

Good morning everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with The Family Business Institute, Digging Deeper.

Today I want to talk about something I was always aware of, but now apparently there's some good science behind it and that's the power of the handshake. The handshake's an interesting thing. If you've ever been lucky enough to go to Europe and you look at some of these buildings and stuff that were built several centuries, BC, you might see some etchings and things of people actually having handshakes. Pharaohs and folks like that. Well, it turns out there's evidence of the handshake going back as far as the ninth century BC.

So why has that hung around so long and become such a part of our culture? Well, a study from Cal Berkeley, University of Chicago, and Harvard actually shows some of the benefits of the handshake. So, what they did in their study is they had, as they usually do, half the participants go into a negotiation starting with a handshake, and half the participants go in without a handshake to start. What they actually found is the people who began with a handshake, the negotiations went more smoothly. The people with the handshakes achieved better outcomes, outcomes that were actually mutually beneficial or more mutually beneficial. There was an enhanced trust when they interviewed the folks later with their cohort. There also was a reduced tendency to lie. So once people shook hands, there was a reduced tendency to lie. And generally speaking, they found out that people acted more in a spirit of cooperation versus competition. All of this, just coming, the only difference being a handshake versus no handshake.

So if you just think about that and how simple a habit that is, but whether you're starting a meeting, just coming upon somebody, seeing your employee for the first time of the week, meeting your customer on a job site, talking between the subcontractor and the contractor. Whatever engagements you have, definitely want to use the handshake as a tool.

And then if you think about, okay, if the handshake is successful, well, what else is successful? Well, certainly I think you've probably seen the habit of doing a handshake and putting a hand on somebody's shoulder, something like that. Yeah, those things do work. And couple other things that they found in this research, singing together. People who sing together tend to connect better. And again, be able to get more things done together. People who exercise together, so taking a client out to play lunch, I mean, I'm sorry to play tennis or possibly golf or something like that, or even out on a job site thinking a stretch and flex, where you warm up in the morning. That could possibly help your cooperation on the job site.

One other habit that they found was really beneficial was sharing a meal. Again, think about that, just having a meal out on a job site with barbecue brought in or pizzas or something like that. But just by sharing a meal, people get the similar benefits to what you get from a handshake. And interestingly enough, people found that sharing a plate actually takes it to another level from sharing a meal. And that's a very common habit in some Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures where people share from a plate and actually meals served family style versus plated. Again, people actually get a little bit more of that sense of cooperation.

So just think about those things that you can do to enhance cooperation, negotiation, coming to common interests, and don't ever forget the power of the handshake.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.