WOMEN | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Impress for Business Success

Be willing to become a true professional in your business and to do what is necessary to get the results you deserve. The impact on your bottom line will be extraordinary.

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You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

While I agree with that statement, I know that about 98 percent of the time, it's wrong. We can't possibly get to know people in a few minutes, let alone a few seconds.

It's important to create a good first impression, but it's essential to create a *great lasting impression.*

Several factors determine your level of business success. *The way you dress is the number one factor* in determining whether people want to do business with you. Far too much business is lost because a person just does not look capable. We want to do business with successful people.

Your first impression - of your dress, presentation, attitude, and manners - may promote you as mediocre and perhaps incompetent or present you as average, out of touch, sloppy, unreliable, and lacking confidence.

Harsh? Perhaps, but the reality is that over 80 percent of both the male and female workforce dress inappropriately for their office, their industry, and the target market they are serving and trying to attract. Their dress and behaviour are hurting business and sales.

Your Attire

> **The first thing to understand is that *dressing for fashion* and *dressing for style* are two separate things. The latter can enhance your personal and business brand and success; the former can drive customers away.**

Being fashionable does not necessarily mean you are a professional in your industry. The fashion industry is about trends and making a statement. It's about a prevailing custom, fad, or rage. Fashion can be influenced by current affairs, the environment, or the hottest celebrity. It can apply to any modest or bizarre way of dressing or behaviour that tends to be favoured at any one time or place.

Style is imbedded in tradition and trust. Style is a distinct expression or manner expressed through good taste, fine form, correct manners, and a sense of civility. Dressing for style implies sophistication, mastery, success, opportunity, and awareness of current events and issues. The Direct Seller's profession is also based in tradition and trust with the offering of great products and service, and tremendous opportunities for developing a business and attaining financial success.

Those who express great style do it in a mode that can be described as beautiful, graceful, elegant, and confident. Your style can suggest you are proficient, reliable, and trustworthy and that you produce quality work with ease and provide a quality product. In short, you are a consummate professional.

Dress Code

Every business needs a dress-code policy. If you think dressing for the office or for business is too conservative, you're right! When you peruse your closet wondering what to wear to the a networking event or when visiting a potential client, stay on the conservative side. Dressing more professionally has been proved to enhance performance in any career, including the Direct Seller's industry. I know - you want to express your

individuality, but you want to be remembered for who *you* are, not because your wardrobe raises eyebrows and screams *"yikes."*

Attire directly affects personal performance in any profession.

In my opinion, casual Fridays or any "casual" days should be eliminated from the office environment and any home based business. It has been proved that on those days, people under perform on many levels and the business itself is adversely affected.

Ditch the super-casual look for the office and your home based office environment, and pull together a polished and professional look. That doesn't always mean a suit. The best choice is to be industry and target-market appropriate. If you're in a profession that demands proficiency and competence, your wardrobe and business etiquette must reflect that. Trust me... you will perform better when you are at your desk, on the computer and talking to prospective clients on the phone without the fluffy slippers and flannel PJ's, and you will take yourself more seriously.

Image

Your image should:

- be appropriate for the environment, the occasion, the industry, and the client;
- be intentional and purposeful;
- embrace your awareness of first impressions;
- express the best aspects of the company you represent;
- reflect your client, target market, and industry;
- connect with your audience;
- create and build rapport;
- reflect the best you have to offer;
- look ethical;
- indicate your uniqueness - the way you want to be noticed, known, and remembered;
- focus on generating a **great lasting impression**.

The image you create for yourself will be distinct from the image of your products and company, yet it will be similar in many aspects. All employees represent their company and therefore should be aligned with the values of the business.

When people create a company or they start a business as a representative of a direct sales company, it usually is an extension of themselves and hopefully it embodies the finest aspects of their character - a reflection of their hopes, dreams, vision, experiences, and knowledge. As a company grows, its image evolves, shaped by the people at the top, the staff, and the customers and suppliers.

> **The products and services offered and delivered also affect the company's image. The sum of all those characteristics creates the company's reputation, and much more.**

Those doing exceptionally well in business know what it takes to be in the **top 1 percent** of their industry. They are professional and polished on all levels of presentation and performance. And they reap the rewards. They also realize that an ongoing investment in themselves, their dress, and their personal development is critical to stay at the top.

That's serious stuff, yet all too often I see complacency.

Wardrobe Meltdowns

In Men:
Some of the most common problems in a man's wardrobe are ill-fitting suits; shirts too tight; ties too short; pants too baggy or tight; gaping pockets and pleats; and scuffed shoes with cracked leather and worn-down heels.

Some pant hems are so long, they drag on the ground - or the hems are too short. Socks aren't long enough and a bare leg shows when the gentleman sits down. The socks don't match the pants and the tie, shirt, and jacket aren't coordinated.

In Women:
No-Nos in a woman's attire include plunging necklines and cleavage, skirts too short, bare legs, or hosiery with runs and holes. The length of shirts, blouses, and sweaters should ensure we don't see any part of your mid-section or backside when you raise your arms or bend over. A well-

fitting skirt and trouser, properly tailored into the waist or upper hip, will avoid the exposure of skin.

