

Sorry, What's Your Name Again?

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**By Eric Plantenberg**

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You're at an event and a prospective client you have been hoping to work with for a while introduces herself. You shake her hand and no sooner does the handshake than – whoops! Her name vanishes into thin air. You could not remember the name if somebody paid you. Frustrating? Embarrassing? Costly? Yes, yes, and yes. Let's explore the reasons and resources to eliminate this and other memory challenges.

Dale Carnegie, in his all-time bestseller *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, says, "the sweetest sound in the world is the sound of a person's own name." Even though most professionals recognize this, it is undeniable that most people are plagued with forgetting names at one time or another. How could something so simple be so tough?

The top reason for memory challenges is that most professionals have never learned how to train their recall abilities. Everyone has the ability to make huge improvements in his or her recall ability. Rather, it is a "trained" and "untrained" memory. Your recall is not a talent – it's a skill that can be learned and improved.

If you want to improve your recall of important client information, points to cover in presentations, answers to objections, technical information, and other critical data, try some of the simple strategies below to improve your memory skills.

#### Remembering Names

1. Slow down and listen. Names that you forget immediately you never heard at all. The first 15 seconds of a relationship are the most critical – so when meeting someone new, make sure to stop, clear your mind, and invest a few seconds just paying attention. It saves time and frustration.
2. Repeat the name aloud...two or three times. Do not overdo it, but when someone says her name is Mary, for example, introduce yourself by saying: "Mary?" Then you will know you heard it correctly. "Nice to meet you Mary." Be conversational but conscientious about your introductions. Using

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somebody's name within the first few seconds of you meeting locks the name into your mind – plus it makes a great first impression.

3. Use images. Your memory operates visually, so try turning an abstract name into a clear picture. For example, the name "Jay" can be visualized as a blue jay. "Jane" can become chain, and "Tom" can become a tomcat or turkey. With just a little imagination, nearly any name can be visualized clearly.

### Perfect Presentations

1. Do not try to "memorize" a presentation word for word. Stress is the number one killer of memory, and communicating information is stressful enough for most of us without worrying about the occasional misplaced "and" or "the."

2. Do prepare properly. Decide upon a few key points that are relevant, and then in an order that makes sense. A rough outline in bite sized pieces is much easier to commit to memory than tons of details.

3. Most important, whatever your topic or preparation level, do your best to relax, be yourself, and have fun. 93% of communication is nonverbal, so take the focus off "What do I say next?" and connect with your audience. It makes your information much easier for you to recall and much more interesting to your audience.

### Long-term Storage

Any information that needs to be retained for longer than a few minutes needs to be reviewed using spaced repetition. Use the "one hour, one day, one week" system. This means that when you learn something you want to lock in long term, you must review it within the first hour (while it is still fresh in your mind), once again a day later (to refresh your memory), and then again within about a week (to lock it in).

An effective memory will positively impact every area of your work and your life. It's actually much easier than most people think. The above tips are just the beginning – try them out and see the immediate impact.

Eric is president of Freedom Speakers & Trainers, [www.deliverfreedom.com](http://www.deliverfreedom.com) & an instructor & personal coach on memory, goals, attitude, time management & communication. He is a national known memory trainer that has worked with thousands of companies to enhance their memory. He is co-author of *Winning The Name Game*, an at home study course that teaches individuals how to remember the names of everyone they meet. [www.winningthenamegame.com](http://www.winningthenamegame.com)

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