

SLIDELL BUSINESS News and Notes

How 'likable' are you?

Media expert provides interesting tips for business group

By KEVIN CHIRI
Slidell news bureau

COVINGTON - Who doesn't want to be likable?

That is a word which was highlighted by Dr. Tommy Karam at the Northshore Young Professionals (NYP) business luncheon here at the Covington Holiday Inn, with a sell-out crowd of businessmen and women, who all wanted to hear from an expert on personal branding.

The NYP group is a chapter of the St. Tammany Chamber, and this particular meeting had great interest since Karam is a professor who is the director of marketing at LSU. He brought a fascinating message to the group about marketing yourself in a way that others will want to do business with you.

Leading the key to success, he said, is a seemingly simple formula—be likable.

To achieve that, he focused on two particular factors for those who are in the business world or just with friends. He noted that vocal delivery and facial expressions make up 93 percent of what it takes to be likable.

"Whether you are talking about being in the business world, or with anyone, if you want to make an emotional connection with people you have to come across as being likable," he said. "Otherwise, peo-

ple will not be interested in you."

While he had lots of fun allowing the audience to try and guess what key factors these might be as a likable person, Karam had the crowd laughing after hearing enough wrong answers that he started pointing out "losers" in the audience.

The first factor to being likable, he said, is in your vocal delivery, which makes up 38 percent of what it takes for someone to like you.

"It's about the tone of your voice. It has to be engaging, but more than anything, you have to talk and respond in a way that people think you care," he said.

He pointed out the fact the best doctors are those who have patients believing their physician cares about them.

"Actually, they do what it takes to make people think they care—that's so important. But truthfully, most people think that too many doctors are boring and uninterested in what you think or have to say."

He added a small additional point about talking and vocal delivery by adding that one of the worst things in your speech is if people think you are whining or you are arrogant.

But the biggest, most important factor in being likable is your facial expression, or what he calls "your default look. It's the way you look in the mirror when

you are not trying to put on any particular look." Karam said 58 percent of being likable is involved in your facial expressions.

He told the audience that the next morning they should wake up, walk to the mirror, and glance at the way they look first thing—before any attempt is made to smile or appear likable.

"That's your default look and we all have one," he said. "If you don't seem to have a good one, then you have to work on it."

Karam said there is a small muscle just above the lip that determines what your default look is, and the good news is that you can practice changing whatever you appear to be with an attempt to bring a small smile to your "default look. Practice and improve it but know it won't change overnight."

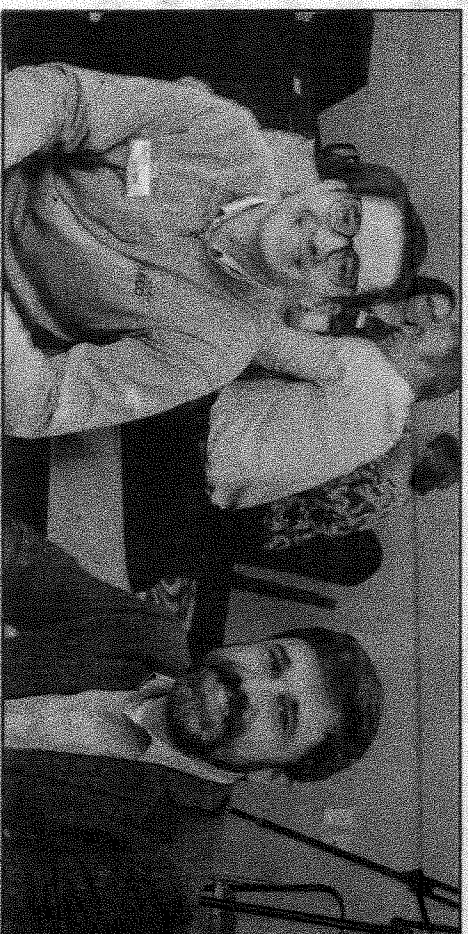
Karam added another important point about your likability look.

"In this business we have identified the fact that people will form an opinion when they see you, and it can happen in as little as 1/24th of a second, up to 15 seconds. That's why you need to always have a good default look when you are walking down the halls, coming into a restaurant—wherever it is—you need to develop an improved default look that tells people you are likable," he added.

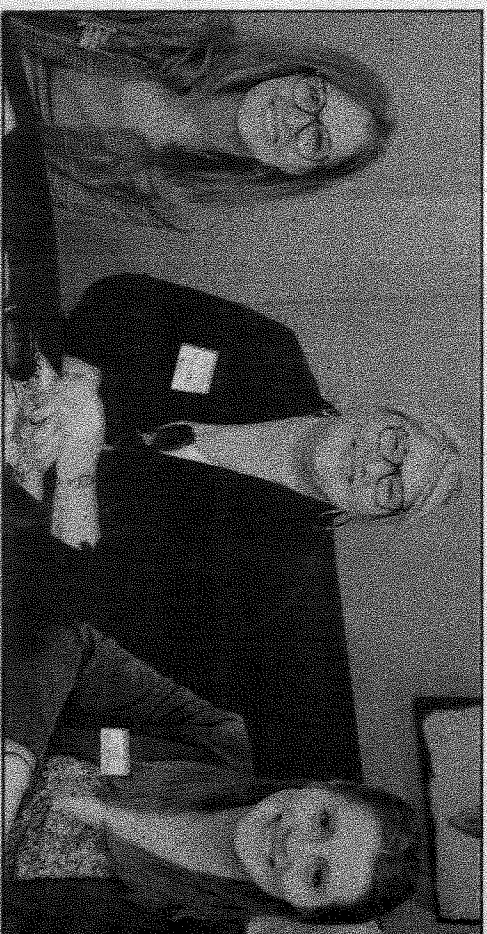
Karam said that Drew



Among the packed crowd of attendees was (from left) Taylor Keller, Mike Gambrell, Alton McRee and Victoria Smith. (Staff photo by Kevin Chiri.)



Matt Felger and Mike Richard.



Mary Artigue, Erica Moreau and Audrey Gitz DeAgano.

Brees and Michael Jordan are two of the best examples of individuals having a great default look.

"They realize that the camera never blinks, so if you are an athlete, or a businessperson like other people, which improves your personal branding, is to always try to make others feel good. That's when they want to do business with you."



Dr. Tommy Karam from LSU was quite animated in speaking to a luncheon meeting of the Northshore Young Professionals with great tips about how to improve your personal branding, or likeability, in the business world. (Staff photo by Kevin Chiri.)



Chamber leadership with guest speaker Dr. Tommy Karam (second from right) were CEO Lacey Osborne, and Northshore Young Professionals event leaders Elizabeth Lee and Matt Guidry. (Staff photo by Kevin Chiri.)