Ladies, if you're wearing a skirt, knee length is **in**. While we see skirts of all lengths, for the office please be certain your hemline is *no higher* than 2 inches above the knee.

To continue, pant hems are either too short or dragging on the ground; shoes are scuffed; heel lifts are worn down; a suit or jacket fits poorly; sweaters are faded and shapeless because of poor knit and dye quality. Note: Sloppy cardigans and sweaters without shape or structure will accentuate drooping shoulders.

To maximize the shape of garments, every woman needs a proper bra fitting. It's essential for good health and proper back support. The majority of women are not wearing the correct bra size.

The hair shade of women who colour their hair may be draining their skin tone. If you wear makeup, a makeup lesson from a professional is a must, then you must practise and blend, blend, blend.

Tips for Men and Women

- Good posture and a confident stance are necessary to project professionalism. In all walks of life, clean and filed nails and groomed cuticles are essential.

- Every professional needs a good haircut, styled appropriately to maximize his or her facial features. Keep highlights subtle. Men: Get a great short haircut. And go easy on the sideburns - shorten them up. If you are balding, consider a completely shaved head. Just make sure you powder the high shine on top.

- Both form and function are critical if you wear glasses. They are an accessory and one of the first things people notice.

- Good skincare is essential. With advances in skincare technology and aesthetic services, there's no excuse for poor skin. Exfoliating for men and women is an absolute necessity. Through that process, gentlemen can say goodbye to ingrown hairs. Women with a well-exfoliated complexion find foundation glides onto the skin and blends beautifully.

- The way you care for your clothes determines their lifespan. Wool suits should be aired-out frequently and dry cleaned minimally. Buy quality hangers to ensure your clothes hold their shape. The wrong hangers can create holes or bumps that poke out of the shoulders of garments.

Tailoring and Fit
Great leaders and established businesswomen know it's important to make an impressive entrance. They choose clothes that *fit* well – not too tight and revealing and not too baggy.

To make an inexpensive garment look expensive, proper tailoring and proportion are critical. Ill-fitting jackets will pull across the shoulders. If the sleeves and body length are too long or too short, the entire garment will look out of proportion when the jacket is buttoned.

Dress pants should not hug your thighs and derriere. They should be flattering, hang straight from the buttocks, and not pull across the crotch area. Pant length should be hemmed with shoes on.

Colours
For business, invest in separates in solid colours that work well together. Go for texture.

Make sure your choices enhance your skin tone, your hair, and your eye colour. The wrong colours will make you look pale and accentuate lines, wrinkles, scars, and blemishes, and make under-eye circles darker. For the predominant core pieces in your wardrobe, stay with classic neutrals. They tend to be timeless.

We want *you* to be noticed, not just your clothes.

When you're starting out, it's easier on your budget to invest in pieces that mix and match. If you wear neutrals a couple times a week, your colleagues won't notice if you change your accessories, shirts, and tops.

Women can add a smart jacket, scarf, or shawl. Men can change sports jackets and rotate their tie wardrobe to add interest.

If your hair is dark brown and your eyes blue, try a deep chocolate jacket mixed with either navy, steel grey, or turquoise - stunning.

If you want to be seen as authoritative and powerful, combine a black suit with a white shirt and add a touch of dark red. To be perceived as conservative and understated, try mixing charcoal grey with white and navy. To appear friendly and likeable, mix taupe, blue, and pale yellow.

Retail and creative environments can tolerate creativity in the wardrobe - mix neutrals with lots of colour such as fuchsia, turquoise, red, purple-blues, cobalt blue, and lavender.

Accessories
Ladies can don drop-pearl, gold, or silver earrings and a matching necklace. Bracelets, necklaces, scarves, and shawls are fabulous for accessorizing an otherwise bland ensemble. We are seeing a lot of layering with necklaces. Done with taste, the look can be simply fabulous.

If you are giving a presentation, be aware that dangling earrings and bracelets can be noisy and distracting and can get caught on things.

Miscellaneous
For any business environment - particularly in the food industry - get rid of the piercings and hide the tattoos. The less inked skin that shows, the better.

Manners
Demonstrating suitable business etiquette can make a positive, powerful impact on the revenues of a business. To enhance your success, brush up on business etiquette. Every day, business is lost due to bad manners, lack-lustre attitude, bad table etiquette, weak organizational skills, a sluggish work ethic, disappointing productivity and follow-through, and poor service.

Get the picture? The choice is yours.
How do **you** want to be perceived?

The Bottom Line

And how much money do you want to be earning over the next 12 months? Developing, building, and branding your personal, professional, and business images are vital for boosting your income and establishing your expert status in your industry. Let's face it - there's competition out there.

When you and your team dress and behave inappropriately, revenue potential is at risk - quite possibly, your entire business.

If you don't kick it up a few notches, your competition sure will. You can count on it.

