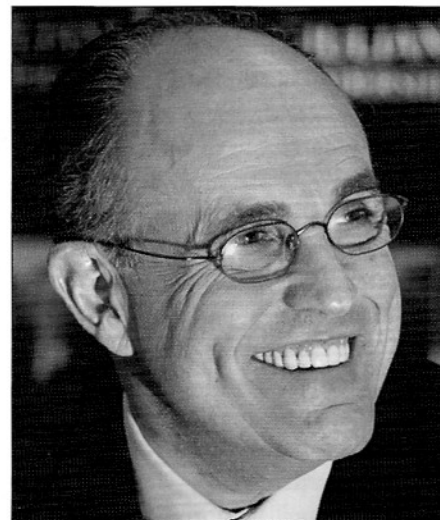
Looking Deep

Because facial expressions are so important, I've investigated them a bit more in-depth. Typically, two places the face can broadcast a mismatch and stop someone from liking you: 1) A fake smile – this is when a person smiles only with his mouth. A real smile is located in the mouth and eyes. That's why amiable people have smile lines around their eyes. 2) Roving eyes – which is when a person's eyes look in the wrong places at the wrong times while engaged in a conversation. Did you know that you can actually tell what kind of information the other person is gathering by where his eyes go?

What happens when your facial aspect of likeability is off? The other person doesn't like you as much. That means he doesn't trust you as much. Consequently, that means he probably won't do business with you. Is this the case in every situation? No, but it's true in 83% of them. The research in likeability proves that decision makers do business with someone they do not like in only 17% of buying situations. Not good odds, are they?

One of the most important elements of facial attraction is what's going on in your head when you're listening.

What happens when your facial aspects are good? You are perceived as be-



In a study conducted at Stanford University, Rudolph Giuliani was ranked as the most likable politician after receiving 64.2% of the vote.

ing sincere. Technically, the term is “congruent.” In other words, all systems are working in harmony toward a common good. Think of it like this. The other person has a subconscious calculator analyzing and tabulating data as Yes or No continually. Give enough incongruent or No signals and you're history.

Stated in real-life terms – financial advisors who place high value on relationships tend to be more congruent, thus liked by more people. Conversely, advisors who prefer to work with calculations and analyze projections tend not to put as much effort into building relationships. Thus, more people do not like them.

Examples of Likeable People

In a study conducted a little over a year ago by Shanto Iyengar of Stanford University, participants were asked to rate 20 political figures on a “feeling thermometer.” The warmer or more favorably they felt toward a person, the higher score they gave them on a scale of zero to 100. The

top three and bottom three politicians in the ranking are listed below:

Bottom three:

- 18) Sen. Bill Frist - 41.5
- 19) Sen. Harry Reid - 41.2
- 20) Sen. John Kerry - 39.6

Top three:

- 1) Rudolph Giuliani - 64.2
- 2) Sen. Barack Obama 58.8
- 3) Sen. John McCain 57.7

I'm not making a political statement here, so please don't read bias into what I'm telling you. Please look at these people as strangers and read just pure data in what you see.

What is it about Kerry?

What is it about John Kerry that makes him the least likeable of the 20 in the list? Look at him totally objectively in terms of likeability. Take a look at the photo of John Kerry. What do you see in his face?

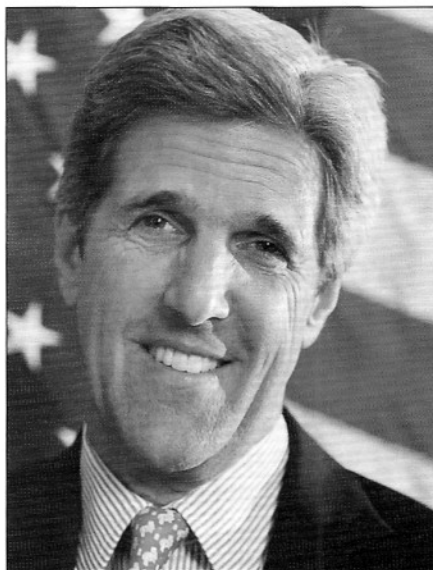
I believe those who don't like Kerry are responding negatively to his non-likeable facial qualities. His face often has a "look" of disdain, even dislike. He is very confident in himself, but you don't get the feeling he is confident in the rest of us. Likeable people like other people and they show that in their facial expressions. I don't think John Kerry likes us and I think we pick up on that.

What should Kerry do to improve his likeability? It's the same thing you should do if you have some of his facial characteristics. Find the most loving and caring facial expression you can make. Think of your kids as little babies, focus on them and then look in the mirror. That's the face you should wear when you talk to your prospects and clients.

Like Me

In my work I've noticed that many people gravitate to other people who look like them, but they rarely ever notice it. Dr. Karen Stephenson describes it as "an ancient skill encoded in us by our forebears."

"In the small talk of cocktail parties, humans are at random walk, desperately seeking points of similarity through visibility: height, girth, dress, gender, race, accent, hair and eye color, etc. Reading



John Kerry was rated the least likeable politician after receiving 39.6% of the vote in the Stanford study.

the audience and working a room are ancient skills encoded in us by our forebears who sat cheek by jowl around the campfire; an earlier and more primordial form of cocktail party. I confess to having attended countless cocktail parties and continue to be amazed how, after just a few drinks, I end up with people who are like me in some way - same experiences, same clothes same interests, etc. It's not the alcohol talking, but the ancient drive of seeking similarity: 'You look like me, you think like me, you dress like me ...

you're one of us.' When people connect at this basic level, they are engaging in an embryonic form of trust with each other. What began as a room full of disconnected people may end up as a network of people connected in invisible lines of trust."

Interestingly, my wife Pam discovered Dr. Karen Stephenson's articles on the Internet quite by accident. As Pam describes it, "I connected with her work and her words immediately. It wasn't until much later that I noticed the physical similarities." So, not only is the physical resemblance uncanny, their attitudes and interests are very similar. Connecting purely by happenstance on the Internet is remarkable in itself, but probably not all that unusual. After all, how many couples do you know that originally met on the Internet? And, just as like individuals gravitate to each other at cocktail parties, those meeting in cyberspace tend to bond to those with similar interests. Very interesting, indeed.

Michael Lovas is co-founder of AboutPeople - a unique coaching, consulting and training form specializing in the financial industry. Michael is the author of eight books, three columns, and a thousand articles on Professional Credibility and Psychological Connection in the financial industry. Michael can be reached by phone at (509) 465-5599, by email at Michael@aboutpeople.com or at www.aboutpeople.com.



Allstate-approved
"on hold" messaging
packages from just

\$99⁰⁰

No monthly fees. No contract.

(800)741-AMTC/www.amtc.com

24-hour demo line:
1.800.288.2751
Demo 222