



AuslanServices

a leading provider of Auslan interpreters

The Complete Package

Years ago, I received a gift from a friend that in retrospect has proven to be quite valuable in contrast to the ‘piss-take’ that was intended at the time. The gift was a book written by Dale Carnegie and titled: “How to win friends and influence people”! This title is quite obvious and at the time of receiving this gift, my friend did get his desired reaction. However over time, I have often used the instructions from the book and applied these in life, professionally and privately.

The message here is: How can Dale Carnegie’s advice apply to the Auslan interpreting profession?

Before I explain, let me introduce the purpose behind writing about this topic....

From my observations and discussions as an interpreter, but predominantly as an employer of interpreters through Auslan Services, there is a massive emphasis on ‘interpreting’ skills (signing and read-back). For good reason of course; it is the inherent requirement of every interpreter. However, with this focus being so emphatic, I believe a lot of other skills are being overlooked!

“There is a massive emphasis on interpreting skills”

These skills I refer to are not taught as part of any Auslan certificate or diploma and nor are they included in any diploma of interpreting courses’ curriculum.

And so what I am alluding to is the discussions that Dale Carnegie presents. You’ll notice that these ‘instructions’ are so obvious, and in most cases are naturally conveyed by interpreters already. But at times, these skills are not being practised with as much intensity compared to interpreting skills.

The points that I will soon present may be identifiable to you, and you may recognise that yourself and or your peers currently exhibit. If so, then let this paper validate what you and others already do. Conversely, you may identify that you display these qualities irregularly, inadequately or not at all.

Also, using the skills taught, identify in your peers and them in you, any areas that they/you can concentrate on to better develop. Most importantly though, identify what does exist in others and compliment. Validation through peers is awesome. It has the power to inspire and develop beyond recognition. Make an effort and contribute to the culture that is changing for a friendlier and supportive working environment.

1. Use people's names at every appropriate opportunity.

"It is suggested that a persons name is to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language." Dale Carnegie

Interpreting opportunities are everywhere. This can be with you fellow interpreters and clients. I refer to times prior to and after assignments, however there should also be chances to apply the same rule while interpreting eg: read-back . Learn names by rehearsing them. Correspond a characteristic of the person to their name to allow you to better recall.

"Correspond a characteristic of the person to their name to allow you to better recall"

2. Smile

"People who smile, tend to manage, teach and sell more effectively.... There's far more information in a smile than a frown". Prof James McConnell, Psychologist, University of Michigan

The only advice is to be conscience of the fact that you ought to be smiling if you're not! It is true that by practising to smile it can become habitual. This attribute would have to be one of the most powerful tools. It will be an everlasting first impression and it will also set the tone of your personality and attitude.

3. Be genuinely interested in other people

You must have a good time meeting people if you expect them to have a good time meeting you. Dale Carnegie

We're not fools, and we'll spot the difference easily if approaches are not genuine. Overcome this by asking questions of someone. Allow them to explain then focus your attention on a topic that interests you. Then listen. I mean really listen, with your eyes and your ears! People have little difficulty in talking about themselves, particularly when they are prompted to do so.

4. Praise people's slightest improvement and every improvement

We capitalise on the praise we are given. We thirst for more and this actually assists us to differentiate better what is appropriate and inappropriate. Weaknesses may decline because of the lack of attention that these weaknesses demand!

This one's pretty simple. At every appropriate opportunity, take the time to praise someone- be it big or small. You will be making a big difference to the day for that person, and all the while making contributions to your own profile.

"In our profession.....praise every day"

In our profession, there are opportunities to praise every day. Compliments don't have to be on interpreting skills either. In fact it would be great if they focussed on the attributes that are detailed in this article!

5. Respect your profession and it respects you

Make every effort to recognise the importance of your profession and your place within it. The effort that you donate, will translate to satisfaction, appreciation, and subsequent acknowledgement.

Be seen making contributions to your profession, in addition to the work you do as a practising interpreter. Are you an ASLIA member?. Are all of your employees ASLIA members? Do you speak highly of your profession and support its members and associations? Do a bit more than the minimum and you'll get more back in support, friendship and ah yes, respect!

6. Give peers a fine reputation to live up to

We are at all times influencing and reinforcing the landscape of the interpreting profession. With this in mind, consider that our peers desire to compare and assess our methods in every detail, consciously or subconsciously. This is done for personal growth. Recognise this and enjoy the responsibility of being in this position.

This attribute is critical. If you can get this right, then you're well on your way to success. To put it another way, this point is a little like self review or self assessment. If you can present in some way that you are consistently monitoring your progress as an interpreter, then the example you convey is very high.

"Practise your ethics and know them"

Ask advice from peers, ask clients, and ask your employer. The small sacrifice you make in seeking this advice says volumes. Practise your ethics and know them. Finally, we are role models to many of our peers. What we do and say can be taken as gospel. Be the best you can be so that your influences are positive.

7. Don't criticise, condemn or complain

“Do you know someone you would like to change and regulate and improve? That's fine. I am all in favour of it. But why not begin with yourself? From a purely selfish standpoint, that is more profitable than trying to improve others-yes, and a lot less dangerous.” Dale Carnegie

Think very carefully before making a criticism. Who will it benefit and what will be the likely responses? There is no doubt that there are better ways to address an issue than to criticise or condemn or complain. There is also the likely damage to your own profile for taking this stance.

“Criticism...who will it benefit?”

Rather, encourage positive attributes. Often it is pride that prevents us from focussing attention on others in a pleasant and positive way, because we subconsciously want it for ourselves. I can very confidently say that any praise you give applies to the principle- ‘what goes around comes around’! It will be reciprocated in a direct compliment or an indirect compliment. That is, your style in dealing with people will be talked about to others if not directly to you.

8. Professional presentation is paramount

This is my favourite. It is argued that 75% of your first impression is based on what other people see? There is no framework or guidelines for interpreters to use to assist them to present professionally. I might suggest that there is no harm being over dressed, but to do the opposite is disaster. The impact will be on you and your employer.

I was once told that the suit I wear is a consequence of the responsibility I have as Manager of Auslan Services. My reply was because I am an Auslan Interpreter! It is true that is personal choice and opinion but is also shared by many. Don't under sell yourself. You deserve to look professional because you have earned it. It doesn't matter what our clients wear or what teachers/lecturers/facilitators wear. Nor does it matter that 400 students in an auditorium are wearing jeans. It matters what you wear and because it says a lot about what you think of the profession, not just what others think of you.

“you deserve to look professional because you have earned it”

The consequence of practicing these skills (and I use the term 'skills' deliberately- they can be learnt) is that you will become well liked, respected, respectful, friendlier and professional.

These qualities in conjunction with your interpreting qualifications will put you in good stead for a very successful career.

From an employer's perspective, and our expectations of interpreters, Auslan Services value these qualities equally with signing skills. I hasten to add that these qualities are similarly valued by clients; Deaf and hearing clients and perhaps more so in many cases.

The reflection you cast on your self and your profession is undeniable. You will demand more attention from your employer/s, more respect from peers and clients and guess what?....you'll be pretty happy with yourself too!

“you will demand more from your employers”

In summary...

- 1. Use peoples name at every opportunity**
- 2. Smile**
- 3. Be genuinely interested in other people**
- 4. Praise peoples slightest improvement and every improvement**
- 5. Respect you profession and it respects you**
- 6. Give peers a fine reputation to live up to**
- 7. Don't criticise, condemn or complain**
- 8. Professional presentation is paramount**