

## six people you should know

» They might not seem all that powerful, but they can sure save your butt in a pinch

A PACKAGE HELD at the post office because you weren't home to receive it, a monthlong wait for a dentist appointment, the discovery that your beloved raspberry splash lipstick is sold out *again*. Frustrating? Yep. Facts of life? Not necessarily. If you buddy up to the right people, setbacks like these will disappear faster than Britney Spears's first marriage.

We're talking about people you see all the time but never get to know: your hair stylist's receptionist, the guy who rotates your tires. Their jobs may not *seem* important—until an emergency strikes. By taking time now to learn their names, joke around, maybe even bake them cookies, you're writing yourself an insurance policy, says Lynn Kahle, Ph.D., a University of Oregon consumer psychology expert. "These people are going to care about you more if they view you as a friend," she says.

Bad with names? Write them down and consult as needed. Make sure your list contains the following folks:

- 1 | Your mechanic.** Debbie Abrams Kaplan, 37, of Foster City, California, got \$500 more than blue book value for her 1982 Pontiac Firebird because her mechanic pal kept the car in tip-top shape and swore to its condition.
- 2 | Your IT guy (or gal).** If you hang with the tech guy at work once in a while, he just might drop by your house to hook up your new printer, or coach you through a frustrating software install.
- 3 | Your doctor's receptionist.** Remember the *Sex and the City* episode when Samantha snagged an appointment with a big-name oncologist? (Turned out the chilly receptionist had a tabloid-fueled crush on Samantha's hunky actor boyfriend.) Receptionists can also help with insurance company red tape.
- 4 | A cosmetics salesperson.** She'll alert you to gift-with-purchase deals—plus do your makeup gratis before a big night out.
- 5 | Your local police officer.** Instead of a ticket you'll get a friendly buzz on your doorbell when it's time to move your car.
- 6 | Your pharmacist.** Keli Goff, 26, of New York City, needed a prescription filled on the Friday before a long weekend, but an insurance glitch denied payment. Her chum behind the counter gave her the meds anyway. "He told me I could pay him when my insurance situation was straightened out," Goff says.



I'll connect you in a moment.

### The Gatekeeper From Hell

How to coax a smile from absolutely anyone

Is the scheduler at your gyno's office giving you toxic 'tude? Instead of letting it ruin your day (or worse, showing her the *true* meaning of the word "beeyatch"), set out to find her sweet side. Everyone likes to be admired and appreciated, and most people like to talk about themselves. Compliment her new highlights, ask about the cute kids in the photo by her computer. If small talk doesn't do the trick, try empathy ("Wow, it's busy here today—I had a crazy morning at work too") or some ego-boosting flattery ("Boy, you really know your way around an insurance form"). Nastiness won't have the same power to upset you when you consider it a challenge—one you can overcome.