

Women in the Workforce ... *V'taas B'chefetz Kapehah* Did You Do Your Homework?

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It's official. Despite popular ditties to the contrary, we do not leave homework behind when we graduate. Doing our homework — more professionally referred to as due diligence — is essential for the success of most professional encounters.

From interview to meeting, conference to sales pitch, doing your prep work is what gives you the edge and creates the backdrop for success.

We set up and attend these kinds of interactions because we seek a professional purpose. You know that laundry won't sort itself and ingredients don't arrange themselves into cakes or suppers. So why should we assume that by simply attending we can achieve success?

This week we had the opportunity to offer a unique and potentially ludicrous business opportunity to businesses affiliated with the Jerusalem Hub. A senior business executive from Europe was willing to come to Israel for one day in search of a distributor for a patented device. Under normal circumstances he would never have considered nor known about these businesses, and they would never have had the opportunity to explore this potential alliance.

A mutual acquaintance who is aware that we strive to bring opportunity to the amazing women developing and managing businesses in Yerushalayim approached us with the proposition. He would make the connection and thus, despite being smaller than the European's usual distribution channels and perhaps less high-powered, they could have the chance at a big-ticket deal that carries significant revenue potential alongside the ability to offer an exclusive world-class product to high-end clients. This would not only generate more income directly for them, it could potentially open the door for them to do other business with large corporations once having established their connection via this particular product.

After letting Jerusalem Hub members know about the opportunity, three expressed interest and a date was set. Mr. European flew in for just 24 hours. A heavy-weight executive with

international experience, now invested and involved in helping innovative companies grow in his home country, this was a unique opportunity. I spent four hours with him as he met the candidates, one at a time, explaining the product, curious about their offering, answering their questions and considering possible partnership.

The women were gracious, self-effacing and intelligent. I know them to be driven and successful business owners who built up profitable operations with little prior knowledge.

With impeccable European manners and interested, he went through the process three times, explaining the nuances of the device, the problem it solves and answered all the questions, despite being straight off the plane.

We do not yet know if any of the businesses will take the opportunity and if a partnership can be collaborated between them. Nonetheless, this was a priceless opportunity to examine our skills at presentation (of self and business) and proper preparation for professional encounters.

As a rule of thumb, the closer the contact, the more familiar, the more natural and easy your due diligence will be. I do not recommend skipping this step, even if you know each other well (unless you are having a coffee break together), because clarifying your goal and the purpose of the meeting for BOTH of you, as well as the potential roadblocks either of you might encounter, will make your conversation more effective and generate better results.

Surely, when preparing to meet someone we do not know, from a different culture, strata or industry, it behooves us to spend time finding out whatever relevant information we can. What is accepted practice in the setting you expect to be? What is common practice for the type of business you are discussing? What are their personal interests and preferences? What are industry trends in their market? What has recent news from the company included? The more insight you have the better equipped you are to handle the situation and the conversation with grace and professionalism. The more details you can explore, the more intelligent you sound and the more

effective the communication.

No less important is considering what sides of ourselves to present. What about your experience or background is most relevant to this interaction? What about your business or proposition appeals most to them? How will you formulate your self-presentation? Is humor appropriate? What can you say, do or give to make a lasting impression, help them remember you favorably and stay in touch? In some cultures it is expected that you will have with you a one-page document to give that succulently summarizes your individual offering.

Technical details are important. What language(s) do you each speak? If you are not both comfortable in the same language, what steps can you take to mitigate that barrier? What will the weather be like? What attire is appropriate? Often local customs or expected flow of conversation is vastly different from one culture to another. For example, Americans do not consider a business conversation complete without a concrete summary at the end, including action items and a written summary of expectations. In Eastern cultures, concluding a conversation that way is a deal breaker and considered highly insulting. Striking a balance between aggressively pursuing your goals and not seeming meek or irrelevant may be difficult. By focusing on offering value and backing requests with valid data, reasoning and value, that balance can be achieved.

