

Shmanners 17: Handshakes and Business Cards

Published April 22nd, 2016

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Travis:

Put her there, Teresa.

Teresa:

Put what there?

Travis:

Your Shmanners.

[theme music plays]

Travis:

Hello, internet. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa:

And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis:

And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa:

It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis:

For ordinary occasions. Hello, Teresa.

Teresa:

Hello, Travis.

Travis:

Thank you for joining me here at the micromaphones.

Teresa:

But of course.

Travis:

I'm honored for you to be there. Um, oh. What the people at home can't see is this entire time, I'm just shaking Teresa's hand.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Just wi—Like, I'm doing the two handed. I went for the grab.

Teresa:

Violently and roughly—

Travis:

Violently.

Teresa:

... shaking my hand.

Travis:

I'm gonna pull one of her shoulders out of its socket.

Teresa:

It's gonna knock my brain loose.

Travis:

Just shake, shake, shake, señora. [laughs]

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Um, because this week, we're talking about handshakes and business cards, two things that as we were discussing topics I felt went kind of, no pun intended, hand in hand.

Teresa:

Ba-dum-ching.

Travis:

I really didn't mean that pun. I feel like when I say no pun intended, nobody believes me.

Teresa:

[laughs] It's be—it's because of our past experiences with you, Travis.

Travis:

I mean, that's... Listen, I haven't earned the right to say no pun intended.

Teresa:

You have not.

Travis:

I get that. I'm interested because this is one of those things where I have both shook hands and had numerous business cards.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

But I know nothing about it. Like, it's never... I never had, like, formal handshake training and I never worked in a fancy enough, like, official business-y enough business that I actually, like, learned anything about business cards except that I have them.

Teresa:

So they didn't go over handshake stuff at cotillion?

Travis:

Not really. Not that I remember. That was... There was, no joke, like, bowing—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... and curtsyng.

Teresa:

Well...

Travis:

And I don't remember handshakes being a part of that. Um, I... Here's the one thing I know about handshakes that I was taught when I was doing

musical children's theater. Chris Sizemore told me that when you shake someone's hand, if you extend your index finger so it's more or less, like, touching the inside of their wrist, um, so rather than, like, group all your fingers together, it spreads your knuckles in such a way that someone cannot crush your hand with that, like, power handshake. So it's just a way to kinda protect yourself from someone crushing your hand.

Teresa:

But that seems fairly uncomfortable for the other person shaking your hand.

Travis:

It feels like you're trying to check their pulse while you shake their hand.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

It is not... I don't recommend it. I'm just saying, like, that's the one kind of handshakey maneuver—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... that I know. Um, and—

Teresa:

And, uh, you've also mentioned the southern lady.

Travis:

Oh, yes. The southern lady with, like, the fingertips extended.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

That one?

Teresa:

Where it seems as if they are asking you more to kiss their hand.

Travis:

Yeah, and that is... You gently take their fingers and just kind of incline the head slightly. Don't actually kiss anybody's hand.

Teresa:

Well, there used to be rules about that. But we'll get to that.

Travis:

Let's get into it. Let's talk about the history. Let's start with... We'll do handshakes, break, business cards. So let's start... Tell me what you know about, I don't know, the history, the mystique, the—tell me all about handshakes.

Teresa:

Well, I think that the, the general consensus seems to be that the handshake originated in times of war of the Roman Empire checking somebody for weapons, right? You've heard this.

Travis:

Yeah, I've heard it's to... 'Cause you can't shake hands with, like, a sword in your hand.

Teresa:

Exactly.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

And so—

Travis:

That would be really awkward and like, "Clang. Oh. Clang."

Teresa:

Right, and so you check that your enemy's hand, dominant hand, was empty of their sword so that you could negotiate. And anyone who was left handed was—

Travis:

Was the devil. [laughs]

Teresa:

Was considered s—uh, they call it sinister.

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

Uh, because they could hold your right hand and still attack you with their left. Right?

Travis:

That's the left hand path. That's evil.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Yeah, it's bad.

Teresa:

Um, that's, that's pretty much an, an, a not real thing.

Travis:

No, and left handed people, they're not the devil. They're just like you and I.

Teresa:

Well, I mean the whole thing isn't real. It's the same—

Travis:

Oh.

Teresa:

It's the same sort of lie we tell kindergartners that Columbus discovered America in 1492.

Travis:

Oh. I see.

Teresa:

Um, which by the way, has a very interesting... We'll maybe do that another time.

Travis:

Well—

Teresa:

Maybe not.

Travis:

We... Maybe we'll have a Columbus Day—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... special where we talk about the proper way to celebrate Columbus Day.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Which should be Indigenous People's Day. Go on.

Teresa:

Yes. Um, but the reality of the handshake is it pre-dates written history. It's kind of just always been there. Um, they found hieroglyphics that have handshakes and they found, uh, depictions of Greek gods and goddesses shaking hands. And there really is no true origin as far as who did the first handshake why.

Travis:

It makes complete sense to me that that is the case, 'cause it doesn't seem like it would take a lot to figure out like, "I grab with this. It's the same thing you grab with. So when we greet each other and we're gonna, like, touch each other, we should touch with the things we touch with."

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Like, logically, it makes sense that, like, right alongside with, "Oh, I can hit things with my hand. I can grab things with my hand." The handshake.

Teresa:

Um, there is the idea of the handshake sealing a deal.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Right? Instead of, of an introduction, and that probably originated from fathers giving their daughters away.

Travis:

Mm-hmm. Why that specifically?

