

8 Ways to Stand Out From the Crowd

By Charles Marcus



Sometimes I think we may feel that we have to do the big things in life to stand out from the crowd, to make a difference, but in my experience I have found that it is the little things that we do on a consistent basis that are usually the most powerful. I would like to share with you 8 ways that I have found help you stand out from the crowd. Some are based on my own personal and professional experience, and some I have observed in other people who I admire and respect. Make your own list, compare, but the main point of the exercise is to integrate the points in to your daily life and the key to its success is by implementing them.

1. **Make it a habit to follow-up with people promptly.** It sounds simple, right? In my experience, and surveys regularly back this up, 67% (amazingly!) of people do not follow up in business. Did you know that most sales are not closed until the sixth, seventh or even until the eighth attempt; very few deals are achieved on the first few attempts, and yet only three percent of sales people follow-up more than twice. Whatever business you are in, if it involves making a sale, signing that contract, or building relationships, the best way to stand out from the crowd is to follow-up promptly, follow-through, and be persistent and determined. Don't give up if you are initially rejected, keep following up! Somebody once said, "a no is only a request for more information!"
2. **Equally as important as following-up is taking the time to respond to people who leave you messages.** This is only common courtesy. How often do we not find the time to follow-up with someone who has emailed us or left a voice-mail unless we know specifically

why they have contacted us, and even then we do not always take the time to respond. Not only is this bad manners, it is also bad business. How many important relationships have you missed out on by not responding to a message? The people who stand out from the crowd take the time to respond.

3. **When you are speaking to people, give them 100% of your attention, and I mean 100%.** There is nothing more annoying or obvious to people than you having your own agenda and only waiting for the other person to take a breath so that you can jump in to get your point across or to turn the conversation around to yourself. Develop your listening skills, most people are not truly good listeners. I have found that you gain much more from being a great listener than being a great talker. Be interested in other people and what their point of view is. Ask lots of open-ended questions. Dale Carnegie once said: "To be interesting to other people, you have to be interested in them first". Wise and true words from a great and wise person.
4. **Get in to the habit, and that is all it is, of sending a hand written note or card to someone who has given you an order, a referral,** or has been nice, courteous or helpful to you. It takes a few minutes, but means a lot to the recipient, especially in this day of impersonal and easy e-mail messages. I don't know about you, but I really appreciate it when someone goes to the time and trouble of hand writing a letter or card to me, actually puts a real stamp on it and writes out my name and address on the envelope instead of a computer label. It personalizes it for me, makes me feel like I am more than just a prospect in a list of many for

that person. Maybe I am making a big deal out of this, but from the response I get from people when I do this, I know it is appreciated.

5. **People expect the expected of you. Why not do the unexpected.** Do you acknowledge people who for whatever reason do not give you that order, where you didn't get the contract or make the sale? Remember, they did let you make the presentation? Do you acknowledge the person who didn't hire you for that job, but at least gave you the experience of the interview? Most people don't take the time or have the discipline to do this, and yet, a sale or a job lost or a contract given to one of your competitors today, does not mean it is lost for ever. Do not give up, think long term, think about the relationship you may be developing, the connection you are building for the future, and not about the lost sale, or your bruised ego!
6. **If you belong to an association or a group either in your personal or professional life, and this includes a church, synagogue, mosque, etc., get involved.** Do not get involved because you want something in return, but because you want to contribute. People will respect and acknowledge you for it, look at you and treat you differently. And this is just an added bonus to the personal satisfaction of getting involved

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and contributing to something you believe in. In the process you learn to become a leader instead of just a participant.

7. **Invest one hour a day, at least, to your own individual personal and professional development.** You can take the one hour all at once, or break it in to segments, whatever fits in to your lifestyle and schedule. During that time read a book, maybe an autobiography of someone you admire or a business book, listen to tapes and the words of wisdom from the experts in the fields and areas of your life that you want to improve, subscribe to a daily e-zone with wonderful quotes or ways to motivate you, inspire you, and to challenge you. We can all say we can't find the time, but this is so important to your personal growth. For many years the only thing I ever read was the sports pages of the newspaper when I was growing up in England. What a waste. I wish I would have devoted more of that time to my development. I am not saying you should not read the sports page or a good fiction book, or whatever interests you, we all need that down time for ourselves, but don't do that at the expense of opening up your mind to new ideas and areas for improvement. Do not look at your education as an expense of time but as an

investment of your time. Knowledge is wisdom when applied correctly. Never stop learning.

8. **Stretch your comfort zone; do one new thing every day.** Take a chance on something you have always wanted to try. Don't be afraid of being rejected, of people saying no to you, or of failing. The people who stand out from the crowd are the ones prepared to take that chance. I am not saying do something radical or fool hardy, but you can become a sensible risk taker. We all have choices and decisions to make every day. We all know the things we want to do and the things we need to do. Take some risk, defy conventional wisdom and make your own wisdom come true. My old boss, when I was a sales professional, used to say after every sales meeting: "Do you want to stay safe and be good, or do you want to take a chance and be great."

The choice, my friends, is yours, every single day.