



Dressed for Success

How first impressions can open, or close, career doors

This is it, the big break you've always dreamed of. You have run over your strengths and weaknesses in your mind, practiced reciting your biggest on-the-job achievements and thought of a way to perfectly articulate just how much of a team player you are. You're cool, calm and confident. Finally it's your turn to enter the room and come face to face with your prospective new bosses. A quick scan reveals a sharp dressed man; two piece suit, designer tie, perfect creases. His female colleague looks stunning in a power ensemble; perfectly pressed blouse, knee length pencil skirt and shoes that look nothing less than this year's Manolo Blahnik's.

Suddenly your confidence begins to plummet as you try your best to conceal your uneven hem job and faded fabric. "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" they ask. "Um, pardon?" you reply as you try not so discreetly to tame your disheveled hair. The job offer never comes and you are stuck in your same old humdrum current position rethinking your image as it relates to your career and future opportunities (or lack thereof).

Like it or not, personal image is becoming increasingly important in the corporate world. Long gone are the words of wisdom given by mom — "Don't worry about what others think." The fact is, today you should care what other people think. A first impression is the most important one, especially in the business world.

Prospective employers, supervisors and clients want to see a person that looks, dresses and acts like a successful individual. In fact, research shows 93 per cent of the time people are judged by how they look and act while only 7 per cent of the time by what they say.

Shirley Anne Millar is the owner of Beautiful You, Colours, Fashions and Image Consulting. Millar has been hired by corporate executives and professionals throughout Windsor-Essex to identify and refine their image. "Today's corporate world is global, competitive, educated, sophisticated, cosmopolitan and fast," she says. Millar believes that if you haven't already, it may be a good idea to take a look at your business attire and the subsequent image you are projecting. In today's competitive job market, any edge counts; while technical skills and knowledge are critical to professional success, they account for only 15 per cent of why a person lands and keeps a job or advances. In contrast, it is said that the majority of success an individual experiences comes from the professional way a person handles themselves around others.

As every employee represents the front line for his or her organization, a greater emphasis is now being placed on business attire. Today, many employers are opting to enforce dress codes in the workplace, which they do with full legal authority. According to the employment standards act, an employer is responsible for making



Top skills and broad knowledge are must-haves in our current tough job market, but what you really need to succeed may lie behind your closet doors.

Story By Danielle Findlay

decisions about dress codes, uniforms and other clothing requirements. With the employees signed consent, a company is permitted to take a percentage of an employee's wages and apply it toward the purchase of a uniform. Dress codes are enforced for several reasons, from safety to team building to projecting a professional appearance.

"A uniform or dress code builds teamwork and morale, allowing the employee to feel confident and respected by their clientele," Millar says. With the strong emphasis on advertising and branding in the ever-expanding global market, some employers look at uniforms as walking advertisements. A person in a button down brown shirt and the same shade of shorts is easily identifiable as a UPS employee, for example. The blue smock is synonymous with Wal-Mart employees, the beige outfit with your morning cup of coffee from Tim Hortons. Other companies choose to make their feelings on dress clear without the use of uniforms or a formal policy. "No one should see up it, down it or through it," was the philosophy adhered to by one supervisor.

An employer is wise to weigh the pros and cons before imposing a dress code though; the cost of maintaining a wardrobe or purchasing uniforms set by the employer can be hard for the worker to endure, depending on the wage they make. As well, some standard uniforms may be ill fitting for certain body types, rendering them a contradiction to what they were supposed to achieve in the first place.

Linda Allan is an expert in the matter of workplace conduct with a Masters degree in education. "Many companies are fearful of

Three Stone Diamond Jewellery Collection

for your past, your present and your future



GOLD STAR JEWELERS

• 25 Amy Croft Dr., Unit 14A, EC Row & Manning (519) 735-9002



PROTECTION

TOTAL SERVICES

One company, One call.

UNIQUE COMMUNICATIONS INC. Since 1961

- Digital Video Recording Specialists
- Surveillance Cameras
- Video Systems / Remote Viewing from Anywhere
- Convert Systems
- Access Control / Proximity / Finger Print Access
- 24 Hour U.L.C. Monitoring
- Apartment Intercom
- FREE SITE VISITS / FREE DEMO'S



519-948-5595

6777 CANELON DR. WINDSOR

www.uniquecomm.com



imposing a dress code because they don't want to be dictatorial," Allan says. "If a company pushes a dress code, sometimes employees will push back." While it is a preference for some, dress codes are not necessary. "Being strict doesn't mean being too rigid, but guiding employees in the right directions," Allan advises. Her advice on business, dress and dining etiquette is dished out in the heart of Canada's corporate base, downtown Toronto. Allan states her expertise as "professionalizing companies and individuals."

"Image is just not about dress, image is really about how you look and act," she says. With over 25 years in the business, Allan has learned a lot about personal branding from her time as a management consultant with such high profile companies as Bell Canada and KPMG. "Everyday in every way in a company we are building impressions. People form impressions on you whether they know you or not," she says. With regards to proper attire, Allan has suggested to clients to "always dress for the job you want, not the job you have."

Projecting a proper image by utilizing appropriate dress and etiquette is essential to making good impressions in the business and corporate world. If you're starting to feel that your image could use a definite overhaul, fear not, it's not as big an endeavour as you might anticipate. While overhauling

one's wardrobe can certainly seem overwhelming, especially if you don't exactly consider yourself to be a fashion aficionado, there are some relatively easy first steps to take. If in doubt, Shirley Anne Millar suggests keeping your image current with a few key items such as trendy eyeglasses and flattering hairstyles. If you still feel you require a bit of help, speak to a professional who can assist you with proper selections and help you to eliminate poor choices or overspending. Image consultants like Shirley Anne Millar are a growing breed in Windsor and Essex County. Millar's services locally have included image workshops for business owners to enhance staff development, and have expanded to wedding parties, photographers, women's organizations and private individuals. Her fees can start in the area of about \$100 and include a two-hour session on colour analysis. According to Millar, "customers are realizing the initial cost pays for itself in wise choices that are beneficial to both their profession and their lifestyle."

So, whether you are just starting to climb the corporate ladder, hoping to enhance your current position or looking to make the move to a more rewarding one, taking a look at yourself on the outside (as well as the inside) will surely make your move up those rungs a little swifter.

IN

**THE
CLEAN
DEPOT**

A Champion Company

THIS SUMMER GET THE BEST IN

SALES RENTALS SERVICE PARTS



**THE SOURCE FOR PROFESSIONAL
JANITORIAL SOLUTIONS & SANITATION SUPPLIES**

TO GET YOUR QUOTE CALL NOW

1-800-407-6188

SERVING ALL OF MICHIGAN & ONTARIO

1030 Walker Road
Windsor, Ontario
Tel.: 519-252-5414
Fax: 519-252-5030

350 Norfinch Drive
Toronto, Ontario
Tel.: 416-749-4242
Fax: 416-749-4322

www.championproducts.com

sales@championproducts.com