Teresa:

Because the exchange goes, "Sir, I've come to seek your daughter's hand in marriage." And the father says, "Well, you'll find it in my pocket, and I'm glad to transfer it to your pocket."

Travis:

I see. Oh, mean like dowry and stuff.

Teresa:

Something like that, right, um, where the hand is passed from one male to another.

Travis:

Oh. And that also makes sense 'cause you see it where, like, they take... You know, I think I've seen this in movies where they, like, take the daughter's hand. They put it in the potential groom's hand and then, like, kinda wrap their hands around it.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Kind of like, "This is a knot that we're making."

Teresa:

Right. But it's not like that in every culture. But in cultures that do shake hands, that's probably one of the ways that it developed into sealing a deal.

Travis:

So you mention other cultures. Is this a good time to talk about the differences between cultures when it comes to handshakes?

Teresa:

Well, sure. Um, specific examples that I have found are in Hindu and Muslim cultures, where there's a couple of different ideas. The first one is that really only the same gender shakes hand, and the other one is especially in Hindu culture, you don't really shake hands. You do, you do kind of a, a bow, like you talked about for cotillion, because shaking hands is a transfer of energy and therefore a transfer of sin. So if I've sinned a lot and you haven't sinned very much, if I shake your hand, you take my sin.

Travis:

I see. And there's also, I imagine... Somebody commented on one of the various send us questions posts that in Germany, you only pump the handshake once.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

And so when Germans come to America and we're, like, you know, pumping their hands three or four times, it reads as just like a super energetic, like, walking into a room going, "Hey, hey. How's it going? Hi, everybody. Hey."

Teresa:

[laughs] Right.

Travis:

So even if there's not a difference of handshakes, I know that, like, depending on what country you're in, they just shake hands differently.

Teresa:

Right. And, um, I have a short little info graphic that I would love to, um, put up on the Facebook group.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

Uh, demonstrating... It's from Mental Floss, and it shows some handshakes around the world. So in the United States, you would shake a hand, introduce yourself by name and, and be pretty firm about it, not bone crushing like you talked about.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

But be pretty firm. Um, in Australia, if you're a woman shaking a man's hand, you offer your hand first, um, to indicate that you would like a handshake. Otherwise, you won't get one. And women do not shake hands with other women.

Travis:

And this is, like, traditionally speaking. Of course, women can shake hands with whoever they want and, like—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

All of—

Travis:

Listen, we're talking about what happens, not what we think—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... should happen.

Teresa:

Right. Um, and then in Morocco, uh, it is said to... you should shake hands gently with whoever you shake, and you should only shake hands if you're the same gender. I think that has some sort of religious undertones.

Travis:

I, you know, I—

Teresa:

But I'm not certain.

Travis:

I've got myself a firm handshake, but there's something about, like, the gentle handshaking that I can kinda get behind. If you do it with purpose but you're not like, "Let me show you how confident I am," where just the idea of like, "We are touching hands," like, what more do we need from this experience? Seems like it would save a lot of bone-crushing handshakes.

Teresa:

Right. Um, in Russia, you're not to shake hands with the opposite sex unless it is a business situation.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, and a man should kiss a woman's hand.

Travis:

They... I mean, they shouldn't, but I get what you're going for.

Teresa:

I'm talking about the info graphic, and it's a generalization.

Travis:

Yes. We'll post that info graphic so that everybody can see all the different examples. Do you have a couple more before we move on to questions?

Teresa:

Um, in Brazil, you give a firm handshake that lasts very long. You should mix in eye contact and repeat it when you leave.

Travis:

I like the idea of it just being very long without a specific timeframe. So it's like okay, if you think that's long enough. I'm not gonna tell you what very long means, but sure.

Teresa:

And the last one I want to share is in Thailand. People don't shake hands. A person will place his or her palms together at chest level and bow, and the gesture is returned by the other person.

Travis:

Excellent. You know, I'm of a mind where it's hard for me to kinda weigh in what is best because of course, I was raised here in America, um, so, like, I'm used to handshake being a very business-y thing. But I will say that there's something much more nuanced, I think, and, um, interesting in the idea of bowing as like a business exchange, because I think that the... I don't know. Handshake just seems like such a weird, arbitrary thing to judge by, but it's all I know.

Um, let's talk about some questions from our listeners.

Teresa:

Sure.

Travis:

Um, Daniel asked, "How to recover from the inevitable, if occasional, finger grab?" Which speaking of, uh, like, the dominant handshaking, basically I think what Daniel's asking about is when one person closes their hand too soon and doesn't quite get the meat of the hand, but instead ends up just kind of awkwardly grabbing the fingers rather than the palm.

Teresa:

Hmm.

Travis:

I mean, what I would do in this case, 'cause I was thinking about it a lot as I was going over these questions, I think you turn it into a joke and you say this phrase, "Oh, almost missed. Let's try that again."

Teresa:

Oh, that's a great idea.

Travis:

Right? And then you both... also both get a chuckle. Instead of being awkward about it, now you've broken the ice a little bit.

Teresa:

Fantastic. I agree.

Travis:

Hey. Thank you, honey. Uh, this is from Shantelle. "Is there a polite way to disengage from a handshake that is going on uncomfortably long or feels a little bit inappropriate for the situation?"

Teresa:

Um, I think that if... Uh, outside of a, of a business handshake, which I think people tend to use as kind of a measure of your strength, um, another, like, jokey way to get out of it in the way of, like, "Am I gonna get that back soon?" Or something like that will probably work. If it... But if it's a business handshake, I think you kinda have to wait it out.

