

## APPEARANCE MATTERS

It is tempting to think life would be so much easier if you could just stroll into the office without even bothering to glance in the mirror. Whether you like it or not, your appearance gives vital clues about your professionalism at work, and getting it right can make the difference between people taking note of what you say – or ignoring you.

Business cares about visual cues. Every year millions of pounds are spent on creating the right image. If, as a professional, you treat yourself as a business, then you should consider your appearance as your company logo – your image communicates to the world how you see yourself and how you wish to be perceived by others.

At a first meeting it takes just 7 seconds to make a vital first impression, if the person you meet with don't like what they see they won't listen to what you have to say.

If your clothes could talk you would want them to say ' can do, will do and trust me'  
Clothes are part of the overall package along with your other presentation and communication skills.

As a business owner or manager you must look like you are in charge. A smart briefcase signals utter efficiency, on the other hand a bag that is old, tatty and crammed with crumpled papers screams lack of preparation, organisation and even lack of responsibility.

Equally, following 'fashion' slavishly, wearing clothes simply because the media dictates irrespective of what they do you for your face and figure shows that you will follow a trends for the sake of it paying no attention to the impact they may have.

What are the most common mistakes people make?

**Badly fitting clothes.** Clothes should have a loose yet comfortable fit. Clothes that are too tight might expose flesh possibly detracting attention of the listener away from what you are saying.

If necessary, get your clothes altered to ensure sleeves show a centimetre of shirt cuff not several inches or reach your knuckles like one of the seven dwarfs, and trousers break on the shoe and not concertinaed around your ankles or exposing leg above your sock.

**Badly co-ordinated clothes.** The most successful way of dressing is to select a basic neutral palette then build around it with accents of complimentary colours for ties and shirts.

**Badly cared for clothes.** Creased and crumpled clothes, scuffed, unpolished shoes and briefcases and handbags past their best? Invest in an iron and use it, polish shoes and get rid of battered bags.

**Poor personal grooming.** You might have been in a hurry this morning but there is no excuse for a careless shave. Poor complexion, bad breath, dandruff on your collar will all fail to impress and signal a lack of personal pride. Dirty fingernails won't wash in the office if you want to show you value yourself and your company.

**Dated or inappropriate accessories** include quirky spectacle frames and giant chunky plastic watches that look like you should be deep sea diving or scaling a mountain. 'Amusing' ties and socks are inappropriate for the role you are undertaking in business and your audience at work. There are far more effective ways of expressing your individuality than relying on cartoon characters as likely to offend as endear you to others.

Above all remember that in the world of business your look is your logo. Invest time and money on your appearance and your career will reap the benefits. Take control of your image in the workplace – it will work wonders for your business.

My name is Gill Kellard. I run a personal image coaching business called Dress to Impress based in Windsor.

If you would like to find out more about how I can help you just call me on 07976 753910 to arrange a consultation.