

Use the FORD Method to Build Stronger Relationships Faster

by James Foxall

Relationships make the world go around. They build businesses, blossom into friendships, and even make babies! Developing strong relationships quickly with strangers is something that I've often found challenging. My nature is to have a relatively small number of very close friends, and therefore I often keep my private life private. This means I also don't ask others about their private lives – and that's what keeps people at a distance.

Recently, I went through ICAN's Defining Leadership program. This is a three part program, each part consisting of two full days of leadership development. Everyone goes into a program like this for different reasons, and each comes out of the program with different results. One of the many things I got out of the program was a realization that I needed to – and I was able to – improve my interpersonal skills; I could take all of my relationships to a higher level!

During one of our sessions, guests were brought in to discuss their own leadership experiences. One of the guests that came to our session was gentleman named DJ. After a brief mingling period, all of the program participants, coaches, and guests sat in a circle. There were about 20 of us in total. DJ was one of the first to speak, and somehow the discussion swung to the topic of people's names. We discussed how remembering and using people's names greatly furthers relationships. Another guest who knew DJ remarked that DJ probably had the names of everyone in the room memorized. We all then watched in amazement as DJ went around the room and recited everyone's names, with near perfect

accuracy. Everyone in the room was stunned. His friend then said to give DJ a week and he'd have all of our kids names memorized too.

I knew I had to sit down with DJ and hear his story!

Fast forward a number of weeks and DJ and I sat down for Sushi and got to know each other. We're about the same age, we each run a sizable business, we grew up in the same town and knew some of the same people, and we have both been on a personal growth path for many years. We got so involved with swapping stories (building relationships!) that I completely forgot the main reason I wanted to meet him! As we were getting ready to leave, DJ said "so you were curious about how I can memorize names..."

Building better relationships using the FORD method

The short version of the story is that DJ learned how to listen – really listen. This isn't something that can be learned quickly – and really, it's his story. However, DJ did teach me a technique to get started: how to use the FORD method to build stronger relationships, faster.



“When you refer to someone by name, you instantly create a deeper connection with them. The FORD method takes this a step further...”

We all know that when you refer to someone by name, you instantly create a deeper connection with them. The FORD method takes this a step further and really creates strong relationships. FORD stands for:

Family
Occupation
Recreation
Dreams

The concept is simple. The more you know about a person with respect to the items above, and the better your ability to use them in communication, the quicker and deeper you can take the relationship. This is obviously a great thing for sales reps whose livelihood depends on their customer relationships, but really, this is great for anyone that wants to build stronger relationships in any setting.

The next time you meet someone new, make it a point to not only learn and use their name, but learn something about their family, occupation, recreational activities, or their dreams. Talk about them in a meaningful way, and commit them to memory. The next time you see the person, ask them how things are going with respect to what you remember, and see if their eyes don't light up! If you use this method, you will build stronger relationships with each person you come in contact with.

Using tools like the FORD method is not about using gimmicks to manipulate people, it's about using tools and models that make it easier for you to adopt new ideas and new habits, in order to grow as a person. As you use the FORD method to build stronger relationships, the process will become second nature – you won't even have to think about it.

As I left lunch with DJ, I got to thinking – how many items did he manage to draw out of me related to FORD? I think he got something from every category, and that's impressive!

ABOUT JAMES

James Foxall, President of Tigerpaw Software, was instrumental in developing and creating Tigerpaw's core product, an award-winning end-to-end business automation tool, utilized by over 35,000 users in 28 countries. In his 20+ years with the company, James has helped transform Tigerpaw Software into an industry leading business automation software that services a variety of industries including IT/Networking, Systems Integrator and Telecommunications.

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business easier and make your staff more effective.

With concurrent licensing, companies only need licenses for the number of people who will be using Tigerpaw at the same time. Sharing licenses across teams can significantly cut costs. Concurrent licenses save you money.