Travis:

I also think the maneuver of... This is the time when, like, the double handshake because go for the single handshake, they're holding on to it for way too long. You put your hand on the outside so now you can release without having to wait for them. Like, your outside hand signals like, "I'm letting go now."

Teresa:

Hmm.

Travis:

Um, that would be what I would, like, grab so then you have a little bit of leverage—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... to get out of the situation.

Teresa:

Like, was it Ross's hug and roll?

Travis:

Oh, yeah, yeah. The cuddle.

Teresa:

From Friends.

Travis:

You hug.

Teresa:

The hug.

Travis:

And then you roll.

Teresa:

And the roll.

Travis:

Um, this is from Robin. "If your dominant hand is taken up, do you shake with your non-dominant hand?"

Teresa:

Um, no. You should always shake with your dominant hand. Um, if your non-dominant hand is full, you need to put those things down before the handshake or switch hands.

Travis:

Hmm. I mean, unless you can't, but ideally yes.

Teresa:

Yes.

Travis:

Oh, oh. This is... Everyone's been in this situation. April asked, "That thing where you think someone is going for a handshake, but they start hugging you instead or vice versa."

Teresa:

Um, I think that that's probably more of a cultural thing. Um, in different parts of the world, hugs are... You know, personal space is a lot smaller than it is here in the United States, um, and so if, if you can hug and they initiate it, I'd go for it.

Travis:

And I also think that it's a... Awkwardness is what you make it.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

And it's that, like, shuffle that you do, where just commit to the action you were doing. And, you know, if they go for the hug and you're the handshake, just hold your hand out and just, like, either wave at them to take it or transition into the hug and vice ver—but, like, don't do the "Uh, what do... Oh, you were... And then I was... Huh," 'cause that's when it gets awkward.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Um, Chris asks, "What do you do when your hand is really sweaty, but you know you're about to shake somebody's hand?"

Teresa:

Um, I would take a pocket detour. So if there is someone who you know you're going to be introduced to, and you're like, "Oh, my hand is wet or sweaty from, like, holding a drink or from nervousness," stick it in your pocket really quickly and wipe it off on the inside of your pocket before you go for the handshake.

Travis:

This is also a great opportunity if you pull out a handkerchief and you're kind of wiping your hands with it before you shake your hand. I don't know a single person alive that would be like, "I can't believe they cleaned their hands before they shook my hand."

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Right? Like—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Who would be upset by that?

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

That's a question we got a lot. I mean, this is a great example. This is from Amy. "At church, we all shake hands during the sign of peace. Is it okay to not shake hands with someone who is obviously ill, or do you shake their hand and then sneak some hand sanitizer immediately afterwards?"

Teresa:

Now, I came from a church where we also did that sorta thing. Um—

Travis:

That's Catholic church, right? That's the sign of peace be with you and—

Teresa:

Well, I think that there, there are several Christian denominations that do that. Um, but yes, in my Catholic church we did do that.

Travis:

In Southern Baptist, we all just French kissed just all the time every about five minutes in the service. It was weird. Turns out, we were not actually affiliated with the Southern Baptist Church.

Teresa:

Doesn't sound like it.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

Um, and in that situation, we just gave each other the victory sign, the peace. You know, hippie peace and love. That would work in a United States church. Um, in Europe, where that means something else, especially if you turn it around to face your outside hand, that wouldn't work so well. Um, but that's a good alternative. That still means peace.

Travis:

What would you think about, like, just offering an elbow? I've seen people do that where, like, they don't wanna shake hands 'cause they someone, like, cough in their hand and they just kind of, like, offer an elbow to, like, bump up against or maybe even like a fist bump. Do you think that that is rude to a person, that you're saying like, "I don't wanna touch you," or do you think the person who is sick would understand?

Teresa:

I think the person who's sick will understand. And, I mean, when you are ill, it is partly your responsibility not to spread your germs. And so, um, even if they were attend to... to attend a church, I don't think that anyone would be upset if you didn't want to touch their hands that they had been coughing into.

Travis:

This question is from Amanda, and it's really more of a statement with an implied question.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

"Cheek kissing." I think what Amanda meant there is, what's the deal with cheek kissing?

Teresa:

Again, it's another cultural greeting, um, in countries where the, the personal space is a lot smaller. It's just another way to say hello, really.

Travis:

I mean, I will say the only time I think I've ever instigated a cheek kiss is when it's a very close friend either with whom I, like, have no physical boundaries and we're so close that, like, we hug all the time and it's nothing or if it's, like, they, you know, have done it before and it's established. But it's never something that I instigate like, "Let's see how this goes." Like, for example, Sarah, Clark, Rose, I would cheek kiss. We've been friends for over a decade.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

You know what I mean?

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

Like, Maggie I would cheek kiss. Justin.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Justin McCombs I would cheek kiss. But, like, if I just met the person, I wouldn't do it because I haven't kinda gauged.

Teresa:

Well, again, I think that that's relative to your comfort level of your personal space. These people are people that you've known for a long time, you have a high level of comfort with. And so here in the United States, that's someone... that comfort level allows them to invade your personal space. Um, but in European countries, where cheek kissing is a lot more prevalent, there's a different concept of personal space.

Travis:

If instigates it with me, like, say it is, uh, someone from a European country where that is the norm, um, should I react to it in a way of like, "Oh, well that's new," or, like, what's the right way to not be awkward?

