



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Reprinted from the November 2005 issue of BIC

Today's organizational image: Reflections of success

Have you ever walked into an office and had to wait until the front desk employee finished her personal call, stopped reading a magazine or ended a side conversation before she acknowledged your presence?

Can you recall phoning an organization for information and receiving a cold and curt, "Hello," rather than a pleasant "Good Morning," from a voice that projected, "We're so glad you called. How can we help you?" Or, does this following telephone conversation sound familiar?

Ms. Adams: Elliott Printing. (short and abrupt)

Caller: Is this Mr. Gray's office?

Ms. Adams: Yes.

Caller: May I speak with him, please?

Ms. Adams: Yes, but you'll have to wait a minute. He's talking on another phone right now.

Caller: Do you know how long it will be?

Ms. Adams: I don't know. It's hard to say.

Caller: I'll wait.

Ms. Adams: Okay.

Mr. Gray: Gray speaking. (pause) Hello, hello ... Ms. Adams, who was calling on the other line?

Ms. Adams: Oh, is he gone? He must have hung up.

Mr. Gray: Who was it?

Ms. Adams: He didn't say.

To continue — have you ever had to wait in a reception area where the support staff sat polishing her nails, or better yet, licking her fingers while she devoured lunch at her desk and the entire office smelled like a fast food restaurant?

Finally, what about the profusion

of sloppy, inappropriate and in-poor-taste attire worn by so many in today's workplace? Perhaps, the idea of "you never get a second chance to make a first impression" has gone by the wayside.

Sound like extreme exaggerations? On the contrary. These are only a few examples of unprofessional acts of behavior that occur everyday in many businesses.

Organizations, both large and small, should be keenly aware that the attitude, appearance and behavior of their employees — from the receptionist to the CEO — are directly related to the overall organizational image and how the public and clients perceive the total enterprise.

It is difficult for an organization to appear professional, credible and successful, if indeed, its personnel do not reflect that image. For those reasons, as well as others, it is vitally important that all employees strive to project a positive attitude, be knowledgeable of quality customer service strategies, demonstrate a willingness to help, communicate effectively and present an appropriate professional image.

The importance of corporate image and integrity transmitted by employees to the outside world has increased, and it continues to gain momentum. No matter what the job title, each person within a company is, in some way, by performance and behavior, expressing the overall image of the entire firm.

Because competition and the need for quality service/products have increased drastically, organizations must change to meet those needs.

They must realize that their reputation and their success can depend on how their employees are perceived by the external customer.

So, what can be done? Managers can develop and present specific professional development training programs, convey positive reinforcement, offer praise and recognition, and most importantly, role model behavior. These are all strategies that can provide employees with the skills necessary to project an overall posi-

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tive image that will ultimately reflect upon the organization.

Hiring the right people in the proper positions from the very start is important; however, companies must continue to help their staff develop the necessary skills to project a high level of professionalism.

In today's competitive global marketplace, your organizational image is of vital importance. I encourage you to assess your company's image — is it one of professionalism, credibility and high levels of integrity? Or, could that image use a little enhancing? Dedicate the time and funds necessary to improve your organization's image. It will be an investment in success.

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