First Impressions and Networking Behaviour Among College Students

Body Language, Introductions, and Cultural Background in Soft Skills

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Seven Stops From First Glance to Lasting Connection

A route through the moment judgment forms, the signals we send without words, and the habits that make introductions stick.

01

The 7-Second Window

How quickly we size each other up and why those first judgments are so sticky.

02

Body Language Basics

Posture, eye contact, gestures, and the nonverbal cues that carry most of the meaning.

03

Culture & Context

High- and low-context cultures, power distance, and the norms that shape what feels right.

04

Networking on Campus

Why nearly 80 percent of jobs are filled through networking and how students can start.

01

Seven Seconds Decide How You Are Read

Thin-slicing weighs how a person looks and sounds before explicit statements register—and once formed, first impressions resist later evidence.

Seven Seconds, Then the Picture Hardens

Thin-slicing reads faces, voices, and posture before a word is spoken.

1. It takes a mere seven seconds to make a first impression, as people thin-slice others based on how they look and sound.

2. Facial expressions are read reliably: people identify the six basic emotions about 80% of the time.

3. Initial judgments stick: people get attached to their first impressions and resist changing them even when shown contrary evidence.

4. Within seconds, observers judge trustworthiness, physical strength, and intentions to harm from subtle facial and vocal cues.

Visualise the research claim that verbal content carries onl

- Visualise the research claim that verbal content carries only 35% of social meaning, the rest being nonverbal.
- Details in the full briefing.

02

The Body Speaks Before You Do

Posture, eye contact, gesture, and tone form a vocabulary you can rehearse — and the signals are not universal.

Five Silent Levers Decide How Students Are Read

Face, posture, and tone do their work before the first word lands.



Eye Contact

Direct gaze signals confidence and engagement, but the appropriate amount shifts across cultures.



Open Posture

Uncrossed arms and facing your partner project openness and trust; crossed arms read as defensive.



Gestures

Purposeful hand movements anchor meaning, while excessive gesturing can look like nervousness.



Vocal Tone

Varying pitch and pace holds attention; a flat monotone carries the most negative impact on credibility.

03

A Single Gesture Speaks Differently in Every Culture

Direct eye contact signals honesty in the U.S., but in many Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Native American cultures it reads as disrespect — and a head nod can mean 'no'.

Contrast low-context and high-context cultures so students s

- Contrast low-context and high-context cultures so students see that a good first impression is culture-dependent.
- Details in the full briefing.

Map Hofstede's six dimensions onto student life using US ran

- Map Hofstede's six dimensions onto student life using US rankings so culture becomes visible and discussable.
- Details in the full briefing.