Teresa:

Um, I think that you just should allow it to happen. You shouldn't be expected to greet them like that unless they initiate it. So you should just allow it to happen. It's just a different way of saying hello.

Travis:

Uh, this is from Reagan. "What should the general force of a handshake? I get told constantly my handshakes are too strong, and can't seem to find that happy medium."

Teresa:

Um, I think your handshake is too strong if you're grinding the person's knuckles—

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

... inside your hands.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Um, and you wouldn't... you shouldn't hold a hand any firmer than you would hold your coffee cup. It's just not necessary.

Travis:

Don't mistake force with purpose.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

A handshake in America should have purpose. You're doing it. You've made the decision to shake hands, but that's not the same as "I'm gonna grab the hand as hard as I can." It's just like, "I'm committing to the action," rather than, like, hesitating or just kind of like, "Huh. Oh, and I'm out." Like, that's the difference. Think purpose, not force.

Teresa:

Agree.

Travis:

So speaking of, like, we talked about the info graphic, the, you know, handshake men, women, whatever, handshakes differing across, you know, men, women and the old school lines. Sarah asks, "I work in an office that's 95% guys. And often, when clients come in, they attempt to bypass me to shake hands with my bosses instead of me. Is there a nice way to get that handshake?"

Teresa:

Um, I think that Miss Manners had a really great column about this. She says, uh, that "socially, in and within offices, a lady should extend her hand to any gentleman's. And in business, a higher ranking person or the person whose office it is should extend the hand." So if you work at the office, you should extend your hand and expect a handshake. I don't think that there would be anyone who came to an office and saw a woman extend their hand who would just leave it.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, unless they had, uh, religious qualms.

Travis:

Yes.

Teresa:

Um, so—

Travis:

Or germophobe thing. I don't know. Maybe, yeah.

Teresa:

Oh, I suppose. I suppose. But in, in an... in everyday business situation, if you are to extend your hand, you'll get a handshake.

Travis:

Well, I mean, the other side of that, this question comes from James. "Do I shake a woman's hand differently than a man's? I've had women offer me full hand and half hand at upper management meetings." And, and I get this because I would say I'm a very progressive 21st century person and I still... Maybe it's because, like, I was raised a very southern, cotillion-esque person, but I feel very comfortable shaking a man's hand and I have to tell myself to go for the handshake when I first meet a woman.

There's something about, like, that I feel like a hug is more appropriate. I don't know, but, like, I have to say like, "It is... This is fine. Don't second guess yourself, Travis."

Teresa:

Mm-hmm. Well, in a business situation, it is always okay to shake a woman's hand. Um, if they offer you a half hand, I guess that's as good as it's gonna get. Um, shake... Treat that hand like you would any other handshake.

Travis:

A hand is a hand is a hand.

Teresa:

Right, because the way that the... One of the reasons that shaking hands is business is so crucial is it's a respect and it's also a willingness to participate in the business dealings.

Travis:

Yeah. And you hear a lot of people talking about it like as a gauging, taking the measure of a person, you know, their eye contact, their body posture, their confidence, the purpose—

Teresa:

Absolutely.

Travis:

... of the handshake.

Teresa:

All of that matters in business. Absolutely.

Travis:

So just shake.

Teresa:

Shake it.

Travis:

Don't second guess it. Shake it like a Polaroid picture. No, actually don't do that.

Teresa:

Don't shake it like a Polaroid picture.

Travis:

That'd be so painful.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

You'd break someone wrist if you try to do... Also, don't shake Polaroid pictures. It's bad for them.

Teresa:

You're not supposed to.

Travis:

In general, shake it like a Polaroid picture very delicately and place it under your arm. [laughs]

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

No, no. Wait, don't do that.

Teresa:

I am told you are to leave Polaroids flat on a table while they develop.

Travis:

Don't do that with a handshake. That'd be weird. You just take the person's hand, just lay it on a table and say, "Don't move."

Teresa:

All right.

Travis:

Okay, time to move on. Um, oh. So, uh, one last question before we head to break. This is from Mike. "Are additional flair moves, such as the other hand on your shoulder or wrist, a wink, et cetera, acceptable during a handshake?"

Teresa:

Um, I think that those flair moves really, uh, depend, again, on your comfort level with the person. If it's a first meeting handshake, probably not. Um, but if it's a familiar handshake, uh, hand on the shoulder or maybe not a wink. I think—

Travis:

No. A wink is always weird. I—

Teresa:

I think a wink is a little weird.

Travis:

I'm trying to think now of a situation—

Teresa:

But a double cup.

Travis:

... when it's... a wink is fine.

Teresa:

A double hand cup that you were talking about earlier, um, is a sign of familiarity as the hand on the shoulder. All that stuff, I think, is, uh, is something that you would do with someone more familiar to you, but not on a first introduction.

Travis:

I also think of, like, the double handshake, the... as like a reinforcement so you... Like, for example, this is what I think when I think of it. Shaking someone's hand and then realizing you've met them before and you're like, "Oh, yeah." And then you do the second hand.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

That's what I always think. Um, and, like, the hand to shoulder is always, uh, to me, is like I haven't seen you in forever.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

Like, how has it been?

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

I'm really connecting with you.

Teresa:

Again, something you would do with someone you were very familiar with.

Travis:

Yes. Um, let me ask you... This was not a question. This is the question from me, Travis McElroy, to you, my wife.

Teresa:

Oh, oh, oh.

Travis:

Um, what about the concept of the bro hug? You know what I mean? That, like, handshake into a hug, pat, pat on the back and you out.

