



[DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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Image and attitude for interviewing success

Centuries ago, Shakespeare wrote, "... the apparel oft proclaims the man." Here we are centuries later, and according to some psychologists, it takes approximately 10-15 seconds for a person to create an impression. Whether positive or negative during that flash of time, the important point to remember is that you never get a second chance to make a first impression. And, those critical first impressions are lasting ones.

An old saying in human resource circles is that the hiring decision is often made in the first 30 seconds of the interview, and the balance of the time is used to justify that decision. Dr. Joyce Brothers refers to this as the "30-Second Hurdle."

You may be skilled, determined, sincere and knowledgeable; however, if your personal appearance is confusing, an employer may take a quick look and then move on to another candidate who looks more suited to fulfill his or her workplace needs. So, like a product that is rejected and passed over, you would not get a second chance to make a good first impression with that employer.

Many people assume that talent, experience and hard work are the only tools necessary for achieving success. They discount appearance as a potential asset. But appearance does count. Wardrobe, grooming and your overall demeanor speak more eloquently about you than anything you actually say. The way you dress, the way you are groomed and the way you move — these factors taken together are your visual presence. When you dress poorly, the

fight for credibility is much harder, and it may take longer to achieve your goals.

A well-polished image complements your background, gives you a genuine competitive edge and "stamps" you as a professional. It is the most visible and easily acquired business tool.

Now, I realize that many of you may feel a bit uncomfortable with the word "image." You feel that if you are going to be judged, you would much prefer to be judged by your knowledge, skills and ability. Once again, the reality of it all is that initially we are judged by the impression we create. And in today's competitive global society, every message we send needs to be positive.

Let me ask you a question: When you look great, how do you feel? I'm sure most of us would say, "I feel great." Absolutely! When you feel great, your attitude is positive, your self-confidence increases, and the interviewer generally has more confidence in your judgment and ability.

So, beginning with the obvious, pay attention to your appearance. Your wardrobe is something over which you have total control. While there is no magic outfit designed for instant hiring success, you should keep in mind that it is always better to err on the conservative side when dressing for an interview.

Your goal is to create a strong, positive first impression. Remember that simplicity and good taste are desirable. Also, keep in mind that what is appropriate is determined by the profession, industry and position

in which you are interested.

The way you present yourself is the single most powerful nonverbal statement you can make. Even if you personally believe that too much emphasis is placed on appearance, it's human nature for an employer to be more favorably inclined toward the well-qualified job candidate who also looks the part.

Keep in mind, your total image is a harmonious blend of your appearance, demeanor, voice quality, firm handshake, integrity, courteousness, sense of humor, sense of personal style and good taste, and the well-spring of it all — the projection of a positive and professional attitude.

How's your attitude? Is it positive or negative? Remember, it's your focus that counts. The optimist sees a glass that's half full. The pessimist sees one that is half empty. Comedian George Carlin said that he sees a glass that is twice the size it needs to be. In other words, your attitude is a reflection of how you look at things, and it's always your choice. So, think positive. Think professional. Think success.

In the final analysis, consider your image as a form of communication. With it, you want to send out messages that will bring forth positive responses from others. In today's fiercely competitive business world, those messages can make the difference between "You're hired," or "No thanks. We're not interested."

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