

The A to Z of Dressing for Impact

ATTITUDE: Your attitude to your image speaks volumes. Your choice of clothing directly reflects your commitment to your career, your organisation and your level of professionalism. It will not fail to be noticed if you aspire to exceed your current level of success.

BRANDING: Organisations often focus their attention on their brand through their products, building and written communication, thereby missing an opportunity to strengthen their brand message visually through their people.

COLOUR: Use colour in putting your image together. For example, a person wearing blue tones tends to be perceived as trustworthy, whilst a man wearing brown is said to elicit distrust. Learn how to make colour work for you whether you want to project trust, power, authority or other characteristics.

DESIGNER LABELS: It is not necessary to wear expensive designer labels to project a quality image. By dressing in clothes that are the right colour, shape and style for you as an individual you can achieve the same result.

ELEGANCE: When it comes to style, for me there is a distinct lack of sartorial elegance of the 1940s and 50s that was characterised by Cary Grant and James Stewart, Doris Day and Bette Davis. They were dressed impeccably and exuded charisma and confidence. Well-dressed people are always noticed – never their clothes.

FIT: To achieve a streamlined, flattering look, it is imperative that your clothes fit properly. Whether too large or too small, ill-fitting clothes will always be noticed and will only serve as a distraction.

GROOMING: No matter how well dressed you are, poor grooming can ruin your appearance. Grooming consists of attention to lots of small details that collectively convey a powerful message.

HAIR: It can be extremely unattractive and distracting – whether it is on your head or face, or in your nose or ears! Grooming of hair is vitally important to the image that you are projecting. For example, men with facial hair have been perceived in research as less trustworthy (hiding the face) and lacking in personal power.

IMPRESSION: it is not possible to make no impression. With some focus and direction you can ensure that you are making the right impression and maximising your personal impact on a daily basis.

JUDGEMENTAL: People will make judgements about you and by extension, your organisation based largely upon your appearance. When you think about the image that you and your colleagues and staff are projecting, do you feel confident that it is the image you want, and that is consistent with your corporate identity?

KNITWEAR: Successfully incorporate knitwear into a smart casual look by aiming for contemporary, good quality fine knits, and avoiding dated twin-sets and chunky sweaters.

LAZINESS: “There are no ugly women (or men for that matter) only lazy ones” Helena Rubenstein. With just a little effort and some guidance, you can make your image work for you.

MAKE-UP: research shows that women who wear make-up generally get better jobs, get paid more, and get promoted quicker than those who don't.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION: 55% of all communication is non-verbal. It is based upon how you present and carry yourself. By ignoring the image that you are projecting you are potentially ignoring the benefits of good non-verbal communication.

OCCASION: When you put some thought into what image you want to project for each occasion, you will consistently improve the outcome of your communication.

PACKAGING: Being noticed both internally and external to your organisation increases your chances of getting on in your career. You can stand out from a crowd by paying attention to your packaging – (our packaging are the clothes that we wear and the way in which we wear them) and the non-verbal messages that it is projecting.

QUALITY: Always buy the best quality clothing that you can afford. Quality garments will look better, fit better and be more durable than cheaper versions. Remember though that there is expensive 'tat' out there!

RESPECT: You should aim to be consistently immaculate with your grooming and appearance showing attention to detail, for an overall look that commands respect before you even open your mouth.

SMART CASUAL: It is impossible in today's business environment to avoid occasions where smart or business casual is required. Smart casual dressing is about maintaining the same amount of credibility and projecting the same authority and professionalism as one does in formal business wear. Whether the emphasis is on 'smart' or 'casual' will depend upon what is appropriate for the specific occasion.

TWO PATTERNS: When pulling together a formal business look, stick to a maximum of two patterns out of three for the suit, the shirt/top and the tie/scarf. Use colour for contrast and to add intrigue.

UNDERWEAR: Underwear should never show a bulge or line in clothing. Ensure that you are fitted professionally for a bra, and avoid a visible panty line at all times. Remember 'a house is only as good as its foundations'.

VENTS: The vents on a gents jacket are largely a matter of jacket style and personal preference, but fit is important. If you tend to carry extra weight in the

rear, double side vents are often the most flattering, but ensure that the jacket does not fit too high on the hipline, as it will draw attention to this area.

WELL-DRESSED: “If a woman is well dressed you notice the woman but if a woman is badly dressed you notice the clothes” Coco Chanel. Dressing for success is not about being dressed in the most expensive clothes, it is about being well dressed to portray a look that is balanced and appropriate.

EXPECT ALTERATIONS: It is rare to find clothing that is made to fit your precise proportions. Do not be afraid to invest in a good tailor to provide alterations that will give you that made-to-measure look of quality.

YARDSTICK: Potential clients use representatives of your organisation as a yardstick for the service that they perceive they will get from you. Make the image of all your staff work for you to entice people to want to explore your organisation further.

ZOOM IN: The eye will automatically zoom in on any inconsistencies in your image, whether it is a hanging thread, or an item of clothing that is particularly loud or inappropriate. Attention to detail is essential in putting your image together.

“Never fall for Fashion, Always be in Style! Fashion fades, only style remains” Coco Chanel