Teresa:

Um, I think that's a very millennial thing.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

I see that on television, um, and I, you know, I see that with people who have some sort of social connection already. I can see if you were Twitter friends and you, you know, you already banter back and forth a lot, um, or if you, um, if you're colleagues that share maybe a fraternity or something like that. Um, I think that that's, that's a fine thing to do if you're—

Travis:

Do you—

Teresa:

If you're sharing your common experiences that way.

Travis:

Do you think, though, that it's just a buffer of, like, physical contact? 'Cause I've heard people critique before and say, "Just do the hug." Like, you don't have to couch it in, you know, "Oh, it's a handshake into a hug?" Like, hug. It's not weird.

Teresa:

Um, no because I think so much of our interactions as millennials and under become, um, internet based that there is still... there's this kind of weird mixing of "I know you but I don't really know you. We're Facebook friends and we talk on Twitter, but I've never really met you," so it's... I think that, that it's a good way to kind of encompass that situation.

Travis:

Okay, well I think that's gonna cover handshakes. We're gonna talk about business cards after the break. But first, here's a word from another Max Fun show.

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[*Can I Pet Your Dog?* theme music plays]

Allegra:

I'm Allegra Ringo, a dog owner.

Renee:

And I'm Renee Colvert, a dog wanter. And we host a show called *Can I Pet Your Dog?*, the podcast for unapologetic dog lovers.

Allegra:

You can find us every Tuesday on maximumfun.org or on iTunes.

Renee:

So, you know, what is this? Is it just a podcast where all we do is talk about dogs? Sort of. Uh, we definitely have a segment called dogs we met this week, where we tell you about, you know, dogs we met this week.

Allegra:

We also have a segment called dog heroes as well as cool dog tech and stupid dog tech. We also have some of your favorite celebrities. Lin Manuel Miranda, who did *Hamilton*, has been a guest. We've got Lesli Margherita.

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Allegra:

Can I pet your dog?

Renee:

Can I pet your dog?

[*Can I Pet Your Dog?* theme music plays and ends]

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Travis:

Okay, so business cards are an interesting beast to me.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Because on one level, they seem so superfluous. But then when I start thinking about them, they, they could convey such important information. What's the deal with business cards?

Teresa:

Well, business cards have kind of an evolved history. And like a lot of things, probably started in China a very, very, very long time ago and then were made to be in vogue by Louis XVI.

Travis:

Man, that dude? That Louis dude? He really brought a lot of stuff to the cool foreground, didn't he?

Teresa:

I know, right? Um, I think it's because of the pageantry of the court etiquette that was really established during his time. Um, they basically... Like, we talked about handkerchiefs being that way, fans being that way, the dining table, the table setting, the way that food is served, all that stuff, really started other places but flourished in his court.

Travis:

Is it... Okay, so is the idea of a business card an evolution from a calling card?

Teresa:

Yes. Uh, not, not quite a calling card, but the... a visiting card.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

An introduction, if you will. Um, and so these first visiting cards were probably about playing card size, so then, just a small enough to kinda fit in your hand, and they probably did start out as playing cards. You didn't have, like, printing presses or things like that, so you would take the small bits of paper that you would use for a playing card and use that.

Travis:

And was it just, like, your name, like, "Hey. I stopped by"?

Teresa:

Sometimes. Uh, sometimes it was just your signature. Sometimes it was a promissory note. So, um, my imagination tells me that perhaps if you lost at a gambling game, you would write how much you owed the other person on one of those cards.

Travis:

An IOU. Gotcha.

Teresa:

[laughs] Right? Um, and, and other such messages, messages of, of intrigue and other sorts of things like that. I mean, because you were writing whatever on it, you could write really whatever you wanted.

Travis:

Okay, so it started, like, you know, calling card, name card, simple.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

And then became business card.

Teresa:

Not quite.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

Um, so in 17th England, trade cards became popular, which were basically a form of advertising for businesses. Uh, because there weren't really street house numbers, um, so you would advertise where your business was

located with, like, a little map and you would put, you know, what your business was. And this even became a little more formalized in the 18th century when they had engraving capabilities on copper plates.

Travis:

Okay. I mean, that makes a lot of sense to me because I knew that for a long time, signs were just pictures, like the, you know, shop signs and everything, because most people couldn't read. So, like, why would you have numbers on a thing? People couldn't read.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

So you would have a sign or a map or pictures that people could look at.

Teresa:

So these became more and more elaborate, more colors as technology improved, um, and so trade cards kind of split off into two different groups. So there was the business card—

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

... which was responsible more for, like, the business end, and then there was the calling card.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

Um, so a calling card was more of a social thing, and the business card obviously was more of a business thing.

Travis:

Uh-huh.

Teresa:

Um, so you would have a business card to hand out to potential business associates, which you would only provide when you entered in a place of business, and you would have a calling card that you would provide in social

engagements. Uh, for example, if you were to visit a lady's home to... Let's see. Um, there... I mean, lots of different reasons, like to court her.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Right? Um, here's what would happen.

Travis:

Or to, like, invite a man to lunch with you so you could discuss your properties.

Teresa:

Sure. Um, but—

Travis:

And how much you hated the peasants.

Teresa:

[laughs] If it was a social occasion—

Travis:

Yes.

Teresa:

... you would go to their home. Um, so... And it was much, much more the upper class that did this because they had disposable income to get cards made, obviously.

Travis:

'Cause... Well, this is what I picture. I picture, like, you know, the tray with the card on it and the guy lifts the little lid and he's like, "Sir Steven is here to see you." And you're like, "Oh, yes. Of course. Bring him in."