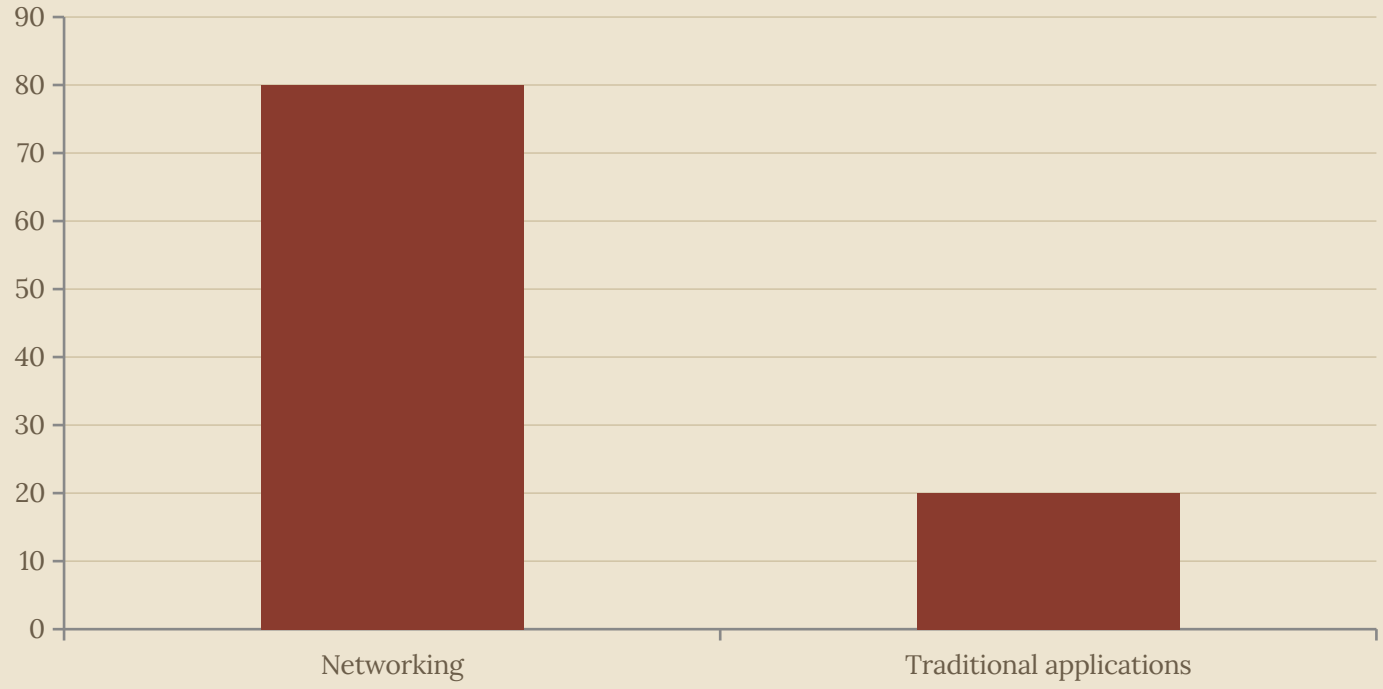
04

Networking Fills Nearly 80 Percent of Jobs

The seven-second read becomes a career asset on campus: relationships built in lectures and clubs are not soft extras—nearly 80 percent of jobs are filled through networking rather than traditional applications.

A Warm Introduction Beats an Application in Nearly 80 Percent of Jobs

The dominant hiring channel is not the portal; it is the referral. Students who build relationships early are positioning themselves in the stream where most jobs actually move.



Research: 'nearly 80 percent of jobs are filled through networking rather than traditional applications.'

For students, this makes career fairs, alumni coffees and peer referrals strategic, not social.

A follow-up after a first meeting converts a contact into a connection.

A Five-Step Loop From First Contact to Lasting Check-In

A practical networking loop for campus: begin with people you already know, give before you ask, and keep the relationship warm with periodic check-ins.



05

An Introduction Is an Interview You Can Rehearse

The opening exchange is where a first read hardens into a lasting impression. Structure it as a deliberate sequence — how you stand, what you ask, how you follow up — and practise it before the career fair.

Introductions Improve With Rehearsal, Not Nerve

Before a career fair or mixer, run through six moves drawn from student networking research—each one turns small talk into a relationship.

- ✓ Scan the guest list beforehand and pick two or three people you genuinely want to meet.
- ✓ Prepare conversation starters about a project, a challenge, or a trend—skip 'What do you do?'
- ✓ Lead with generosity: share an article, offer an introduction, or give feedback first.
- ✓ Follow up with a personalised message within a day or two; most people never do.
- ✓ Send a short check-in every three to six months to keep the connection warm.
- ✓ Remember the liking gap: people usually like you more than your self-criticism allows.