> **Positioning yourself correctly will determine whether you get the business. Do you want to be just average or do you want to be considered an authority in your industry?**

Values and Branding

The businesswoman must be clear on values of the company and how he or she wants the business portrayed in the marketplace. That is the first step in the branding process.

Ask the following questions:

- Who am I?
- What are my values?
- Where do I want to go?
- Who are we as a company?
- What do we do?
- What do we bring to the table collectively and individually?
- Where do we want to go as a company?
- What problems do we solve?
- What do we offer our clients?

- What image best represents the message we want to convey to our prospective customers?

After those questions are answered, you can create a comprehensive plan for how to get there.

Dress for Success

Over the course of a lifetime, each of us will need to seek the services of various business professionals. We are always looking for products to fill a variety of needs for ourselves and our loved ones. We may be seeking professionals to recommend to our clients and colleagues.

I network frequently and am constantly amazed at the lack of professionalism. The level of dress I consistently see is far below what I would expect of people with a business. Many are stymied as to why they aren't getting more business. You can be sure they have missed out on numerous referrals.

> **If you're looking for greater success and financial freedom down the road, look like the career you want. If you are looking to grow your business, expand your target market, or raise your prices, you should increase your skill and professionalism to step up your game.**

Men and women have no idea how good they can look until they work with a professional image consultant. The results speak for themselves.

One of my clients, Susan Robinson, was a VP of Operations for BC Hot House Foods. Amazingly competent and gifted, Susan had all the skills necessary to be President or CEO of that firm or any other company but her personal image said otherwise. Once she determined she wanted to lead a company, a plan was put into place to get her there. Our work

together prepared her, from the inside out, to become the new President and CEO of IRLY Distributors Ltd.

I encourage any professional person or business owner to consult a professional image consultant to ask, “Am I projecting the right image for my physique, body type, industry, profession, and business?” It takes courage to ask the question and even more pluck to accept and act on the response.

Attitude

Other factors determining success are your attitude and people skills and whether you are on top of your game - that is, you know how to run a business and get superb results.

Developing your people skills and conversational skills is critical to make solid connections with people.

> **The ability to build rapport and develop lasting relationships enhances any business environment. Business and corporations will pay for attitude and great people skills.**

Westjet is an example of hiring for attitude.

When conversations get tense, leaders look for savvy negotiators and those who know how to create win-win relationships. The best leaders can work with pretty much anyone and can get a team to perform. When the team doesn’t want to follow the leader, then there is a problem.

Inner Style

If you want to be taken seriously by your colleagues, and you feel you aren’t being heard when you have an idea to share, clean up your image and dress professionally - from head to toe - **from the inside out**.

Inner attitude is one of those shining beacons that can highlight you as a team member or someone destined for the termination list or business failure. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to play your part in the company and show you are a team player? Aptly projecting your maturity,

experience, forward-thinking, and care and concern for your colleagues and company success may require a shift in your attitude. The success of your business is all up to you!

Team spirit is a collaborative effort. It is a desire to create win-win situations and be present and aware of what contributes to company success and what is *tarnishing* the company image. Each team member - from the top down - must be accountable. Those who make excuses and shift blame to others will not prevail. Every aspect of your image must convey loud and clear that you are a winner with an appealing image.

Presentation is everything.

While building and branding your company's image is part of the process, so is painting or remodelling your office and getting super organized. Invest in yourself and get the training and knowledge you need to move forward.

Consider a Business Image Assessment and Image Update Roundtable. You and your staff will get honest feedback about the image of your office and staff, what is working well, and what needs to be improved. It's an excellent investment that will impact the bottom line of your business.

Action

Master motivator and author Zig Ziglar says that if you want others to change, you have to change.

Every business owner needs to set the standard for appropriate attire and behaviour in their profession and for every occasion and opportunity the business is represented. You can't expect your team to pull up their socks when you haven't pulled up yours.

> **Implementation is key. Knowing something is one thing - doing it is something else entirely. Taking action is necessary for success.**

Businesses today are trying their best, given their cash flow and time, to market themselves and generate leads and clients. Let the best of your personality and character shine through to leave a ***great lasting impression*** to be noticed, known, and remembered... for all the right reasons.

Be willing to become a true professional in your business and to do what is necessary to get the results you deserve. The impact on your bottom line will be extraordinary.

Deborah Reynolds, founder and President of About Face Image Consulting Inc., is a contributing author, along with Dr. Wayne Dyer and Anthony Robbins, of ***Wake Up Live the Life You Love: Living in Clarity,*** contributing author of ***Inspired Style****,* and Author of the soon to be released book ***Getting You Noticed Known and Remembered: Building Your Business Image from the Inside Out.*** Having captured one of "America's Most Wanted" and the "Second Most Wanted" in Germany as an Immigration Investigator, Deborah brings the same passion and drive to her business and is a sought after International Image Expert, Speaker and Business Consultant. Deborah is an Image Center Panelist of the Direct Selling Women's Alliance. Visit Deborah's site at www.aboutfaceimage.com