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Like, that's what I think of.

Teresa:

Yeah, something like that. The, the porter would open the door, and he was called that because he would open the door.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

[laughs] And he would have a tray. You would place your card on, um, and most of the time, he would allow you entry into the foyer, where you would wait to be introduced. He would take your card. He would keep it on the tray, take it to the usually the ladies of the house, um, I mean unless specifically you were asking for a gentleman.

Travis:

But sure.

Teresa:

And then, uh, from there, that was kind of like your introduction. Um, and you would place on the card what the visit was about.

Travis:

Gotcha.

Teresa:

Um, so... And these were usually done in French because French was the language that everyone who wanted to be posh.

Travis:

Yes. It's a very posh language.

Teresa:

Really important. Uh, PF meant congratulations. Um, PR was expressing thanks. PC was mourning, so, like, for condolences. Uh, PFNA was happy new year.

Travis:

And TGIF was let's go get some jalapeno poppers.

Teresa:

[laughs] Oh, no.

Travis:

No.

Teresa:

Uh, PPC was meaning to take your leave, so if you were... uh, this was your last visit before you left a city.

Travis:

Gotcha. So this is, like, probably not the same connected, but like RSVP stands for French words—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

... because, like, we put French words on cards.

Teresa:

Exactly.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

We put French words on cards to seem... awesome.

Travis:

To seem posh. Yeah.

Teresa:

Yeah, to seem posh.

Travis:

And it still happens to this day.

Teresa:

Uh, these cards could be displayed throughout the, the day or the week, the social season on this tray, and they would be folded or torn in a, in a certain way to acknowledge that person.

Travis:

But was it just to, like, show off like, "This person came to my house"?

Teresa:

A little bit. A little bit. So people would... If it was a personal visit where the actual person came to your house instead of you getting their card from a servant, like, you could fold the top corner.

Travis:

Mm-hmm. I would guess that telephones made these even more essential to have. You know, when you didn't have, like, cell phones to store the number in, especially business cards.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

That like, "Hey. Here's my number."

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

Like, you can call me.

Teresa:

Definitely. That's one of the reasons why people question if we need these thing in today's society because, um... For example, if you were to set up a business meeting, you would first have to know where the other business is located so that you could actually go there. You would need to know the number already to set up an appointment, or you would need to know their email to set up an appointment.

Um, odds are that you would have this information either, you know, the phone book or the internet, uh, some other way, and you wouldn't really need that card anymore to tell you how to contact that person.

Travis:

But... Okay, so I will say this. This is something I feel very comfortable saying, very confident in my opinion of, which is I think that business cards are especially essential for people in nontraditional professions. So for example, if I have a business card that lists me as, like, a podcaster and internet professional—

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

... it adds some legitimacy and some credibility to a thing that didn't exist 15 years ago.

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

You know, I'm at a party and I say, "I have a podcast," and it's like okay, great. So does my nephew. And I'm like, "No, no, no. I'm a professional podcaster. Here's my business card," is a good power move.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

And a way to say like, "Check out my show." You know?

Teresa:

It, it really does make you look very put together because you, uh, you show forethought. Um, it's something that you have to have ready and on hand.

Travis:

Yes.

Teresa:

So, uh, it's, it's a lot less casual because you've prepared.

Travis:

Do you think that there's still a need for, like, the social aspect of the, of the social calling card that's, like, just your name and phone number?

It... And I ask. Let me clarify my question. Do you think that it bridges the gap between first meeting and the intimacy of plugging your number into someone's cell phone? You know what I mean? 'Cause, like, I don't want you in my contact list if we just met. Like, what are the odds... But after a five-minute conversation, I could hand you my card and say like, you know, "If

you ever wanna, like, talk about podcasting, give me a call." And you know what I mean?

Teresa:

Right. Well, but that's still isn't really a social thing. That's more of a business thing. Don't you think? Because if podcasting—

Travis:

I guess that's true.

Teresa:

... is your business.

Travis:

I'm just... So would you say that there is no need for the social cards?

Teresa:

I think that they are certainly not in vogue, um, because the... I think that the personal card really kind of went away as soon as we got rid of all of the pomp and circumstance of being introduced.

Travis:

Mm-hmm.

Teresa:

Um, and business cards are a lot more of a practical solution to a problem than they are, uh, just to remember someone. If you, if you go up to someone and you want to see them again, you can ask for their number. In, uh... And that, I know that that feels very, um, first datey type thing, uh, but with social media the way that it is, I think that that's really taken over that sort of, uh, personal card thing.

Travis:

So what about, like, the actual etiquette of business cards? And we have a lot of questions here, but especially with something like this where maybe it's not as in vogue, I feel like there's even more kind of mystery around it.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

How do I give someone a business card? When do I give someone a business card? What information needs to be on my business card? What's the point of it right now?

Teresa:

Well, the information that needs to be on your business card is your name, how to contact you and why they should keep that business card. Is it because you're a podcaster, right, or is it because you specialize in design? Or whatever it is, what your usefulness is should be on there.

Um, as far as giving out business cards, it's a lot of less formal these days. You used to have, like, a business card keeper and all kinds of things like that. But you should hand out a business card to someone you've made a connection with for your business. So if you are at a convention or something and you find yourself speaking to the same few couple people about your business, those people deserve business cards.

Travis:

Especially if they may end up talking to a score of different people and you don't wanna get lost in the shuffle. Like, they pull it out their pocket later and said, "Oh yeah, I was gonna check that out."