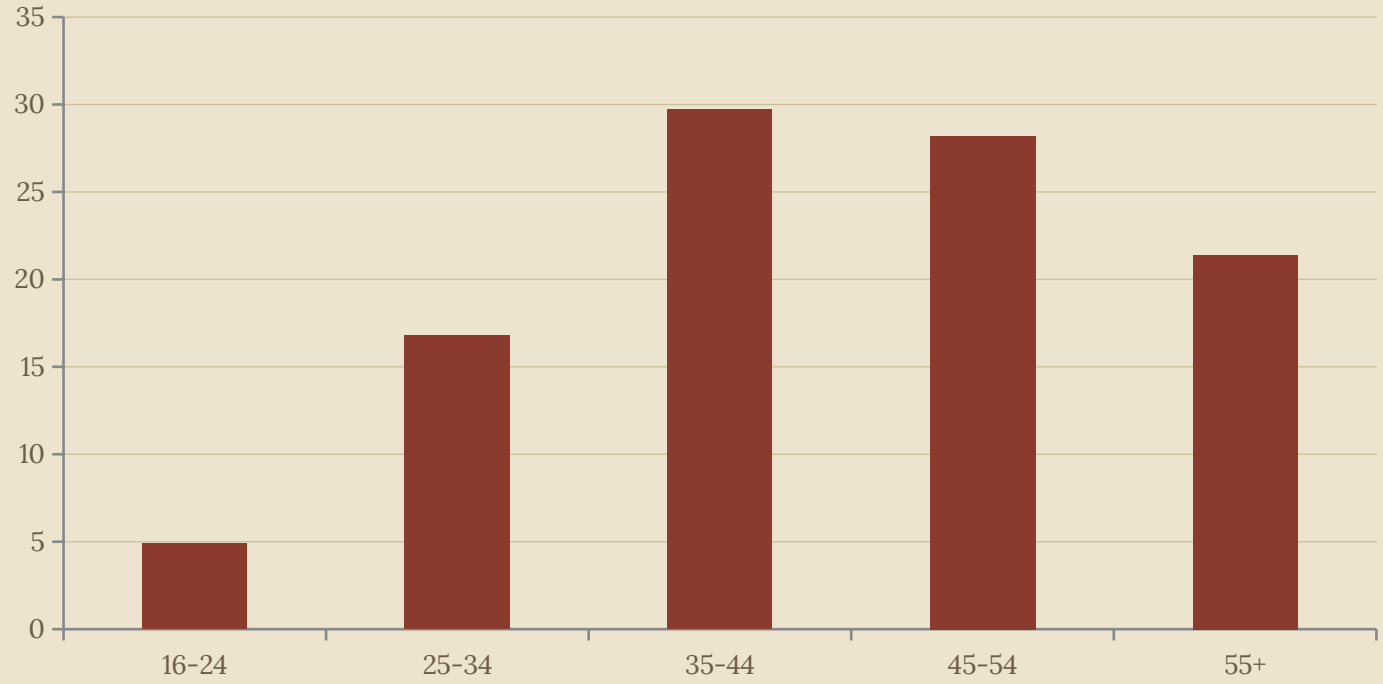
06

Before a Word, Bias Has Already Judged

The halo effect, confirmation bias, and cultural face concerns can outweigh what someone actually says, shaping first impressions before a conversation begins.

The Young Flight Attendant Is a Stereotype the Data No Longer Supports

Nearly half of U.S. flight attendants are 45 or older; the under-35 share is just 21.7%.



The share of male flight attendants rose from 19% in the 1980s to 26% today.

07

Cultural Intelligence Is a Skill, Not a Personality Trait

Coined in 2003 by Earley and Ang, cultural intelligence names the capability to function effectively amid cultural diversity — and it can be built, factor by factor, before your next introduction.

Introduce the four CQ factors as learnable skills for divers

- Introduce the four CQ factors as learnable skills for diverse classrooms and campus interactions.
- Details in the full briefing.

First Impressions and Networks Are Built, Not Born

Seven seconds fix a first impression; nearly 80 percent of jobs come through networking. Bias judges before a word, but cultural intelligence is learnable — knowledge, motivation, understanding, behaviour. Rehearse your introduction, adapt to context, and start building your network now.

Rehearse one introduction and reach out to one person today.