CPI stands for Common Point of Interest. An essential part of every important conversation, it is your duty, to discover your CPI as soon as possible. Whether you are meeting new people, or talking to those you already know, finding your CPI will make them more comfortable and increase your approachability. One way to achieve that — after some homework, of course — is asking better and more directed questions. You'll be surprised at what you may discover.

Another nice concept to keep in mind is "flavored answers." When asked a generic question such as "How are you?" don't fall into the banality trap. It quickly becomes a dead end. Prepare and strive to provide a flavored answer, i.e.,

an answer that gives more information, personal inflection, or engages despite the boring question. People don't expect this, but it does engage them on a deeper, more meaningful level. By being personally available in the conversation it becomes easier to reach more meaningful discussion.

By avoiding assumptions, preparing properly and fully, maintaining an open mind and really listening to what is being said during the encounter you may discover new information, direction or ideas, think of partnership possibilities and make new alliances that grow and solidify over time.

These skills are crucial for one-on-one meetings, but are even more valuable when you participate in conferences. With the Temech Conference for Women in Business around the corner, find out about who is coming, what they are all about, and brush up on your skills. The event promises to be amazing, chock full of world-class content, but most of all an irreplaceable opportunity to meet women — old friends, colleagues, people from different industries and cities — to forge alliances and develop new opportunities. Think about relevant questions you'd like to ask the speaker to utilize this one-time opportunity to speak to someone you wouldn't normally interact with. Consider who you'd like to network with. Do your homework and maximize your results.

We're looking forward to meeting you!



Temech is a nonprofit organization that promotes employment, entrepreneurship and professional development for women in Israel. Shaindy Babad is the CEO of Temech. Shaindy joined Temech in 2008 after working in high-tech and as a serial social entrepreneur.

*We want to hear from you! **This discourse is for and about you, me, all of us.** Please send your comments, thoughts to hamodia@temech.org*

DAY TO DAY

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Jaffa, after sneaking into Israel without a permit.

The bakery denied that the incident had even taken place, but no one representing it attended the hearing.

In its decision, the Tel Aviv court awarded a sum that would be relevant to the loss of capacity in a laborer's ability to work according to standards in Palestinian Authority-controlled areas.

Bnei Brak 'White Elephant' Sold

One of the best-known real estate "white elephants" — buildings that have never been completed — has been sold. The facility, located in the heart of Bnei Brak, at the corner of

Jabotinsky and Ben Gurion streets, has been under construction for nearly two decades. The sale price for the lot and the unfinished building was NIS 223 million.

According to *Calcalist*, the buyer was Bnei Brak real estate mogul Yehuda Amar.

The 10.4-dunam site comes with building permits allowing for the construction of a 40-story tower, with 50,000 square meters of commercial space and 50,000 square meters of office space. Work was halted on the building 16 years ago after its owners got into a financial dispute.

Amar tried to buy the building in 2007 in partnership with another group, but contract disputes held up the sale until now, *Calcalist* reported.

The building is well-known to

drivers on Jabotinsky Street for its large banner criticizing *lashon hara*. The sign was hung by the family of Rabbi Refael Halpern, ז"ל, owners of the Halpern optical chain, who had been searching for a very large space from which to hang the banner.

78-Year-Old Woman Wins Age Discrimination Case

A 78-year-old woman who was told not to return to work was awarded NIS 355,000 (\$95,000) to settle her age-discrimination suit against the Tiv Taam supermarket chain.

In its ruling, the court cited the Yokneam woman's embarrassment at being categorized as old and incapacitated, and the fact that she did

not have financial resources to fall back on.

The woman, who was employed as a cashier, had asked for a leave of absence for several days to take care of her daughter, who was suffering from a fatal disease. She was granted the leave, but after returning was told that she was being fired.

The store, meanwhile, hired another, much younger worker. It did not explicitly say that they were firing the older worker due to her age, but the court determined that the hiring of a younger person in place of the older worker was enough to warrant ruling in favor of the plaintiff.

The court said that the law was very clear on the matter, and it was difficult to believe that there were still employers who practiced age discrimination.