Teresa:

Right, but you want it to have meaning. It is inappropriate to just go around a convention without speaking to the people that you're handing your cards to.

Travis:

Yeah, that's contextless. That's nothing.

Teresa:

We've all, we've all had that happen where someone just taps you on the shoulder while you're talking to someone else, shoves a business card in your hand and walks away.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

That's not something that you wanna do. That just... You've handed me a piece of trash basically.

Travis:

Well, as we're talking about what should be on a business card, this question comes from Erin. At what point does someone's pride in their cool business card design become... Well, they used a word that I don't wanna use on our clean podcast. Jerky.

Teresa:

Um.

Travis:

And I also think that this relates to people who, like, have a really busy business card.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Like, you know, where it's like I can't find the phone number because there's so much going on on it.

Teresa:

Yeah. I think that it gets to the point where if they start introducing their business card as "Look at how cool my business card is."

Travis:

Especially if it's one of those ones where it's like it's indestructible, or look how thick it is. I made the mistake of, I got some personal business cards that were, like, thick. And it was like oh, this is awkward to put in my wallet. Thank you. This is gonna cut my leg if it's in my pocket. Thank you so much.

Teresa:

If the person that you're handing a business card to mentions it, feel free to explain. Say, "Oh, well, they're super thick cardstock," or "I was told they were indestructible," or something like that. But you shouldn't give it the caveat as you're handing it out. Look at my super cool business cards.

Travis:

And speaking of, like, the card itself, this is from Kevin. "Is there a universal standard size for card slots in wallets?" Um, and also Alyssa asked kinda the same thing. An odd-shaped business card... Uh, "Are odd-shaped business cards annoying for recipients?"

Teresa:

Yes. I think that there is a standard size, and a reputable printer will know what that size is. And the weird-shaped ones, I think, I think it's all right to stand out as far as, like, cutouts or as far as, um, maybe, maybe if the, the shape is still rectangularish.

Travis:

Yeah, you get the ones with the little notched corners—

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

... and that kinda thing.

Teresa:

Things like that are fine because they are the same general shape. But if you hand someone an oval as a business card, that's more likely to get lost because it won't go in their wallet or their business card holder.

Travis:

Um, and I think that's a good point. Um, we had a question from Alex who asked, "At what point am I powerful enough of carry a separate business card holder versus just using my wallet?" Um, and I feel that on that, if your wallet keeps your business cards safe, it's fine. But you're really gonna undo a lot of credibility and goodwill if you pull, like, a beat up, bent, kind of warped from being in your wallet business card and ha—it's gonna make you look unprofessional.

Teresa:

Or if you have a lot of business cards that you anticipate giving out, like I said, at a convention or something, um, where your wallet couldn't possibly hold all of those and you need your wallet for other things, I think then it is appropriate to definitely have a separate business card carrying case. And Travis, you have two sets of business cards. You have your personal card and you have, uh, your flagship show, your MBMBaM cards.

Travis:

Yes.

Teresa:

And you keep those in a case because there are so many of them.

Travis:

That's right. I actually, I find an old cigarette style case to be the perfect wallet for me. One side holds all of my, like, cards and ID and credit card stuff, and the other sides holds my business cards. And it keeps them safe because it's a hard-sided, uh, container and it makes me look like a real cool dude.

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

Um, uh, we also had the question from a couple different people. "What about if you don't have a job and you're looking for a job?" And that's kinda where I think the idea of the social card, you know, just, like, your name and contact without... Or, like you were saying, you could put on there, like, especially if it's a specific job you're looking for, like, Travis McElroy, phone number, designer.

Teresa:

Yeah. Absolutely. I don't think that you need a business logo or a business affiliation in order to give out cards for potential business partners. You can put whatever your specialty is. And as long as it's an accurate description, that should be fine.

Travis:

Uh, this question is from Alex. If someone hands you a business card and you know immediately that you're never going to use their service, is it rude to say, "No thank you," and hand the card back?

Teresa:

Yes, it is.

Travis:

Yeah.

Teresa:

Um, [laughs] if someone hands you a business card and, uh, it, it really doesn't jive with you, you'll just have to hold on 'til you can throw it away.

Travis:

And I think the reason it's rude is the reason someone would hand you a business card is to say, "If you ever need my service."

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

And you going, "I never will."

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

And it's like, but you don't know that. And even if you do know that, it's safer just to, like, keep it in your pocket and then throw it away later. Like—

Teresa:

Um, yeah, because especially in the business world, you don't wanna get the reputation of being cavalier of who you do business with. Um, and that goes both ways. So you, you can be choosy and that's okay, but you wanna save face and stay, um, open for business.

Travis:

I also think as far as the relevancy goes, when I have received business cards from... um, as a customer or as a consumer and someone has been like, "If you need me, here's, like, my direct line."

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Or like, "Here." Like, it has made me X amount more likely to use their business again and to remember like, "I did have a good experience. I'm gonna go to that person again."

Teresa:

Right.

Travis:

So... And maybe it's not necessarily the same, like, peer-to-peer exchange, but I think that it's still relevant as far as, like, consumer and as far as saying like, "Person above you, like, please remember me." You know?

Teresa:

Certainly.

Travis:

Um, now you were saying earlier that you had some, uh, business card around the world tips.

Teresa:

Yeah.

Travis:

Do we wanna share those before we wrap up?

Teresa:

Well, a couple of quick ones that were mentioned a lot in a lot of different articles online. Um, it's very, very important in Japan to have your business cards ready. Um, it's, uh, you should make sure that when you accept a business card, you do it with both hands. It's considered a sign of respect.

Travis:

Do you also hand it with both hands?

Teresa:

Uh, yes.

Travis:

So to say, both hand give, both hand take. As Griffin would say, the Japanese style.

Teresa:

[laughs] Yes. Um, and you are to read the information on it, front and back, before putting it away. Uh, so that shows that you have carefully considered and you appreciate the business card that's been given to you.

Uh, in China, again, you are to accept and offer with both hands and again read it. And it is pretty fairly common in China that you would write your information in gold lettering. It's considered lucky.

Travis:

Oh, okay.

Teresa:

Um, in India and the Middle East, you should only give and accept business cards with your right hand.

Travis:

Okay. Now, does—just to clarify, because we also had people. That whole like, "I put my business card in my hand like you would a tip and d—" Don't do that. That's weird, right?

Teresa:

Right, and you don't have to be sly about it.

Travis:

Okay.

Teresa:

Uh, you should offer it willingly, and it should be taken willingly.

Travis:

Somebody asked about that, regarding handshakes, too. Don't ever do the hand... We talked about this in the hotel and the tipping episode. Don't ever do a handshake with money in your hand and do a hand—it's weird and it's greasy.

Teresa:

Mm-hmm.

Travis:

Don't do it.

Teresa:

Yeah. But if you are expecting to pass out your business cards in another country, it is always appropriate to have them translated into the language of that, that country or of the people that you expect to give it out. I know in China, there's Mandarin and Cantonese and a bunch of other different languages, but if you, you at least make an effort to make one of those, um, everybody really appreciates that.

Travis:

Excellent. Um, so think that's gonna do it for us this week. Thank you so much for joining us. Um, we wanna tell you a couple things before you go. One, maximumfun.org, our host site, our, our family, our podcast family, have added a new podcast to the network called the Beef And Dairy Network. Um, I am so in love with it. It's... Okay. It's a podcast fo—uh,

made to sound like a radio show about, like, the beef and dairy industry, but it's weird and funny—

Teresa:

[laughs]

Travis:

... and a farce. And it's so funny. We listened to it the other day—

Teresa:

It's—

Travis:

... when it got added. We love it.

Teresa:

It's a little Monty Python, a little Welcome to Night Vale.

Travis:

Yeah. It's, it's real good. Listen to episode eight. It's my favorite one so far. Um, but go check it out. The Beef And Dairy Network Podcast. Um, you can find it on Max Fun. You could find it on iTunes. While you're on Max Fun, go check out all the other amazing shows that are on there.

Um, I have a podcast that is not on Max Fun that I'm, uh, very, very proud of called Interrobang. Um, if you would go check that out, I would really appreciate it. It's me and my friend Tybee talking about the issues that frustrate us and maybe frustrate you and frustrate the world and trying to make sense of it all. Um, you can find it at interrobangcast.com.

Teresa:

It's a little more high energy than this one.

Travis:

Oh, yeah. It... And it's also got a lot of wirty dords in it, and it's all about us being very frustrated and ranty. Um, but yeah, you can find it. Interrobangcast.com has a player for it and a description of it. Um, and we just launched a Patreon because it is not affiliated with any network. So if you would go check it out, I would really appreciate it.

Um, the Shmanners theme song, which we have all come to love and enjoy and deeply appreciate, was written by Brent "Brentalfloss" Black, my, uh,

co-host on Trends Like These and family friend. Um, and you can get it as a ringtone. If you have an Apple device, just go, uh, through your Apple device to, you know, the iTunes store. Search for it in ringtones. Shmanners, S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S, and you'll find it. And then you can jam out anytime someone texts you or calls you or you get an alert or whatever.

Teresa:

Um, I would like to say thank you to everyone who has joined our Facebook group. We recently reached a thousand members. Thank you so much.

Travis:

We did it.

Teresa:

And I would also like to say, um, that I appreciate all of the posts and I read every single one. Um, but I want to open up the forums. I would like to say if you have something to add or an answer to someone's etiquette conundrum, go ahead and, and state your piece. We'd love to hear it, and I'd love to make it more of a discussion and less of a, of "Please. An emergency—"

Travis:

We—

Teresa:

"... has arisen. Teresa, I need your help." [laughs]

Travis:

We love that you're like, that you think that Teresa is the go-to source. But, you know, she's just one person and we can't always get to your questions in time. So everybody, help everybody out with respect. Make sure that you are offering help and not just, like, your opinions on what you would do. Let's make it all friendly. Let's be helpful, um, with respect for each other. It's always a good way to go.

Teresa:

Absolutely. Thank you so much for joining that group.

Travis:

Um, you can also find us on Twitter at @ShmannersCast, S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S-C-A-S-T. Um, you can email us. Shmannerscast@gmail.com. Um, and if you like the show, maybe tell a friend. Maybe go on iTunes. Rate, review, subscribe. All of this stuff helps. Um, you can also just click Retweet when

we tweet about the episode every week. Um, all that stuff is appreciated. We appreciate you.

Thank you. Thank you for listening. Teresa, thank you for joining me.

Teresa:

Thank you for having me, Travis.

Travis:

Well, I mean, I guess you weren't really my guest. So thank you for continuing to be married to me and continuing to make this podcast with me.

Teresa:

You're welcome.

Travis:

Um, that's gonna do it for this week. Join us again next week.

Teresa:

No RSVP required.

Travis:

You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa:

Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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